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ELT in Local and Global Lives: from Policy to Classroom Practices

Implementation of Storybird.Ai Platform and Principles of Learning in Merdeka Curriculum in Teaching Writing Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of Storybird.ai into sixth-grade writing skills at Daarul Qur'an International Primary School, Tangerang under the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. This descriptive qualitative research uses class observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation, with an English teacher and sixth-grade students as its primary concerns. Preliminary findings, strengthened by quantitative data, demonstrate a convincingly positive reaction from students, who found Storybird.ai's writing exercises easily accessible, engaging, and full of creative alternatives. The use of Storybird.ai has had a positive impact on the students' learning experience. Most students find the platform easy to use, as it is accessible without technical difficulties. The simple interface allows students to log in and start creating stories quickly, without much guidance. Additionally, all students reported feeling more confident and interested in the program. Based on the Merdeka Curriculum principles, these results support Storybird.ai as a useful tool for student-centered learning. The study provides important new perspectives on digital tools, highlighting the beneficial effects on student involvement and writing abilities while establishing the framework for further research and discussion in educational fields.

Keywords: storybird.ai; sixth grade writing; merdeka curriculum; student center; digital

INTRODUCTION

The ability to write is one of the essential skills for people studying foreign languages. This is consistent with Hyland's (2004) perspective that writing proficiency is necessary for learning a foreign language and mastering it is essential for language acquisition. For this reason, when studying a new language, students need to become proficient writers. On the other hand, Rahmani et al. (2016) stated that writing is considered the most challenging skill for language learners because they need some L2 background knowledge about rhetorical organizations, appropriate language use, or the specific lexicon they want to communicate to their readers.

Teaching writing has become more complex since students, particularly those learning English as a second language (ESL), experience various challenges in developing their writing abilities. These challenges include a lack of preparation, poor grammar and spelling, a small vocabulary, and limited access to reading resources. Due to these problems—including the students' different proficiency levels, the complexity of the materials, and the time constraints—teachers have found it challenging to teach

writing. It could be not easy, but teachers must commit more time to helping students write better by offering feedback and suggestions (Moses & Mohamad, 2019).

Furthermore, teaching writing at the elementary level comes with specific challenges, as young students are still developing their language and literacy abilities. Writing is mentally demanding, requiring students to structure their thoughts, select suitable vocabulary, and follow grammar rules (Tompkins, 2013). Additionally, writing instruction must balance encouraging creativity with teaching essential literacy skills like spelling, punctuation, and sentence construction (MacArthur et al., 2019).

In recent years, educators have worked to make writing lessons more engaging by incorporating digital tools that tap into students' interest in technology (Coiro, 2015). The use of technological tools for English Language Teaching (ELT) has been actively encouraged since COVID-19. Several studies have looked into the use of digital platforms in ELT even before the epidemic. It was previously suggested that technology, including games, apps, and devices, can be used in language instruction. Social media, digital technologies, and virtual settings also have significantly enhanced language teaching and acquisition (Venkataramanan, 2023).

Technology has always been essential to improving the educational environment. Teachers may use technology as a teaching tool, which makes it an essential resource. When talking about the usage of technology in education, the word "integration" is frequently used. But with technology spreading in every aspect of our lives, it's time to change our mindset and concentrate on integrating technology into the curriculum in an efficient way that enhances the educational process. It implies that educators should place an emphasis on technology integration and that it should be a natural component of the entire teaching and learning process, from planning to implementation (Quyen & Hong, 2021).

Beyond what standard textbooks can offer, innovative learning technology gives students access to incredible knowledge. It helps them to improve their language skills and cultural awareness by providing students with access to a variety of immersive, genuine, and engaging language tools and information. Teachers might depart from traditional teaching strategies and create a more interactive, student-focused environment by integrating this technology into the classroom. This approach helps students become better communicators while making the most of class time.

A more dynamic and engaging learning environment is produced by innovative learning technologies, which overcome the limitations of time and location. The teacher serves as a guide and significantly focuses on student engagement and teacher-student interaction. A dynamic atmosphere for learning English may be created by the teachers using a variety of resources and techniques, such as interactive whiteboards and visual aids. With its improved flexibility and promotion of student freedom in the learning process, this technique may also be used outside of the classroom (Iannuzzi, 2000).

Storybird is a language learning and teaching tool that was developed in 2010 by Mark Ury with an emphasis on reading and writing abilities. Storybird's platform, which includes visual elements

like images, graphics, and more, is primarily focused on entertaining educational activities. With a variety of visual resources, such as images and colors, Storybird is one of the most captivating teaching tools available. These features allow users to make the illustrations as engaging as possible. Since Storybird is free, anyone can access it by signing up as a new user. Storybird categorizes its users into two groups: educators and parents. It is primarily used for educational purposes by teachers and students. Teachers can set up their classes on Storybird, where students can read stories with illustrations and even create their own stories.

The impact of technology on education has been widely studied, particularly concerning student engagement and motivation. Research indicates that digital tools like Storybird.AI can boost student motivation by offering an interactive and visually appealing learning environment (Prensky, 2012). The visual prompts provided by Storybird.AI inspire creative writing, encouraging students to tap into their imaginations and express themselves through writing. Additionally, this approach aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learners play an active role in building knowledge through meaningful experiences (Piaget, 1970). By allowing students to create stories using both images and text, Storybird.AI creates a learning space where students take an active part in their own education.

With its wide range of intra-curricular learning opportunities, the Merdeka Curriculum optimizes material to give students plenty of time to study new ideas and develop their abilities. Teachers can customize classes to their student's needs and interests by choosing from various teaching approaches. Under the guidance of Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture, the "Kurikulum Merdeka" aligns with growth mindset concepts. These ideas include giving teachers the ability to design a basic, high-quality literacy program that keeps up with technology changes without feeling obligated to cover difficult subjects in the classroom (Anwar, 2021).

In the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, integrating Storybird.AI supports several core learning principles, such as learner autonomy, collaboration, and creativity. A key objective of the Merdeka Curriculum is to encourage students to take control of their learning through self-directed exploration. Storybird.AI enables students to independently create stories, allowing them to select visual prompts that inspire them and craft narratives reflecting their perspectives. This autonomy is crucial for building learners' confidence and motivation, which are vital for long-term academic achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Furthermore, Storybird.AI promotes collaborative learning by allowing students to share their stories with classmates and engage in peer feedback. Collaborative writing activities not only enhance writing abilities but also foster social interaction and critical thinking (Nurfaidah, 2018). When students work together on writing projects, they are exposed to diverse viewpoints, which can enrich their creativity and deepen their understanding of narrative structure and language. This social dimension of

writing, supported by platforms like Storybird.AI, aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's goal of developing interpersonal skills and creating a sense of community in the classroom.

Additionally, incorporating Storybird.AI into writing instruction aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on creativity as a crucial component of education. Creativity is increasingly recognized as a key skill for the 21st century, especially in a fast-changing world where innovation and adaptability are essential (Robinson, 2012). Storybird.AI stimulates students' creativity by offering a variety of visual prompts that inspire unique stories and ideas. This process helps students not only improve their writing but also develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in innovative ways. By using technology that encourages creativity, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to equip students to face future challenges both academically and professionally (Rohmah et al., 2023).

Moreover, Storybird.AI provides significant instructional benefits for teachers. It offers a structured yet adaptable platform for writing lessons, allowing teachers to customize assignments to meet the needs of diverse learners. The visual elements of Storybird.AI are especially beneficial for students who may struggle with traditional text-based writing, such as English language learners or students with learning disabilities (Miller, 2013). By integrating visuals into the writing process, teachers can scaffold instruction and better support students' language development. This aligns with the differentiated instruction model of the Merdeka Curriculum, which stresses the importance of addressing students' individual learning needs (Tomlinson, 1986).

Based on the background and significance above, the researchers are interested in conducting research about The Implementation of Storybird.Ai Platform and Principles of Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum in Teaching Writing at Grade 6 of Daarul Qur'an Int' Primary School—Tangerang.

METHOD

The research design serves as a framework to identify viable solutions to research problems. In this study, the researchers employed a descriptive-qualitative approach to describe the research findings. Qualitative research is characterized by several key features at each stage of the research process, including exploring a problem to develop an in-depth understanding of a central phenomenon, incorporating literature reviews to provide a minor role but to justify the problem, and formulating purpose and research questions in a general and broad manner to capture participants' experiences. Data is collected based on the views and opinions of a small number of individuals to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives.

Data is gathered from a small group of individuals to achieve a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives. The goal of qualitative research is to describe the phenomenon in a detailed, accurate, and thorough manner. In this study, qualitative methods were used to analyze the implementation of Storybird.ai and the Merdeka Curriculum principles in teaching writing, along with

students' responses. The data was examined for descriptions and themes, using text analysis to interpret the findings' broader implications. Finally, the report was written with flexible, evolving structures, incorporating the researchers' subjective reflexivity and bias (Creswell, 2012).

Variables are the key terms of the study to find information and draw conclusions. This research focused on the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y). Based on the writer's research entitled "Implementation of Storybird.ai and Merdeka Curriculum principles in teaching writing skills to the students of grade 6 at Daarul Qur'an International Primary School" can be defined by:

1. The implementation of the Storybird.ai platform and the Merdeka Curriculum (X)
2. Writing skills of the grade 6 students at Daarul Qur'an International Primary School (Y)

The subject of this research is SM, a teacher who instructs sixth-grade students at SD Daarul Qur'an International in Tangerang. The study focuses on the teaching and learning process of the sixth-grade students at this school, which consists of three classes: VI A, VI B, and VI C. Class VI A has 11 male and eight female students, VI B has 10 male and eight female students, and VI C has 11 male and six female students. The researchers chose to observe class VI C, as classes VI A and VI B have different English teachers. For this qualitative descriptive research, one class and one English teacher provide sufficient data for observation.

The research data was gathered through observation, interviews based on Seidman's (2006) theory, questionnaires based on Patten's (2016) book, and documentation. In this study, observation data focused on the implementation of Storybird.ai and the Merdeka Curriculum principles in the teaching and learning process of English teachers in grade VI. The researchers recorded field notes based on these observations, covering aspects such as teaching methods, student activities, media, and strategies used by teachers. Interviews were also conducted, with the researchers documenting the responses from an English teacher at SD Daarul Qur'an International Tangerang using the teacher's own words. Additional data was collected from supporting documentation, including photos, questionnaire sheets, and videos. The questionnaire, containing eight questions, was administered solely to the students. The data sources for this study include the teaching and learning process, along with observation notes from class VI C. In addition, the researchers utilized documentation from the Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), Modul Ajar (MA), and student worksheets as data sources.

RESULT

The researchers present the research findings and discussions used to answer the problem statements in the first chapter, which have been collected from observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documents. The focus of this chapter is to describe the implementation of the Storybird.ai Platform in teaching writing and to find the students' perceptions during the implementation of the Storybird.ai platform.

1. Direct Observation

From the results of direct observation, it can be seen that the implementation of the storybird.ai platform and the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum are used to teach writing at the sixth grade of SD Daarul Qur'an Internasional Tangerang. The following are the results of observation with the informant obtained by the researcher, the English teacher named SM:

A. Opening Activity

In the opening activity, the teacher gave greetings to the students. Before starting the lesson, the teacher invites students to pray together. After praying, the teacher checked the attendance of the students. The teacher asks students questions about matters related to the lesson. The teacher delivered and related the material they would learn to students' experiences. The teacher said that students would be divided into several groups. The teacher provides an overview of the benefits of lessons for everyday life. The teacher conveys the mechanism of learning steps from the beginning to the end.

Table 1. Direct Observation through Class VI C: Opening Activity

Activity	Description of Activity	Does	Doesn't
Opening	Salam	✓	
	Pray before starting learning.	✓	
	Checked the attendance	✓	
	Making classroom agreement	✓	
	Deliver learning scenarios	✓	
	The teacher asks a trigger question.	✓	
	Guide students to discuss the material to be studied	✓	
	Convey the learning objectives and activities to be carried out	✓	
	Doing the pre-assessment	✓	

B. Main Activity

In the main activity, the teacher conveys to students that based on the results of the pre-test that has been carried out, two groups will be formed in learning. Then, the teacher immediately gives information on the names of students who are members of groups one, two, and three. After that, the teacher conveys material about past tense and their use in sentences through interactive videos. The teacher carries out learning by using formative assessment methods. The teacher makes adjustments in learning with differentiation of student learning readiness. The teacher provides more accessible material for students who need more support, the medium difficulty

for students with average competency, and the most challenging task for students with good competency and understanding.

Table 2. Direct Observation through Class VI C: Main Activity

Activity	Description of Activity	Does	Doesn't
Main Activity	Problem orientation	✓	
	Giving helping words	✓	
	Students watch the video.	✓	
	The teacher asks questions about the video.	✓	
	Organizing students		
	Students are divided into three groups.	✓	
	Students observe the video in groups.	✓	
	Guiding individual or group investigations	✓	
	Students pay attention to the explanation of how to use storybird.ai	✓	
Main Activity	Students choose one story from one group.	✓	
	Give a pre-reading activity by asking some questions related to the story.	✓	
	Giving time to students to enjoy the story on the storybird.ai platform	✓	
	Develop and present the work.	✓	
	Students find or ask difficult words.	✓	
	Asking students to retell the story	✓	
	Students answer questions related to the content of the story.	✓	
	Students finish the creative tasks.	✓	
	The teacher teaches about how to make a good prompt.	✓	
	Students practice writing using storybird.ai	✓	
Students come to the front of the class to present the results of the story.	✓		

	Analyze and evaluate the problem-solving process	✓	
	The teacher guides students in discussing the story	✓	

C. Closing Activity

In closing activities, the teacher asks students about the conclusions of the material that has been studied. Teachers also asked some open-ended interviews about students' responses or perceptions after learning writing using storybird.ai. The teacher conveys the activities to be carried out in the next meeting and advises them to study hard. Finally, the teacher closed the lesson by greeting.

Table 3. Direct Observation through Class VI C: Closing Activity

Activity	Description of Activity	Does	Doesn't
Closing	The teacher asks students to conclude after learning.	✓	
	The teacher asks students to reflect on a post-it.	✓	
	The teacher informs the next meeting and asks students to study them at home first.	✓	
	The teacher asks students to fill out the questionnaire.	✓	
	Salam	✓	

The research findings highlight the successful implementation of Storybird.ai in teaching writing skills at SD Daarul Qur'an International, focusing on how the platform enhances student engagement and aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's principles. Storybird.ai enables the teacher, SM, to customize learning content to the student's abilities through pre-assessments, allowing for differentiated instruction that meets individual learning needs. The use of technology significantly motivates students, particularly those less inclined toward traditional writing activities. The intuitive nature of the platform, combined with creative tools, fosters enthusiasm for writing, as seen in the high levels of engagement from students in Group One.

Storybird.ai also serves as a powerful motivational tool by boosting student confidence. Positive reinforcement and group collaboration techniques encourage interaction and self-expression. The platform's visual and storytelling features help students overcome hesitations about writing, making the

process enjoyable and accessible. Moreover, Storybird.ai enhances key writing skills by fostering creativity through visual storytelling and supporting collaboration and communication, as students often work together to create stories, learning from each other in the process.

The integration of ICT is crucial to Storybird.ai's successful adoption. The platform aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on technology, and students, already familiar with ICT, can easily engage with it. Most students come from middle-income families and have regular access to technology at home, which facilitates continuous learning beyond the classroom. Parental support further strengthens this integration, as students receive encouragement in using technology for their studies. Overall, the implementation of Storybird.ai in the writing curriculum has proven to be an effective tool for enhancing creativity, engagement, and collaboration, while reinforcing the technological focus of modern education under the Merdeka Curriculum.

Table 4. Students' perception of the use of storybird.ai

No	Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you like using the Learn English Kids platform?	100%	0%
2	Is Learn English Kids accessible and easy to use?	100 %	0%
3	Do you need a technical person to help you to use Learn English Kids?	89%	11%
4	Are the various stories of Learn English Kids interesting?	100 %	0%
5	Does Learn English Kids build your creativity through the tools that you use? (Text, photo, link, audio, video, and comment)	100 %	0%
6	Does Learn English Kids make you confident to write?	100 %	0%

DISCUSSION

The implementation of Storybird.ai in teaching writing at SD Daarul Qur'an International Tangerang has been quite effective. Teachers initiate lessons with engaging opening activities, including greetings, prayers, and pre-assessments, to create a conducive learning environment. These activities help to connect the lesson content with students' real-life experiences, making the learning process more relatable. During the main activities, teachers divide students into groups based on their competencies,

which are assessed through a pre-test. The use of multimedia tools, such as videos and interactive exercises, makes learning more engaging, particularly when teaching grammar concepts like the past tense. To conclude, in the closing activities, students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned, summarize the lesson, and provide feedback through questionnaires, helping the teacher gauge student progress and set future goals.

The use of Merdeka Curriculum principles plays a significant role in enhancing the learning experience. The lessons are designed to be student-centered, allowing students to take an active role in their education. The teacher tailors the content to the individual abilities of the students by conducting pre-assessments and adjusting the difficulty level of tasks according to their competencies. This differentiation ensures that all students, regardless of their skill levels, are challenged appropriately. Moreover, the integration of ICT tools, like Storybird.ai, has been a key element in motivating students—especially those who are typically less interested in writing. The platform makes learning enjoyable and engaging, aligning with the Merdeka Curriculum's goal of creating meaningful and fun learning experiences.

The use of Storybird.ai has had a positive impact on the students' learning experience. Most students find the platform easy to use, as it is accessible without technical difficulties. The simple interface allows students to log in and start creating stories quickly without much guidance. Beyond ease of use, Storybird.ai encourages creativity by allowing students to incorporate text, images, and multimedia into their stories, which helps build their confidence and imagination in writing. The platform's interactive features and colorful design also increase student engagement, making them more enthusiastic about participating in writing activities. Students' writing skills have shown improvement through the platform, as they get opportunities to practice, receive feedback, and correct their mistakes. This process helps them develop more structured and well-organized written work.

From the teacher's perspective, Storybird.ai supports effective learning by aligning well with the Merdeka Curriculum principles. The platform aids in developing students' communication, creativity, and collaboration skills, all while maintaining a student-centered approach to learning. Teachers find that incorporating ICT into the classroom, specifically using Storybird.ai, provides students with contextual and engaging learning experiences. The platform is also in tune with students' familiarity with technology, as most students already have access to the necessary tools, such as email accounts and internet access, which makes it even more relevant in today's educational context.

In conclusion, the integration of Storybird.ai into English writing lessons, along with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, has resulted in enhanced student engagement, creativity, and writing skills. The platform not only makes the learning process more enjoyable for students but also supports teachers in creating a customized and effective learning environment. This combination of

technology and curriculum principles has proven to be a powerful tool in motivating students and improving their writing abilities.

CONCLUSION

After describing and analyzing the data, the Researchers draw a conclusion that answers the problem statement based on the results of the research related to the implementation of storybird.ai and the principles of Merdeka Curriculum in teaching writing to the grade 6 students of Daarul Qur'an International Primary School Tangerang academic year 2023/2024. Based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the following conclusions are drawn: Based on the study's results, the Researchers can conclude that storybird.ai and the principles in the Merdeka Curriculum have been implemented in English teaching-learning, especially in writing skills. At the planning stage, the teacher makes Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran and Modul Ajar, which are adapted to the format and characteristics of the education unit. At the stage of implementation of storybird.ai and the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum in the teaching and learning process, there are three activities: opening, main activities, and closing. The teacher has also implemented a learning cycle based on the Merdeka Curriculum.

According to the Merdeka Curriculum, in the learning process, the teacher has implemented differentiated learning based on the knowledge and readiness of student learning. In delivering the material, the teacher uses several teaching techniques such as discussion, presentation, and group-based-projects. The teacher also facilitates students with audio, video, projector, and whiteboard to support learning. The teaching-learning process also facilitates a differentiated learning approach. This teaching and learning can be seen from the pre-assessment at the beginning of the study. The teacher uses the result of the pre-assessment to group students according to 73 to their cognition and behavior. The learning also gives freedom to the students to name the groups and even choose the story they want to read. This learning style can make students feel happy and enjoy the learning. Students are given a creative assignment: creating a story prompt. After getting the story, the students are also welcome to present the result to the class. So many activities have been done in the learning and teaching process, and mostly, it is a student-centered approach because the teacher does the job as a facilitator. The teacher also takes the assessment as authentic to support the students' communication skills, creativity, and critical thinking. Students face positive perceptions in implementing storybird.ai and the learning principles in the Merdeka Curriculum. First, the fantastic features and multimedia-based attract students' interest to love it. Moreover, the ease of access also increases students' interest in using it.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence surprises students because it can generate ideas in seconds. Students enjoy learning using the storybird.ai platform, and they also said that this platform can increase students' ability and confidence in writing skills in English. Using storybird.ai makes students enjoy

learning and increases creativity and communication skills, as Curriculum Merdeka wants. The various features and choices allow teachers to conduct the differentiated learning approach.

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