

EXPLORING THE USE OF STORYBIRD APPLICATION FOR RURAL ESL TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

While there has been a growing interest in the use of *Storybird* application, most of them focused on students' writing in the native speaker context and very few examined speaking and listening skills for rural ESL learners. Besides, these earlier studies rarely focused on the teachers. The present study examined the use of *Storybird* application for rural ESL teachers. It highlights the effectiveness of *Storybird* application based on the teachers' and experts' perspectives. A survey was conducted to 89 primary ESL teachers from rural areas in the Northern state of Malaysia, and 8 teachers were later trained to use *Storybird* application and developed their own teaching materials to suit their learners' needs. Multiple methods consisted of survey, interview, observation, and reflections were employed, while the ADDIE instructional design model was used to guide the research procedures. The findings revealed that the integration of *Storybird* application has improved teachers' digital skills, teaching methods and materials, and enhanced their creativity and motivation. This study provides crucial information regarding the effectiveness of *Storybird* application which can inform teachers, policy makers, and researchers on digital technology integration for rural ESL context.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, Storybird application, ESL, primary teachers, rural.

1. Introduction

Numerous studies have shown that Web 2.0 tools are effective in enhancing language learning particularly in motivating students [1] and in promoting higher order thinking about texts [2]. Garrard, [3] claimed that research on the advantages of digital storytelling in improving the standards of literacy in the classroom is still deficient. In a similar vein, earlier studies have reported that technology alone does not promise good learning is taking place, but the teachers' techniques and approaches in using technology play an important role in determining successful teaching [4-7]. Hew and Cheung, [7] for example, indicated that the evidence to support the impact of Web 2.0 technologies is fairly weak.

Realising that today's students are "digital natives" [8], teachers have bigger roles and responsibilities to engage learners in the teaching and learning process. Teachers have to equip themselves with technological and pedagogical knowledge to be at par with the latest technology and pedagogical innovation. This integration of Web 2.0 tools in teaching and learning is a form of pedagogical innovation which fosters knowledge construction through creation, collaboration and sharing [9-11]. While pedagogical benefits of Web 2.0 have been widely discussed in the literature, its integration in the Malaysian classroom is still relatively new [12-13]. Even though teachers and students are using Web 2.0 tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for social networking, [14] they did not apply it for academic purposes.

Storybird is one of the Web 2.0 tools used in language learning. It is a virtual learning environment which provides e-learning using applications. It is described as a software application for administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivering of electronic educational technology in creating and managing courses online. Not only does it promote students' active learning [15], it also increases classroom interaction [16] and provides opportunities in innovating the learning and teaching processes of the 21st century [17].

Consequently, our teachers have to be equipped with the necessary technological and pedagogical knowledge related to Web 2.0. Teachers must be trained to design and develop their own digital materials to suit their students' needs, use them effectively in order to enhance students' learning. Therefore, this paper examines the use of *Storybird* application for teaching rural ESL learners and measures its impact on teachers' professional development. This paper also highlights the effectiveness of *Storybird* application based on the teachers' perspectives and the researchers' reflections.

Despite numerous literature highlighting the positive impact of digital storytelling on learning, literature on the teachers' views of *Storybird* application in ESL/EFL contexts is inadequate. In Malaysia, the existing usage of digital technology among school teachers is considered low due to time constraint, lack of technology infrastructure, and lack of pedagogical and technological knowledge among the teachers [18]. With respect to that, Alhassan [19] discovered that teacher's belief influences classroom practice of digital technology. Alhassan [19] found a strong positive relationship between teachers' Web 2.0 self-efficacy beliefs and their actual use of Web 2.0 tools in classroom teaching, influenced by their in-service training, age, and access to Web 2.0 tools. Hence, seemingly, teachers' integration of digital literacy were related to their beliefs about the worth of digital literacy for fostering students' 21st-century skills.

There have been attempts by teachers to integrate digital technology in the classroom. However, it is not done effectively based on the proposed instructional design model. It is felt that teachers needed support not only in terms of knowledge but also technical skills and techniques in implementing new approaches. This implies that there is a continuous need for in-service training for the rural primary ESL teachers to develop skills [19] and to express their concerns during the implementation process.

2. Objectives

As this is part of a bigger research project, this paper mainly discusses the findings from the following objectives:

1. To examine teachers' perspectives on the use of *Storybird* for rural ESL teaching and learning,
2. To explore the experts' perspectives on the implementation of *Storybird* for rural ESL teaching and learning.

3. Literature Review

Web 2.0 Technology in ESL Learning

It has been claimed that writing is the skill that most students are least proficient in [20]. In this regard, previous studies in the use of digital technology in ESL classroom mainly focused on students' writing [21-22] and less on speaking or listening ([23] particularly, in rural context. However, speaking and listening are equally important to develop students' language skills.

Likewise, researches in teaching ESL with digital technology also focus on students' writing. For example, previous studies have explored the effectiveness of using *Storybird* in language teaching particularly on writing [21,24,25]. Ramirez [21] found that the writing skill was enhanced through the use of collaborative writing. Similarly, Dollar and Tolu [26] investigated the implementation of digital story writing in EFL classroom consisted of 63 Fifth Grade students in Turkey and found that students displayed positive attitude and high motivation after using it. They created interesting, enjoyable, imaginative stories and enthusiastically shared them with their friends.

Apart from that, previous studies also focus on the benefits of digital storytelling and collaboration. Digital storytelling is claimed to be one of the innovative pedagogical approaches that can engage students in deep and meaningful learning [25]. It was found that digital story telling is a powerful tool in providing more engaging and exciting learning environments particularly in language classrooms. In addition, Harnish and

Muilenburg [24] revealed that *Storybird* enhanced students' opportunities for socialization through collaboration as they worked together in small groups and discussed the endings of the stories.

Literature suggests that digital technology, in particular, Web 2.0 tools, is useful for students' learning. O'Reilly [27] reiterated that Web 2.0 emphasizes collaboration, user-generated content and participation. Jimoyiannoes[11] indicated that Web 2.0 has evolved into a participatory platform which broadens users communication capabilities and enables content distributions sharing and co-creation (p. 248). Richardson [28] and Sailin and Mahmor[12] asserted that a more interactive and responsive learning can be created through the use of Web 2.0 to encourage active and meaningful learning. Sailin and Mahmor[9] also discovered that digital mind-mapping tool such as *Popplet* enhanced students' active learning. They illuminated that, "Web 2.0 tool, Popplet in particular, supports active learning experience and could enhance student's critical thinking through active experimentation or experiential learning process or activities where students can create, share, and collaborate" [9,p.70]. Furthermore, "the digital contents created and shared collaboratively by the students are valuable data as they can serve as evidences of students' learning engagement." [9, p.70].

The use of digital technologies assist teachers to deal with academic matters and meet the challenges and demands of 21st century teaching and learning [21]. Currently, Web 2.0 has gained popularity and has been widely used in the educational context in Malaysia. For example, a survey was administered to 217 Malaysian students and the researchers found that students were well exposed to Web 2.0 tools and comfortable in using them [29]. However, it has been claimed that students still need help and guidance from teachers in using digital technologies. This indicates that teachers must ensure that they are able to conduct lessons using digital tools and this effort may require extra work from the teachers such as preparing the platforms and outlining suitable strategies to ensure that students are engaged in the learning. Unfortunately, it is found that teachers are not ready to use digital technologies and even if they do, they lack technological and pedagogical knowledge or skill [30]. The current classroom materials used for teaching English as a second language are still conventional and there is lack of digital and interactive fun learning activities. This implies that teachers require exposure to digital technologies and they need to equip themselves with necessary skills in designing good teaching lesson and materials. Hence, this study is crucial in helping to develop teachers' technological pedagogical growth. This is because professional development includes fostering technological and pedagogical knowledge among teacher educators is essential [31-32].

Storybird as a Tool for Teaching and Learning

Storybird is a digital storytelling application designed and developed for users to collaborate and share artistic and literacy talent worldwide. The application makes full use of arts and variety of beautiful images. These abundant free images and pictures enable users to create or craft their own stories virtually. Users can simply choose and drag the pictures while shaping their storyline. The stories will later be in the forms of picture book and long form book. These books which are available online can be shared with others worldwide. In other words, upon completing the story, users can collaborate with other users by suggesting ideas or reviewing the story. Consequently, the writing process can enhance users' writing skills, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

Accordingly, *Storybird* is seen to be able to support the teachers' creativity in making their lessons more interactive and interesting, apart from fostering independent learning and encouraging the users to explore it even further. Zhang [22] who used *Storybird* in a graduate-level early childhood education method course discovered that *Storybird* has greatly improved students' interests and engagement in the course. They also found that *Storybird* has become a useful tool for teaching writing as the application could be used to complete the writing process through peer collaboration right from editing to publishing. Research on the use of *Storybird* in ESL has mainly been conducted for supporting writing skill [18,21,33] instead of listening and speaking. Hence, since *Storybird* has been widely used for writing, this study aims to explore the use and effectiveness of this application for listening and speaking.

The next section addresses the methodology used in the study. It begins with the research design followed by multiple methods which consisted of survey, interview and reflection, while ADDIE instructional design model was used to guide the research procedures

4. Methodology

Research Design

This study employs design and development research methodology. According to Richey and Klein [34], design and development research is "the systematic study of design, development and evaluation processes with the aim of establishing an empirical basis for a creation of instructional and non-instructional products and tools and new or enhanced modules that govern their development" (p.1). In this study, the design, development, and evaluation will systematically provide an empirical source for the development of the *Storybird* Teaching and Learning Kits. It involved the instructional design for the new module (teaching and learning kit) development and provided evaluation for improving the development of the product. Reeves [35] asserted that

“researchers with development goals are focused on the dual objectives of developing creative approaches to solving human teaching, learning, and performance problems while at the same time constructing a body of design principles that can guide future development efforts” (p.7). In this regard, the design and development research methodology is appropriate in this study because it focuses on the dual objectives of developing creative approaches to teaching and learning while adding meaningful knowledge to the existing literature on the theoretical significance of using digital storytelling to improve students’ learning particularly in rural ESL context.

In the development of any instructional materials, it is important that the development process is carried out based upon an instructional design model [36]. To increase the efficiency of the instructional design process in the development of the *Storybird* Teaching and Learning Kits, ADDIE instructional design model was employed.

To guide the teachers to design and develop their *Storybird* material which includes five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation.

5. Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative research allows the researchers to obtain further in-depth information on the use of *Storybird* application in designing interactive and technology-based teaching materials for primary ESL classroom. This study employed multiple methods within qualitative research design which consisted of teachers’ interviews, and researchers’ reflections. The teachers were asked to reflect on their experiences before and after the completion of the *Storybird* project. Evidences from their learning and participation during the training were collected and analyzed using emergent coding.

Researchers also reflected on the nature of the training given to the participants. This is crucial as they needed to identify the problems faced by the participants and plan appropriate strategies to remedy the problems. Taking everything into account, the researchers’ reflections were collected before and after the training. All participating teachers were given an informed consent form with some verbal explanation of their rights to withdraw from the study. Pseudonyms were also used to protect confidentiality of the participants.

For data analysis, qualitative thematic analysis was employed based on Braun and Clarke [37]. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed using thematic coding [38]. The analysis involved transcribing, familiarizing with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing, and defining themes.

6. Research Procedures

This study involved five (5) phases. In Phase 1, an analysis was done to examine teachers' existing knowledge and skills of using digital tools. A survey was conducted to 89 primary English teachers from Kuala Muda/Yan and Sik/Baling districts which are considered rural areas. The first phase was important to identify instructional goals and objectives of developing *Storybird* Teaching and Learning Kits for rural students.

In Phases 2 and 3, the researchers designed and developed the module for the *Storybird* teaching and learning training for the teachers. In Phase 4, a 2-day training for teachers on using the *Storybird* was conducted at SKSL, a rural school in the northern area of Malaysia. In this training, the teachers were introduced to Web 2.0 tools and trained to use the *Storybird* application. They eventually designed their own *Storybird* teaching and learning material to suit their students' needs.

Finally, in Phase 5, the teaching and learning materials were evaluated for its effectiveness. A meeting with two experts from one of the local universities in the northern region of Malaysia was conducted to obtain feedback regarding the design of the product and its alignment with the lesson's learning outcomes. In addition, the usability of the *Storybird* products was also conducted with 4 teachers from 3 different schools from the two districts based on voluntary basis. Teachers were also interviewed to gauge their perspectives of teaching listening and speaking skills using *Storybird* application. As this is part of a bigger research project, only the findings derived from teachers' interview and researchers' reflections are used and discussed in this article.

7. Findings

In this section, we discuss the ESL rural teachers' perspectives on the use of *Storybird* application on their professional development, and also their perspectives on the benefits for students' learning.

Table 1 below describes the profile of the respondents who participated in this study.

Table 1. Profile of the participants

No	Names	Gender	Years of experience	Qualification
1	Teacher A	M	13	B.Ed (TESL) IPGKT
2	Teacher G	F	29	B.Ed (TESL) OUM
3	Teacher H	F	13	B.Ed (TESL)
4	Teacher B	F	7	Math & English (IPGKDA)
5	Teacher I	M	6	B.Ed (TEYL) IPG-

6	Teacher J	M	13	UUM Political Science (UIA)
7	Teacher S	F	5	TESL &Seni IPGKSAH
8	Teacher T	F	9	Math IPGKB
9	SISC R	F	30	M.Ed (ELT)
10	SISC N	F	20	M.Ed (ELT)

Participants

As indicated in Table 1, the participants consisted of 3 males and 5 female teachers. Their experiences ranged between 5 and 29 years. Six of them were trained in English language teaching, while the other two were non-English majors (Political Science and Mathematics). In the context of Malaysia, English is an official second language. Even though many teachers teaching in the rural areas were not trained in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), they were requested to teach English due to the shortage of English teachers in the area. Apart from the teachers, two mentors known as SISC R and SISC N participated in this study. Both of them worked at the District Education Department and they were assigned to mentor the non-English major teachers in English Language Teaching pedagogy.

Teachers' perspectives on the use of *Storybird* for teaching and learning

This section illustrates the teachers' perspectives on the use of *Storybird* for teaching and learning after the implementation of *Storybird* in their respective classrooms. Before embarking into the project, the teachers were asked to reflect on their feelings about the *Storybird* project. The findings revealed that generally, the teachers had mixed feelings before the training. Some were excited, worried and confused to venture into the project as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' Feelings Prior to project implementation

Themes	Statements
Excited	Excited to learn new item and sharing them with my pupils (Teacher A)
	I felt excited yet nervous (Teacher I)
	I was excited and curious to know what <i>Storybird</i> is all about (Teacher J)
	nervous...excited (Teacher G)
Worried	Excited and interesting learning (Teacher B)
	Very worried (Teacher T)
Confused	Confused and anxious (Teacher N)
Curious	Curious to know about the <i>Storybird</i> Project (Teacher S)
	Curious and elated (Teacher H)

As indicated in the Table 2, most teachers were excited to participate in the project. Teacher A mentioned that he was “Excited to learn new item and sharing them with my pupils” (Teacher A) while Teacher J said, “I was excited and curious to know what Storybird is all about” (Teacher J). On the other hand, Teacher I, Teacher G and Teacher B were excited and nervous.

These reactions were also supported by the SISC N who mentioned that some of the teachers were not confident with their competency, especially, the non-English majors.

Both of the teachers were not confident with their teaching skills especially when it comes to English subject. They were kind of reluctant to use the new apps because they were uncertain or unconfident on whether they were competent in using the story bird app. In their mind they were just non-major English teachers. Teacher T was trying to avoid or tried to talk me out of replacing her with another English teacher. With my coaching skills, I managed to persuade her to try it out first and promised to help her out. However, Teacher B showed enthusiasm in trying out or learning new app. She was anxious, excited and showed interest because she knew it would help her improve her 21st century teaching and learning (SISC N’s Reflection)

Similarly, SISC R also agreed that some teachers had mixed feelings about the Storybird implementation. They were more concerned with issues such as internet connectivity, pupils’ capabilities in using technology and their own competency in conducting the application. Below are some comments made concerning Teachers G and A.

When I proposed to the teachers to participate in this Storybird project both Teacher G and Teacher A had mixed feelings about the implementation of ICT based applications in their lessons. They had worries whether Storybird is workable in their classrooms. Their main concerns were on internet connectivity, pupils’ capabilities and their own competence in designing and implementing Storybird lessons in the classroom. These worries stemmed from the time constraints that they face in schools. (SISC R’s Reflection)

SISC R further added, Teacher G was initially sceptical in using online applications in two ways. First, she was worried about her own competency in using ICT applications in her classrooms but she was very positive in accepting the challenge. Teacher A was confident because he often uses ICT during his English lesson. He was worried that the low level of proficiency of his pupils might not make the project work.

However, they gave their full support in making the project a success. SISC R reported, For both teachers, Storybird is something new to be explored and implemented in the

classroom. They showed positive attitude and gave good cooperation as participants of this project. (SISC R's reflection)

Interestingly, she also mentioned that she was anxious in exploring it herself and seeing its success. She said, As one of the researchers I was also anxious in exploring Storybird applications and see the outcomes of its implementation in teaching listening and speaking during English lessons. (SISC R's Reflection)

In general, at the beginning of the project implementation, most of the teachers reported that they were excited to learn a new application. However, they were also worried and confused. Again, after the Storybird training, the teachers were asked to reflect on what they have learned from the Storybird training. As illustrated in Table 3, the teachers reported that they learned to create a platform to share their materials with other teachers. Not only that, they claimed that they learned new skills and knowledge, created teaching materials and changed and improved on their teaching approach from teacher-centred to student-centred. They managed to improve their teaching materials and provided interesting and meaningful lessons. This has somehow enhanced their creativity and increased their motivation. The following section illustrates teachers' reflections on their own benefits as well as their students'.

Table 3. Benefits of *Storybird* for teaching and learning

No.	Benefits of <i>Storybird</i> for teaching and learning	
	Benefits for teachers	Benefits for students
1	Multiple platforms	Increased interaction
2	Improved ICT Skills & knowledge	Increased collaboration
3	Improved Teaching aids/materials	Active learning
4	Interesting and meaningful lessons	Enhanced Creativity
5	Improved Teaching methods	
6	Enhanced Creativity	
7	Increased Motivation	

Provided Multiple platforms for sharing

Teacher A mentioned that the Storybird training provided him with multiple platforms that would ease his teaching. He said, Learning to use multiple platforms and try to make it work cohesively to ease my work (Teacher A, Reflection)

He also mentioned that this platform helped him to share interesting materials with his colleagues and students.

Interesting materials to share...new ideas...will be something interesting to share with my students... so I think it will make my current teaching ideas more attractive to the pupils (Teacher A, Reflection)

Improved Digital Skills and Knowledge

The second theme reported was an improvement in digital skills and knowledge. The majority of the teachers reported that they learned new skills in using Web 2.0 such as Storybird application, Google Form, Schoology, and Kahoot. These Web 2.0 tools increased their skills on digital technologies. They claimed, I have learned a lot of skill and knowledge about the project (Teacher S, Reflection) Storybird and Google forms (Teacher T, Reflection) I learned a lot on storybird, a bit on kahoot, google form, schoology (Teacher G, Reflection)

Other teachers also reported that they gained knowledge on how to create picture books and poems for teaching listening and speaking in their rural ESL classrooms. Created pictures book and poem using StoryBird (Teacher B, Reflection) Created a story through storybird application (Teacher N, Reflection) I learned how to incorporate storybird in my lesson (Teacher I, Reflection)

I have learnt how to create a story using Storybird (Teacher J, Reflection)

The SISC researcher also supported that the participants learned the benefits and potentials of Storybird as a tool in teaching and learning English in rural ESL context. She mentioned that some teachers helped each other by sharing their experiences in using the tools,

Both teachers realised the benefits and their own potentials in using Storybird application as a tool that they can use in designing their lessons. Teacher A was already apt in using ICT in his classroom. He had experiences in implementing digital classroom tools during his English lessons. During the training he had shared *some of the digital tools that he had used in teaching English* (SISC R, Reflection).

Created interesting and meaningful teaching materials

Generally, all the participants mentioned that they learned how to create interesting and meaningful lessons which would eventually attract the students' interest in learning English. Teacher I mentioned that the digital lesson helped to enrich his students' understanding of English. He claimed, To make interesting and meaningful lesson that may help my pupils to understand English better (Teacher I, Interview)

Similarly, Teachers G and T reported that rural students with limited English would be exposed to enjoyable and interesting materials that would arouse their interest in learning English. A lot of benefits and programmes to expose students to interesting and fun < enjoyable > materials (Teacher G, Interview) Interesting and can attract pupil's interests in class (Teacher T, Interview)

The findings indicated that digital storytelling increased students' interaction through hands-on activities. From the observation, SISC R mentioned that in Teacher G's lesson, pupils were seen to have hands-on activities in groups. Thus interactions occurred among the pupils even though at times they were caught speaking in BahasaMelayu. The flow of the lesson also went smoothly because the teacher was in control over the activities and the movement of the pupils (SISC R, Reflection).

SISC R further added that students were involved in the listening and speaking lesson conducted by Teacher G. They made fruit salad in the lesson whereby each group was given a bowl, fruits and other ingredients. They listened to the teacher as she demonstrated the process, they interacted with the team members, and most importantly they enjoyed the lesson. Surprisingly, they managed to produce their own poems and stories using Storybird and presented their work to the whole class.

Teacher G was eager to learn and showed a lot of interest during the Storybird Training. She had carried out a considerably successful lesson with well-prepared three-part lesson steps. Listening and speaking occurred during the hands-on activities in which the pupils made fruit salad. For this activity, they had to listen to the *teacher's instruction and then they interacted among themselves.* (SISC R, Reflection).

Promoted Active Learning

Another theme reported was the evidence of active learning in ESL classrooms. SISC R mentioned that through her observation, the students were engaged in active learning through teacher's guidance. Teacher G for instance, guided the students during the process of creating poems and stories using Storybird and students seemed to have enjoyed the new learning experience. She mentioned, Teacher G's lesson was well-

designed and she was prepared for the lesson. She prepared the necessary teaching aids for her pupils to use during the hands- on listening and speaking activity through making the fruit salad. Then she guided them well during the creating of poems and stories because the pupils had never used Storybird application before. They seemed to have enjoyed themselves and participated actively in the lesson (SISC R, Reflection).

Similarly, SISC N also mentioned that during her observation, students gave their full attention to the teacher and participated actively in the activities using Storybird. Listening and speaking skills were developed, and enjoyable learning environment was created.

Both teachers agreed that the pupils love the story theme more compared to poem. The poem is more for the high English Proficiency Level pupils. Pupils' responses were amazing and they tend to share how they feel and share their experience. They gave their full attention watching the screen and participated in all the activities that were carried out in the class. The interaction between teacher and pupils, pupils and pupils and pupils with the interactive source. Communication skills were developed through the listening and speaking activities. *Fun learning happened in the class and these are the elements of 21st centuries PdPc< teaching and learning>. (SISC N, Reflection)*

Changed in Teaching Methods

Teacher S and Teacher B claimed that they changed their teaching methods and used Storybird.

It changes my teaching method by using ICT (Teacher S, Interview)Improved the materials and method using Storybird (Teacher B, Interview)This is supported by the SISC R who mentioned that the new method changed from a traditional to a more interactive classroom. She said, Based on my observations of the teachers' lessons, it was obvious that there was a change from a traditional classroom to one which incorporated ICT, which was Storybird application. I expected to see pupil-centred classrooms where pupils engaged in hands-on activities and active meaningful interaction among themselves. In this case, Teacher G's classroom showed success as the pupils were able to produce good poems and stories. Listening and speaking skills were also involved during the development and production stage of the lesson. (SISC R, Reflection)

Enhanced Creativity and increased motivation

Another theme which emerged was the element of creativity. Storybird application improved both teachers and students' creativity. Teacher J for instance, stated that he became more creative in his teaching.

It has opened my eyes to be creative and to go the extra mile in my teaching. (Teacher J, Interview). This is supported by the observation made by SISC N who claimed that the teachers' creativity was enhanced whereby the teachers managed to plan the lesson more effectively and creatively. She mentioned, As a coach, i could see that this app improved the teachers' creativity in making ABM and plan the lesson wisely that also follow the requirement in SKPMg2 Standard 4. (SISCN's reflection).

Another theme which was highlighted by the teachers was an increased in their motivation to teach English in the rural area. Teacher I mentioned that the project has increased his motivation and made his students more interested in learning.

It helps to boost my motivation intrinsically (Teacher I, Interview)pupils were more interested to learn (Teacher N, Interview)SISC N also reported an improvement in her teachers' motivation.

Teacher B showed positive response to the usage of the application in PdPc<teaching and learning>. She liked to upgrade herself and find new ways to be used in her teaching. *She expressed that her level 1 pupils were active pupils and one of the ways to get their attention was by using interesting app and interactive materials. (SISC N, Reflection)*

Increased Creativity

Digital storytelling also improved the students' creativity. SISC N mentioned that when students were given opportunity for learning, they became more creative in producing and designing their own Storybird materials.

Then, they were also involved in producing their own poems and stories. Finally, they presented their work where the practice speaking, even though at times they were guided by the teacher (SISC N, Reflection). Finally, the SISC N also acknowledged the benefits of Storybird in helping students to learn sentence patterns, vocabulary items and phrases during listening and speaking activities.

They both agreed that story theme is able to help the pupils with vocabulary, sentence pattern or phrases as well as developing the pupils listening and speaking skills using the app (SISC N, Reflection).

In summary, teachers' reflections and interviews revealed that Storybird application has increased students' interaction, participation, collaboration and creativity. Students were engaged in active learning with their peers when they participated in the group work to complete the activity. As a matter of fact, they also created their own poems and stories in English using the Storybird application. In addition, the mentors also mentioned that digital technologies have increased the students' interaction with their peers when they actively and willingly engaged in hands-on activities. As for the teachers, they had realised the need to change the teaching approaches in their English classrooms to support their students' increasing attention and interest to learn English.

8. Discussion

In this paper, we examined the use of Storybird application for rural ESL teachers' professional development. It highlighted the effectiveness of Storybird application based on the teachers' and the experts' perspectives. The findings of this study revealed that Storybird project provided benefits not only for the teachers but also for the students. The teachers learned multiple platforms to share their work, they gained knowledge and skills on Web 2.0, they created interesting and meaningful activities which are suitable for their rural students with limited English. This new experience and knowledge eventually improved their confidence and motivation in teaching ESL for rural learners. This study supported earlier findings on the effectiveness of using Storybird, a Web 2.0 tool in language teaching [21, 24-26]. Storybird also promoted students' active learning [9,19], increased interaction [16] and made learning more meaningful [12, 25].

Teachers in this study indicated that they have changed their teaching approach from traditional to more student centred approach after the training. The literature suggests that when teachers changed their pedagogical practices in the classrooms, students also gained some benefits. Students became more involved and actively participated in their learning. Furthermore, when teachers provided more opportunities for learning, students became more creative and created their own Storybird materials. During the interview, the teachers reported that they learned to create new and interesting materials for teaching listening and speaking. This has been found to be innovating the teaching and learning processes [1,17]. Reflections and field notes by the SISC mentors also revealed that better interaction patterns and participation was noticed after using the Storybird application. The findings revealed that these teachers used more hands-on- activities using Storybird which proved to be more interesting and increased students' interaction. Students became more involved and they also managed to create their own Storybird products.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory posits that human learning is socially constructed through interaction with others. When students work together with their

peers to accomplish a given task, they learn a lot more by co-constructing the meaning during the language learning process. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal development indicates that children's potential and ability can be promoted to a higher level with the help of more knowledgeable others. In this study, we provide evidence that, even though the rural pupils are of average level of English proficiency and most often interact with one another using their mother tongue during lessons, they are able to create good poems and short stories as targeted according to the lesson objectives when provided with ample learning opportunities in the classroom. For young learners with limited English such as those in this study, the given pictures and words in the Storybird application are helpful in guiding them to create their own product creation which can range from word level to sentences and a complete story. Therefore, we recommend teachers teaching in the rural areas to provide more opportunities for peer socialization among the pupils [24] with the use of technology. This socialization enables students to work collaboratively and consequently the pupils are not only able to accomplish the task but also to practice using English as a second language. In addition, 'scaffolding' happens when teachers give the learners assistance at the right time. Thus we suggest that a further study could be carried out that explore the impact of the interplay of 'scaffolding' actions and integration of digital learning approaches on rural pupils' development of learning English as a second language.

9. Conclusions

Our research has supported the findings of earlier studies which claimed that Web 2.0 technology, particularly Storybird application makes a difference in the learning process [21, 24-26]. However, in this paper, we argue that teachers' techniques in teaching, and the roles they play are equally important in the classroom [4 6,22]. In other words, even if the teachers incorporated technology in their teaching, but when they played a passive role and did not provide opportunity for students to explore their own learning via technology, students would not experience the best learning. In this study, we discovered that when teachers were actively involved in designing lessons using technology, particularly, Storybird, they improved their students' learning. Therefore, it can be argued that when technologies are used for active viewing in class, they promoted interests and motivation for both the teachers and students [39]. Hence, it is recommended that continuous training should be provided to rural ESL teachers when using digital technologies in their English classrooms.

No doubt, teachers play an important role in designing the lesson to suit the learners' interests and capabilities. A successful lesson depended a lot on the design of the lesson and the capability of the teacher to implement it well in the classroom. Pupils would accept any teaching method, tool or activity that captures their interest and they responded well to the lesson according to how it was designed by their teachers. The lessons should be designed to enable the pupils to practice listening and speaking, and

also to create the own products in the form of poems, and short story. Consequently, students should be given opportunities to engage in hands-on activities and the teacher's job is to create this opportunity for learning. When opportunities are created for the students to explore their own learning, they are able to do wonders by designing and creating their own learning beyond their expected level. This is in line with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal development whereby children's potential can be pushed to a higher level with the help of more knowledgeable others. Future research should look into students' perspectives to gauge the benefits they gained when using Storybird application and when designing their own materials. Task-based activities while using Storybird will have to be designed so that students' interaction and collaboration can be recorded and analysed for better understanding on ESL students' learning.

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