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## EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF USING STORYBIRD ON 10TH GRADE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING NARRATIVE SKILLS IN UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Reda Ahmed Mahmoud Mustafa

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United Arab Emirates University

College of Education

Department of Curriculum and Methods of Instruction

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF USING STORYBIRD ON 10TH  
GRADE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING NARRATIVE SKILLS IN  
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Reda Ahmed Mahmoud Mustafa

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education (Curriculum and Instruction)

Under the Supervision of Dr. Sara AlAleeli

November 2019

### Declaration of Original Work

I, Reda Ahmed Mahmoud Mustafa, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this thesis entitled “*Exploring the Impact of Using StoryBird on 10th Grade EFL Students’ Writing Narrative Skills in the United Arab Emirates*”, hereby, solemnly declare that this thesis is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Sara AlAleeli, in the College of Education at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my thesis have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this thesis.

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29-12-2019

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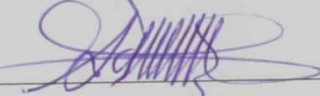
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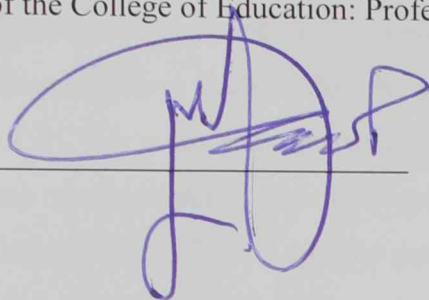
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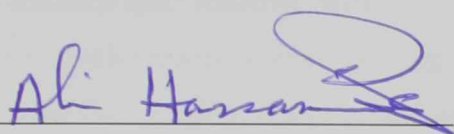


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## Abstract

Integrating technology in the classroom is essential to develop students from this generation's learning skills. Based on previous studies, using a collaborative digital platform to enhance writing skills within the EFL context has been advantageous to students. All in all, this study attempts to explore the impact of using StoryBird (a digital platform) on the students' narrative writing skills and specific sequencing of events and dialogue writing. This is done by performing a pre-test and post-test design on a control and experimental ESL 10th grade students' group. This study would serve as a baseline for further studies and an action research study that may benefit other teachers to enhance their students' writing skills. It was also found that there is a gap in the literature with regards to using this digital platform in narrative writing skills in the UAE and the Gulf Region. Although the limitations encompass time and scope that may impact the generalizability of the study, it can serve as an essential first step towards integrating such technologies in the writing EFL classroom.

**Keywords:** Narrative writing skills, StoryBird, Dialogue writing.



## Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

كشف مدى تأثير استعمال برنامج ستوري بيرد علي طلاب الصف العاشر في تنمية  
مهارة كتابه القصصيه واستعمال اللغة والحوار داخل دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة

### المخلص

إن استخدام التكنولوجيا داخل الصفوف أصبح جزءاً أساسياً في عملية التعليم والتعلم لهذا الجيل ، وبناءً على الدراسات السابقة فإن استعمال التكنولوجيا يساهم بشكل فعال في تنمية مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية. و خلاصة القول (تقوم هذه الدراسة محاولةً منا لاكتشاف مدى تأثير برنامج ستوري بيرد. على تنمية مهارة الكتابة القصصية للطلاب ، وخاصة تسلسل الأحداث ، واستعمال اللغة والحوار، وكل ذلك يتم عن طريق تطبيق الامتحان القبلي ثم الاختبار البعدي على طلاب " الصف العاشر " ، وستكون هذه الدراسة بمثابة الأساس لمزيد من الدراسات البحثية ، وتعزيز دور المعلمين في تحسين مهارة الكتابة لطلابهم وقد وجد أيضاً أن هناك فجوة في استخدام " تكنولوجيا التعليم " داخل دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة ، ومنطقة الخليج العربي. وبالرغم من وجود بعض المعوقات وهي (الوقت ، و تعميم الدراسة ) إلا أنها بمثابة الخطوة الأولى نحو دمج هذه التقنيات لتحسين مهارة الكتابة داخل الفصل وخارجه.

مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية: مهارات كتابه القصصيه، ستوري بيرد، كتابه الحوار.

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To my wife and my soulmate, Mayada, who patiently provided me with enduring love and steadfast support throughout my journey.

## Dedication

*To my sons Ahmed and Yousef, to my lovely daughters Ayah and Jana, to my precious newly born Amira and Haneen who provide me with unending inspiration.*

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## List of Abbreviations

CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
EFL	English for Foreign Learners
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MALL	Mobile-Assisted Language Learning
SCL	Supportive Collaborative Learning
SD	Standard Deviation
UAE	United Arab Emirates



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Recently there is an increase in the advancement of technology and innovation which has impacted human development. Developing 21st-century skills amongst students is essential to keep them in line with the newest technologies and hence, ready for the workforce. Hence, educators around the world explore and experiment with different technologies and innovation strategies in the classroom to develop these skills in tandem with developing the content or skills they are aiming for. Specifically, in teaching English to Foreign Learners (EFL), teachers must find innovative techniques to ensure that students' skills are developed. These techniques may include the integration of digital platforms during class contact time. For example, in a study by Pop (2012), it was found that digital storytelling raised students' interest, engagement, and productivity in learning English as a Foreign Language. Furthermore, in a study by Abdel-Hack and Helwa (2014), forty University Level EFL majors in Egypt were subjected to a quasi-experimental design in applying digital storytelling resources in the classroom. The students that were in the experimental sample had enhanced their narrative writing and critical thinking skills.

Writing skills in any language is a basic ability that students must acquire. The skill itself requires continuous practice using a variety of resources. After numerous steps, students present a final draft of a text that must comply with language rules. EFL students are challenged with these skills and are expected to abide by these grammatical and language structures and write eloquently to have mastered the writing aspect of the English Language. Hence, effective resources must be used to ensure that

EFL students can access and grow in their writing skills. Currently, to cater to millennials, teachers are testing innovative methods in their classrooms. Many studies are now centered around using technology to further skills in all subjects. The studies explore student perceptions, teacher perceptions and the impact of these technologies on student achievement in specific skills within subjects. In a study by Sánchez-Gómez (2017), Pre-service teachers had a positive perception when incorporating electronic activities in the classroom. They enunciated that the use of web-based resources improved the quality of the English Language by providing the students with opportunities for cooperative learning, communication and problem-solving. Students of this generation use technology daily and are surrounded by games, social media applications, and learning platforms. In another study that explored the best education technology practices, collaborative tools were found to enhance communication and collaboration and in turn motivate students to learn (Icard, 2014).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also started to use educational technologies in the classroom to improve students' performance. In a study by Almekhlafi and Almeqdadi (2010), 100 teachers from two schools in Al Ain were studied to explore their perceptions of technology integration in the classroom. The researchers used questionnaires and focus group interviews of the teachers both male and female. The teachers showed that they have a high self- perception with regards to their competencies in integrating technology in the classroom. They also recommended that all teachers need further training, technology resources and further investigation of the impact of technology in the classroom. Another study in the UAE was also a teacher perception study on the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) resources to develop students' reading skills in English (Al-Awidi and Ismail,

2014). The teachers reported that the use of CALL resources helped in providing opportunities for active interaction and differentiation resources.

In another study by Herrera (2013), an action research study was performed on university students using StoryBird. It was found that the digital platform tool promoted the creation of stories collaboratively and enhanced the learners writing skills. Christensen (2017) also explored the effects of using story-writing applications on Kindergarten (KG) students' creative writing skills. It was found that the KG that the story writing skills were developed as the students used the digital platform resource. However, due to their young age, students' independent writing skills were not achieved. It was recognized that the students needed phonetic abilities to be able to write independently using the platform.

Although there are some studies about integration and perceptions in the UAE, only some schools integrate technology consistently within schools and specifically in EFL writing classes. Hence, this study aims to investigate the impact of using a collaborative digital platform, StoryBird, in a 10th grade EFL class on narrative writing skills.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Language teachers are in a constant search for the most effective technology platforms to use in the classroom to support the attainment of writing skills with students. Teachers are expected to incorporate the usage of technology into any teaching subject and the failure to do so may limit their teaching and learning quality. Although there are a few studies with regards to the integration of technology in education in the UAE, there is still a gap in the literature with regards to the

implementation and impact of technology and specifically in narrative writing skills. There is an underestimation of the usage of technology by educator researchers in the UAE and hence, this may limit the development of skills, especially with the current generation of students. To ensure that millennials are engaged and motivated in their learning, technology must be incorporated in teaching and learning. Prensky (2007), enunciates the importance of teachers using technology to engage their students.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Given the scarcity of research and integration of collaborative digital tools in EFL classes in the UAE, this study is intended to investigate the impact of using a digital platform that is called StoryBird in EFL classes. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to study the development of narrative text writing skills in 10th-grade students. The study will attempt to explore:

- The impact of using StoryBird in the EFL classroom on narrative writing skills in using a correct dialogue technique.
- The study will examine the perceptions of using StoryBird in their narrative writing activities.
- The study will also examine the challenges that 10th Grade students when using StoryBird.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the impact of using StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students' dialogue writing skills? Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that there is a

positive impact of using StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students' dialogue writing skills.

- 2) What are the students' perceptions of using StoryBird in their writing activities?
- 3) What are the challenges faced by grade ten EFL students when using StoryBird in their writing activities?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Finding resources on how to grow and master narrative writing skills within an EFL classroom must be explored. Students need to develop their writing skills so that they are using correct skills including forming dialogues and sequencing events. Students will in tandem collaboratively integrate technology in their writing tasks. Hence, students within the UAE must be subjected to digital platforms to grow in writing skills. This study will attempt to study the impact of using a digital platform like StoryBird to enhance students' narrative writing skills. It may be the opening door for further studies in this region about incorporating technology in writing pedagogical strategies in the teaching of EFL students. It will be beneficial to see the impact of using this digital platform on students which may support other teachers and decision-makers to adopt these platforms consistently. The lack of previous studies of the incorporation of digital platforms in writing classes in the UAE specifically and the gulf region, in general, gives the motive to study these practices. Furthermore, the expected findings may contribute to the knowledge base of incorporating technology and input to the evidence-based information within the context of this study.

## **1.6 Limitations and Delimitations**

This study follows a quasi-experimental design to be exploratory in nature. The impact of other factors that may increase students writing skills must be considered. This study is limited from different factors such as size, context and time. Since it is to be conducted within a short time frame, this time frame of the study, as well as the quantitative nature of the data collection, may also limit the understanding of some of the issues that may not be revealed by quantitative data. The scope of the study will only include 10th Grade EFL classes within a private school in Al Ain schools, which allows the researcher to narrow the factors and findings to the region. However, it may also limit generalizability since the results may be different in other settings and contexts.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

**Narrative Writing Skills:** The ability to write any piece that tells a story (Narrative Writing, n.d.).

**StoryBird:** is a collaborative digital platform that provides students with an opportunity to use artwork to write stories. It also allows students to share their created stories to form a learner's community (Chandler, 2015).

**Dialogue Writing:** Writing a conversation between 2 characters (Dialogue, n.d.).

## **1.8 Summary**

Integrating technology in the classroom is essential to develop students from this generation's learning skills. Based on previous studies, using a collaborative

digital platform to enhance writing skills within the EFL context has been advantageous to students. All in all, this study attempts to explore the impact of using StoryBird (a digital platform) on the students' narrative writing skills and specific sequencing of events and dialogue writing. This is done by performing a pre-test and post-test design on a control and experimental ESL 10th grade students' group. This study would serve as a baseline for further studies and an action research study that may benefit other teachers to enhance their students' writing skills. It was also found that there is a gap in the literature with regards to using this digital platform in narrative writing skills in the UAE and the Gulf Region. Although the limitations encompass time and scope that may impact the generalizability of the study, it can serve as an essential first step towards integrating such technologies in the writing EFL classroom.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter is a literature review to demonstrate previous findings of the use of digital platforms on writing skills and specifically narrative skills. The chapter aims at reviewing the latest literature that studies this approach. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework of using digital platforms and their impact on developing narrative writing skills.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This section of the study explores the main theory that is involved with this research. It attempts to explore both the Social Constructivism Theory and the Blended Learning approach to enunciate the effectiveness of using a digital platform in advancing writing skills.

#### **2.2.1 Social Constructivism Theory**

The most relevant theory related to using a digital platform to enhance narrative writing skills is the Social Constructivism Theory. This theory focuses on using a social and individual process interdependently (Palincsar, 1998). In social constructivism, the emphasis is on the collaborative aspect of learning. The social interactions that occur between students can cause cognitive processes. Vygotsky enunciated that learning was intertwined in a social context. He furthermore emphasized the role of language and culture in cognitive development, claiming that both language and culture provide the basis by which people experience, communicate and understand reality.



Hence, using a digital platform that allows social constructivism processes to occur may enhance language skills. In a study by Goodyear, Jones and Thompson (2014) it was found that Supportive Collaborative Learning (SCL) supports and promotes learning through collaboration and helps students progressively build upon their knowledge. Hence, a digital platform like StoryBird connects learning activities to a social and cultural context. Students may use this platform for interaction and collaboration and hence, allowing social interaction which impacts their language skills. In a study by Wang (2014), 'wikis' was used as a digital platform amongst EFL students. It was found that students' motivation to learn English and their writing confidence increased significantly. The students' enjoyment in regards to their group tasks when using the digital platform increased their engagement, level of challenge, and interest.

### **2.2.2 Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)**

The latest technologies are in constant change around the world. The education sector specifically has been introduced to many technologies that have the potential of enhancing the learning experience of students (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). However, educators are faced with the challenges of finding technologies that are effective and relevant to their context. Taylor (2015) enunciates that the use of technology in the classroom has increased recently resulting in the promotion of collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving which are all part of the 21st century needed skills. Using technology in the classroom has been evidently supportive of the learning process. Haughton and Kelly (2015) found that when comparing traditional instruction with a technology-based classroom, students in the technology cohort performed better

than their peers. The researchers tested this approach on 600 undergraduate business students in the USA.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) allows personalized, easily accessible learning (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). Learning occurs through mobile technology including phones, pads and tablets and allows students access to learning materials at any time and place. In a perception study across 7 different countries of EFL students about using MALL, the participants agreed that MALL is a potential tool for constructivism in EFL learning (Hsu, 2013). In a research conducted by Hwang, Chen, Shadiev, Huang, and Chen (2014), 59 sixth-grade students were subjected to a situational learning system aimed to help them learn English as a foreign language. It was found that when students used their mobile devices to carry out EFL writing assignments they significantly achieved better than the control group. Furthermore, the students perceived the designed activities to be fun and hence, were motivated to continue their assignments. The researchers also interviewed the students and found that the students were inclined to write more sentences and describe their target objects when writing more clearly and thoroughly.

In a meta-analysis study conducted over 20 years of MALL, it was found that the overall mean effect size was 0.55 which is significant (Sung, Chang & Yang, 2015). The meta-analysis was done on 44 peers who reviewed journals and dissertations with 9154 participants. The researchers found that there were different effect sizes across studies based on learning stages, the hardware used, software used, teaching methods, durations, and languages. Aamri & Suleiman (2011), investigated the use of mobile learning in the process of learning the English Language at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The researchers conducted a survey on 100 freshman university students undergoing an English intensive course. The students described

their use as limited although they would like more mobile usage, they included that this is because teachers don't encourage them. They also indicated that educators needed to be convinced of the effectiveness of this tool. They described the mobile technology as an effective tool when used wisely.

### **2.3 Narrative Writing Skills**

Dialogue Writing Skills encompass writing a narration between 2 characters. In the CCSS, dialogue techniques are used to develop experiences, events or characters. In a study by Ochi (2014), it was found that Japanese students' writing fluency and complexity was improved significantly when they practiced their dialogue writing. Thirty-one Japanese students in 2 different English classes over a 15-week course were asked to complete 1 journal entry per week. In another quasi-experimental study, dialogue writing journals improved and developed student's collaborative learning techniques (Janah, 2018). Students became more engaged in a group activity as they practiced more dialogue journal techniques.

In Grade 11 in Indonesia, 20 students were interviewed and observed and their journals were analyzed (Hapsari et al., 2018). The students had been conducting Dialogue Journal writing as part of a study to explore its effectiveness in teaching writing. Students felt that they could fulfill their need for reflection and expressed their ideas freely. There was an increase in interaction, attitude, and motivation. The teachers identified that the limitations of using this strategy were in timing finding suitable vocabulary and responding to the students. Although this study was purposive sampling, a case study it could be a starting point for other action research that could have a positive impact on numerous student skills..

## 2.4 Writing Difficulties of EFL Students

Writing is considered as one of the difficult skills to master with EFL students. Writing is a more advanced skill, where students first need to understand the language through reading, and can communicate the language and the actual process of forming words by writing them. In a study done in Thailand about writing errors of EFL students, it was found there are 22 types of errors that emerged in writing essays by Thai students (Phuket and Othman, 2015). These include wrong verb tense, wrong verb form, pronouns (omission, addition or wrong choice), pronouns: inappropriate use, prepositions (omission, addition or wrong choice), articles, nouns, adjective (position), adjective (comparison), conjunctions, infinitive and gerund, subject-verb agreement, sentence fragment, translated word from Thai, word choice, confusion of sense relations, collocation, question mark, comma, full stop, capitalization and spelling. It also clearly shows that students use their first language when writing which causes common errors. This is also in agreement with the study of Kim and Yoon (2014), where researchers explored the impact of the first language on second language writing. They found that all students used their first language when writing in their second language, however lower ability students used them more frequently. The researchers also recommended that different writing instruction should be used to enhance the writing strategies of EFL students and encourage them to write more efficiently.

In an exploratory study of Chinese students in Australia, 7 EFL students at the university level found that their difficulty or writing English stemmed from the traditional approach of learning English in China and their inability to establish a dialogic relationship between themselves and the audience reading their work (Ai,

2015). They also suffered from not being able to relate their writing to their social surroundings; hence, collaboration and social interaction must be occurring to write more eloquently. In a more relevant context in Algeria where the first language is Arabic as in the UAE, a study showed that although the first language had an impact on the writing skills of the students, teachers were not aware of these problems and difficulties and hence, did not cater their teaching and learning techniques to prevent this problem (Haddad, 2018). Hence, it was found that EFL students seem to be facing multiple difficulties that may impact their development of writing.

As for the UAE, a study was conducted to analyze the common grammatical errors made by male students in Secondary school (Hourani, 2008). The study showed that students had grammatical errors based on intralingual transfers. It also enunciated the need for a more reinforced and developed writing skills among secondary students in the UAE. In another study conducted in the UAE, University level students also showed subject-verb agreement grammatical and punctuation errors in writing (Al Murshidi, 2014). In Jordan, the writing errors identified in university-level students were found to be in the use of prepositions (Tahaine, 2010). In Saudi Arabia, seventy-five English major undergraduate students were found to be very weak in their writing skills (Al-Khair, 2013). They also committed errors at the sentence level. Amongst the recommendations was the usage of modern and novel techniques to motivate the students in improving their writing. Hence, instructors must explore different resources that may help in the development of the writing skills of EFL students and are relevant to them.

## 2.5 Student Perceptions Studies

Researchers have been exploring integrating digital tools into the education process for reasons including developing 21st-century skills, engaging and motivating students and developing content and skill in all subjects. In a study by Zakaria, Yunus, Nazri, and Shah (2016), researchers explored the EFL students' experience of using StoryBird in Narrative writing texts. The researchers used semi-structured interviews and observational notes to gain a qualitative view of the students' experiences. Students expressed an increase in interest, authority and being able to express themselves via StoryBird. Students were highly engaged when completing their tasks and felt that they preferred working collaboratively with their classmates via the platform. The students also felt that they were improving in vocabulary and were writing more complex structures. This is very similar to the findings of Herrera (2013), where EFL students' that underwent 2 pedagogical interventions in writing using StoryBird found that they were encouraged to create more narrative texts and they had a more positive attitude towards producing more stories.

In a similar platform named Blendspace which is also a digital storytelling platform, Tsigani and Nikolakopoulou (2018) found that students' commitment to the goal of improving their narrative texts has increased. Although the sample size was only 11 pupils, the researchers completed a full action research methodology of applying the platform in EFL classes of 6th grade. The action research methodology included recognition of the application, planning, implementation, monitoring, and critical reflection. At the university level, a study that was conducted in Canada explored the perceived efficacy of the use of technology in 14,928 Quebec University students (Venkatesh et al, 2016). The researchers then conducted inferential statistics

to explore if course effectiveness perceptions can be linked to technology integration perceptions. Students have a positive perception with regards to technology integrations. Furthermore, the perceived efficacy of ICT impacted the perceived efficacy of the course. In a study conducted by Papantoniou and Hadzilacos (2017), argue some aspects of a pilot e-learning technical writing course addressed to 11th - grade vocational high school students in Greece. The study confirmed that using e-learning can change the way of thinking of students and modify their way of learning.

All in all, students at different levels prefer the use of digital platforms in their education process. This positive perception may impact students' use, engagement, motivation, and progress. This further enunciates the need to explore the perception of the students' in the UAE of these platforms and if they truly have a positive impact on them. Additionally, students' limitations and challenges of using these resources must be explored.

## **2.6 Studies Incorporating Technology in Second Language Writing**

Different studies have investigated the impact of using numerous digital platforms in writing courses. In a study by Strobl (2014), 48 university students underwent a study that explored the impact of an online collaboration tool on advanced writing in a foreign language. It was found that collaboratively written texts showed better content selection and organization. This was due to the ability to discuss deeply with peers through the forum discussions. It was also found that online collaboration stimulates recursive writing and hence, this may eliminate the use of linear writing methods by students and allow them to use more cognitive processes when writing text. In another study that investigated 4 Web 2.0 technologies that were used to support students in writing essays, it was found that there was a significant difference

in students' scores between students that used these technologies and students that did not (Ali, Malek, Abidin, Razali, 2018). The researchers used a mixed-method approach of analysis of quantitative data and perception examination through qualitative methods. The students also showed a positive perception of using the technologies in their writing.

Chin, Gong, and Tay (2015) explored the effects of using a digital platform (Wiki) recursive process writing on students that were learning Chinese as a second language. The researchers targeted narrative writing in Singapore and found that students' in the 7th grade improved their writing skills. An online scaffolding technique was employed on 32 students using 45 writing skills that were developed and uploaded onto the Wiki platform. Student's first draft was peer-reviewed by each other with a focus on narrative writing. The process of revision was found to have a positive impact on the students writing skills using the digital platform. Further research was recommended to ensure that the impact on writing skills in second language acquisition was effective. Hence, although there has been researching on this topic further analysis must be done.

## **2.7 Digital Platform Studies in the UAE**

Currently, in the United Arab Emirates, there is an educational shift that targets incorporating 21st-century skills in the process of teaching and learning. The UAE National Agenda of 2021 foresees a first-rate education system that places the UAE at top competitive levels in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (UAE Vision 2021, 2018). Hence, students in the UAE are expected to develop their literacy skills including reading and writing. Educators must find resources that support the students in attaining the needed skills, progressing in their education and



mastering skills needed for the next stage of their lives. Researchers in the region have been exploring these different resources. Naaj, Nachouki, and Ankit (2012) explored the use of Moodle at the level of undergraduate students in Ajman University. The students had perceived the use of the digital platform favorably. Additionally, the instructors were also interested in incorporating digital resources to enhance the learning process.

Ishtaiwa and Aburezeq (2015) explored the impact of Google Docs on student collaboration. They used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to additionally identify the factors that may limit student collaboration using the digital platform. It was found that the platform enhanced interactions between students and between students and instructors. Amongst the limitations that were identified included a lack of teamwork skills and technological skills. Specifically, in Al Ain, Mustafa (2015) explored the perceptions of 55 students at Al Ain University of Science & Technology about the digital platform Edmodo. Mustafa used Keller's Motivational Theory and asked students to write reflective journals about their experience with Edmodo after using it for a semester. The researcher then completed a thematic analysis where he sets the general themes into an Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction (ARCS) model. The students found that they will use this technology if it is easy to use, related to their interests and capabilities and if it allows them to improve their performance, achievement, and capabilities.

Furthermore, a blended learning approach of using both face to face and online platforms with EFL students at the middle and high school level was investigated in the UAE (Elorbany, 2014). The students' writing scores compared with the control group had significantly improved. Additionally, students had positive attitudes towards using a blended learning approach. The researchers also presented a thorough

model of the approach and how to implement it. Most of the research that was found in the UAE were implemented at the university level, also, there were no studies that were completed about StoryBird specifically at the school level.

## **2.8 Summary**

The essential exploration of different resources that are in line with the needs and interests of millennial learners is exhibited in many studies. Numerous studies have explored the different platforms and resources that are being currently used in the classroom for progress and attainment. Students also have shown a positive affinity towards technology as they are using digital technologies in their daily life. Previous studies link the usage of digital platforms to enhance the collaboration and content skills of EFL students. Furthermore, many studies explore the attitudes and perceptions of the learners. In theory, the incorporation of technology is found in both the social constructivism theory where learners where collaboration (social) impacts learning. Furthermore, MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) has also been found through research to have a positive impact on EFL learning through social constructivism.

There are currently a few studies of StoryBird in the UAE that examine how it may affect narrative writing skills, perception of the students, and the challenges they may face when using the platform. Hence, the present study is an introductory step to examine StoryBird platform and its effect on EFL students in the UAE. The purpose of the study aimed at exploring the impact of StoryBird (technology) on narrative writing skills and examining the perception and challenges of the students when they are using the digital platform. The research questions are identified as:

- 1) What is the impact of using StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students' dialogue writing skills?
- 2) What are the students' perceptions of using StoryBird in their writing activities?
- 3) What are the challenges faced by 10th grade EFL students when using StoryBird in their writing activities?

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter addresses the methods and procedures to investigate the impact of using the digital platform StoryBird in EFL classes. Specifically, a description of the participants and how they are selected, the instrument and its validation procedures, as well as the design of the study and the procedures, used to collect data and the statistical analyses that were employed.

### **3.2 Research Design**

In this study, a quasi-experimental design is implemented as a case study. The main purpose of this study was to measure the impact of the usage of the digital platform on the dialogue narrative writing skills of the students. 20 students were part of the study. They were taught dialogue narrative skills. Furthermore, the study also explored the perceptions of the students that used the StoryBird application and the challenges they faced through conducting a survey. This part of the study is based on the exploratory descriptive survey design to allow the researcher to attain a description of the application and how the sub-groups stand on this issue (Gay et al., 2011). The study consisted of a 4- phase step process. The first phase included conducting a pre-test, which included a writing assessment and a rubric. The second step included implementing the dialogue narrative writing classes 5 periods per week during the 6 weeks. In this phase, by implementing the StoryBird application. Phase 3 includes conducting a post-test which was similar to the pretest and used the same rubric. In phase 4, students filled out a survey about their perceptions of the implementation of the program and the challenges they faced. In addition to that, the researcher carried

out interviews with the participants. The data gleaned from interviews, documents' analysis and students' reflections contributed to explaining the quantitative data collected in the first phase.

### **3.3 Participants**

The participants in this study were conveniently and purposively selected. Mainly, the criteria for selecting the participants were their availability and willingness to participate in this study as one of the main features of the convenience sampling (Bryman, 2012). Due to the nature of the study, only Grade 10 students were selected as participants because of the length of time of the program implementation. The participants in this study were EFL students from different backgrounds including local (Emirati), Arab and Pakistani students.

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

The method of data collection employed was a rubric that is based on the 9-10 Common Core State Standards specific to narrative writing and the dialogue technique. The researcher developed the rubric based on these standards. The rubric was used during both the pretest and posttest phases to measure the impact of the digital storytelling platform. The pretest was adapted from an activity from the Book "Grammar for Writing" (Chin et al., 2014)

The posttest took place after the 6-week program implementation. The criteria used in the rubric were Narrative Focus, Organization of Ideas and Dialogue Technique. A survey was conducted to explore the challenges and perceptions of the students with regard to applying StoryBird in their English class. An initial step that helped in building up the content of the pre and posttest was through implementing a

diagnostic test. The diagnostic test is used to identify the actual levels of the participants. The diagnostic test is commonly done on a term basis and is conducted in all the general English skills needed in Grade 10.

The survey was developed based on research and evaluations of digital storytelling studies (Barrett, 2006). The survey used the research design presented by Barrett and hence an email was sent for permission. The items were developed based on the targeted audience and the types of questions being surveyed. The survey consisted of 25 Likert type questions that aim to answer the ease and access to use, 5 perceptions questions assigned to this study. Under the general perceptions of the students, 2 domains were assessed which include the effectiveness of using StoryBird and the enjoyment and motivation of the use of StoryBird (10 questions). As for the challenges' domain, it consisted of 5 main questions. Before beginning the survey, an opening page explaining that this survey is anonymous was used because of the sensitivity of responses that may be provided. The question part of the survey included Likert-type questions about StoryBird. This section measured the responses using a 5-point Likert type scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree".

The last instrument that the researcher used was the interviews. Interviews followed the recommendations of Kvale & Brinkmann (2007) where the purpose of the interview was to engage the students by prompting them verbally (asking questions) and giving them feedback. The researcher also allowed appropriate time for the students to express their views and opinions and checked their reliability and validity of their views by repetitively asking and summarizing the points that were communicated to the researcher. All interviews were completed systematically, and ( $n = 8$ ) were all done individually and were recorded, transcribed and placed in themes by thematic analysis. The researcher also constantly reassured the students that their

opinions and perceptions do not affect them in the course and that they were confidential.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The researcher started to apply phase 1 by implementing the pretest to assess the levels of the students in narrative writing skills and specifically in dialogue. The researcher asked the participants in this case study to write a narrative essay about an accident, a surprise or an adventure. The researcher chose this topic because they are familiar to all learners. The students then were assessed using the Narrative Writing Rubric that was developed based on the CCSS and the level of the students. Subsequently, the researcher collected the data from the pretest and started to analyze the data to compare before and after using this platform StoryBird. In phase 2, The researcher conducted the treatment period that took place over six weeks and used 5 periods a week targeted at narrative writing. The teacher used a consistent method of teaching and materials to the sample in this case study. In phase 3, after finishing the treatment period, a posttest was conducted with the same topics and using the same rubric. Two English teachers from the same school corrected the pretest and posttest because they are familiar with the rubrics for validity.

Phase 4 consisted of surveying the participants to accumulate data about their perceptions of the effectiveness of StoryBird and the motivation and enjoyment domain. Additionally, the questions also have a domain about challenges that students may have faced when using StoryBird. All data collected was inputted into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software (SPSS) program for data analysis. The researcher analyzed the score of the student's writing, after checking the reliability of the pretest and posttest. The analysis data focused on examining differences

between the control and experimental group. As the test was used to investigate the differences between the means of the pretest and posttest results in both groups.

Phase 5 consisted of attempting to recognize patterns within the interview as part of the thematic analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The researcher conducted the interview and then transcribed data. During the interview, the researcher validated his data by continuously asking the same questions and summarizing the perceptions of the students and asking them to confirm. Consequently, he moved to the next step of finding the themes within the interviews.

The researcher invited a panel of experts to help find the themes within the transcripts including a vice-principal, a principal, and an education professor. Within the analysis, the educator experts used the meaning condensation method (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2007) to read the interviews as a whole and find a general meaning. Consequently, the researcher and education experts pinpointed repetitive phrases that include “StoryBird motivated me to write”, “I did feel motivated because it was simple to use”, and “I preferred it to traditional writing”. The researcher then combined these similar quotes and formed themes.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability**

#### **3.6.1 Validity**

Yin (2009) stated that there are two types of validity, which are internal and external validity. Internal validity, according to Yin (2009) seeks to confirm that the research answers the study questions, and external validity clarifies whether the study can be generalized or not. It is therefore important to make sure that the construct and content validity is appropriate for this study. To establish the content and construct validity of the instruments were tested for construct and content validity aspects by



obtaining expert opinions from a panel of professionals in the education sector that include Education professors and the School Principal and Vice-Principal. Reviewers were asked to provide comprehensive feedback on the instruments about the factors and how the content and construct are suitable and appropriate to the study. Changes were applied to improve the instruments when needed. As for the rubric, construct validity factor analysis was used (Van et al., 2017).

About the interview questions, the validity was established by reviewing it by the same panel of experts. The panel suggesting deleting repeating questions and clarifying the questions. The researcher also continuously checked with the participants about their answers and summarized the points and asked them to verify them.

Johnson and Christensen (2004) proposed that any testing effect might have occurred on the participants. Additionally, the researcher would make sure that participants received no feedback about pretest responses before receiving the treatment and taking the posttest. The outcome of this research cannot be generalized; however, the research questions have been answered adequately. Nonetheless, the possibility of transferring the outcome of this research for use in another similar context can as well not be ruled out.

### **3.6.2 Reliability**

The reliability of this study refers to how the method of data collection can yield repeatable and consistent results. Yin (2009) states that the reliability of a study shows the degree of trustworthiness that one can find on the procedure or the instrument used and to ensure that if the same study had to be carried out by another researcher it would be almost exactly the same result. Essentially, Kananen (2011)

clarifies the reliability quality of a subjective examination approach as far as "repeatability" and "consistency" in the translation of the exploration result. In this study, there are two instruments. The survey tested this using Cronbach's alpha which was calculated for each domain to indicate that they have adequate internal consistency. Cronbach Alpha was found to be 0.66 which shows reliability as per Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011). As for the internal consistency of the survey questions, the means of the domains were found between 0.64 and 0.68. All of the reliability tests were conducted using 20 students from grade 10 that were not participating in the study as a pilot study. As for the rubric, Intraclass Correlation will be used to describe interrater reliability (Van et al., 2017). The interview's reliability was also checked by the researcher who continued to ask the same questions for reliability.

### **3.7 Ethical Issues**

The researcher informed all the participants of the research purpose. Additionally, approval from the school administration and the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) was obtained. As for parents, a formal letter was sent to them for approval to research with their children. Peer teachers were informed by the process of the study. All the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the research procedures. They were also provided with an informed consent form for ensuring issues of anonymity and confidentiality (Oliver, 2003; Gregory, 2003). Moreover, participants were aware of the ways the study's results will be used to decide whether they wanted to participate or not (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, the students and the parents were allowed to review their responses to avoid any bias or misinterpretations by the researcher thus, ensuring objectivity.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The researcher screened the results before considering any data. This was done by descriptive statistics analysis to deal with Likert-type responses. The researcher attempted to answer the first of the research questions (What is the impact of using StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students' dialogue writing skills?) by conducting a t-test comparison between the pre-test and post-test results, and a comparison between the control and experimental group results. As for the second and the third question, (What are the students' perceptions towards using StoryBird in their writing activities? And what are the challenges faced by grade ten EFL students when using StoryBird in their writing activities?) statistical comparisons of means and descriptive analysis took place using SPSS. The researcher then presented these results in tables in Chapter 4.

### **3.9 Limitations**

With regard to methodology, a quasi-experimental design was conducted with a limited number of participants from the same gender (20 male students) since the school context does not allow for mixed gender classrooms. Such limitation may impact the internal validity of the study due to lack of comparison group. Consequently, the findings of this study can be generalized with some caution.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter provides information related to the methodology to be used in this study including a description of the participants and how they will be selected, the instrument to be used and how it will be validated. It also explains the design of the study and its justification, the procedures to be followed to collect data, and how the collected data will be analyzed to answer the research questions.

## Chapter 4: Results

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the results pertaining to the data that was collected from the research completed in this study, which aimed to investigate the impact of using the digital platform StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students in their dialogue writing skills. Additionally, it also investigated the student perceptions and challenges of 10th-grade students when using the platform.

Quantitative data was collected using a rubric for pre/post-test analysis and a survey, which was developed based on the purpose of studying the perceptions of the students with regards to StoryBird usage in the classroom.

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings related to the answers to the research questions that were presented in chapter 1 as follows:

- 1) What is the impact of using StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students' dialogue writing skills?
- 2) What are the students' perceptions of using StoryBird in their writing activities?
- 3) What are the challenges faced by grade ten EFL students when using StoryBird in their writing activities?

## 4.2 Impact of StoryBird on Student Skills

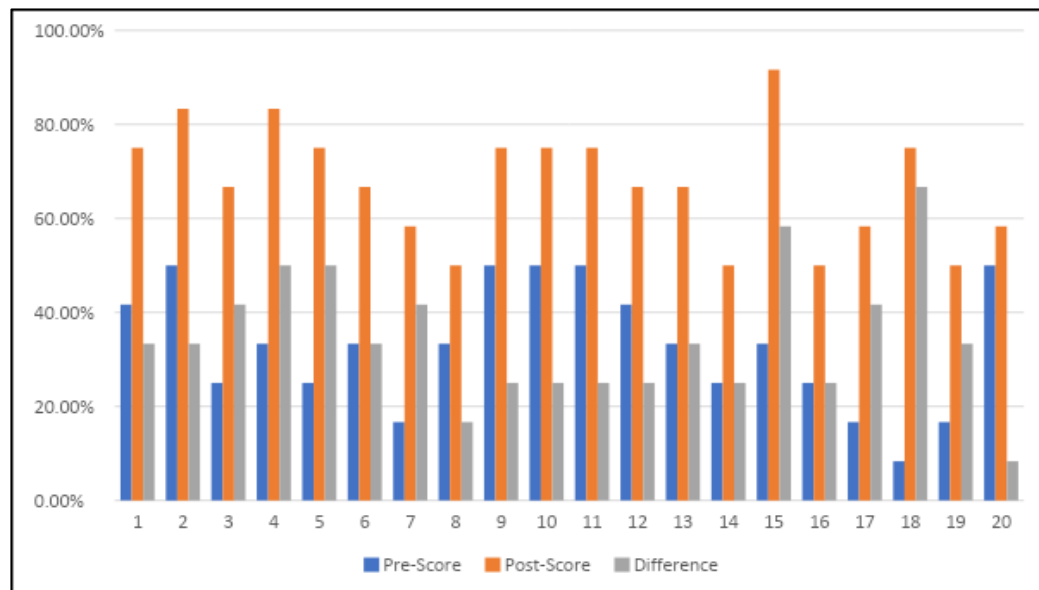


Figure 1: Overall Pre/Post - Test Analysis in all Skills (n= 20)

Figure 1 shows the Overall Pre/Post – Test Analysis results of all the students. This figure attempts to answer Question 1 of the study of the impact of StoryBird on the Overall skills of the students. The figure shows the highest increase from 8.33% to 75.00% which accounts for 66.67% positive difference. The lowest increase was found to be from 50.00% to 58.33% which accounts for 8.33% positive difference.

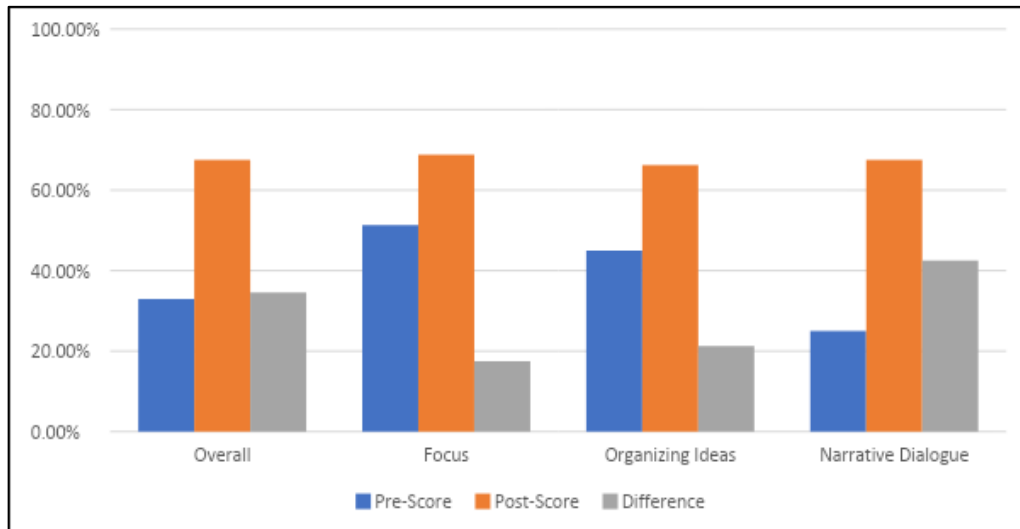


Figure 2: Overall Pre/Post – Test Analysis in each Individual Skill (n = 20)

Figure 2 shows the comparison between the pre and post-test score averages of the skills assessed. The highest positive difference was found in the Narrative Dialogue Skill with an increase from 25% to 67.50% and a positive difference of 42.50%. The next difference was found to be in Organizing Ideas in the Body of the Text Skill with an increase from 45% to 66.25% and a positive difference of 21.25%. The least impacted skill was the focus skill which was found to be from 51.25% to 68.75% and a difference of 17.50%.

To further answer Question 1, Table 1 shows the t-test analysis of the Overall Skills. Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference in the pre-test results ( $M = 32.92\%$ ,  $SD = 0.017$ ) and the post-test results ( $M = 67.50\%$ ,  $SD = 0.015$ ) conditions;  $t(2) = -10.95$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ . Table 2 shows the t-test analysis on the Focus Skills. Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference in the pre-test ( $M = 51.25\%$ ,  $SD = 0.04$ ) and the post-test results ( $M = 68.75\%$ ,  $SD = 0.02$ ) conditions;  $t(2) = -4.77$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ . As for Table 3 it shows the t-test analysis on the Organizing Ideas with the Body skills. Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the pre-test ( $M = 45.00\%$ ,

$SD = 0.04\%$ ) and post-test results ( $M = 66.25\%$ ,  $SD = 0.01$ ) conditions;  $t(2) = -5.1$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ . In Table 4, the Narrative Dialogue Skills are analyzed pre-test ( $M = 25.00\%$ ,  $SD = 0$ ) and post-test ( $M = 67.50\%$ ,  $SD = 0.04$ ) conditions;  $t(2) = -9.48$  and it was found that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-Test results  $p \leq 0.05$ .

Table 1: The Impact of StoryBird on the Overall Skills of the Students (n = 20)

	Mean	N	SD	T-test
Pre-test	32.92%	20	0.017	-10.95
Post-test	67.50%	20	0.015	

Table 2: The Impact of StoryBird on the Focus Skills of the Students (n = 20)

	Mean	N	SD	T-test
Pre-test	51.25%	20	0.04	-4.77
Post-test	68.75%	20	0.02	

Table 3: The Impact of StoryBird on the Organizing of Ideas on the Body Skills of the Students (n = 20)

	Mean	N	SD	T-test
Pre-test	45.00%	20	0.04	-5.1
Post-test	66.25%	20	0.01	

Table 4: The Impact of StoryBird on the Narrative Dialogue Skills of the Students (n = 20)

		Mean	N	SD	T-test
Pre-test		25.00%	20	0	-9.48
Post-test		67.50%	20	0.04	

### 4.3 Domains of the Perceptions of Students

Table 5 to Table 11 attempts to answer the second question about the perception of students with regards to using StoryBird. Table 5 shows the mean of the five domains and the overall domain that attempt to answer the second question presented in this study. Students that participated in this study showed higher regard to using StoryBird judging by the higher mean value where the overall mean value was found to be ( $M = 4.23, SD = 0.85$ ). The views of the Ease of Access & Use of using StoryBird in learning English as a Foreign Language has the highest mean score ( $M = 4.48, SD = 0.61$ ). The next highest domain was found in the views of the Appropriateness of Materials & Resources of StoryBird ( $M = 4.25, SD = 0.92$ ), which is followed by the views of the students regarding Group Work – Collaboration when using StoryBird ( $M = 4.24, SD = 0.75$ ). Subsequently the attitude & motivation of students when using StoryBird follows ( $M = 4.20, SD = 0.98$ ). The lowest identified views were found in the Writing Skills Enhancement domain ( $M = 4.12, SD = 0.99$ ).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of the Domains (n = 20)

Domain	Mean	SD
Overall Perceptions	4.23	0.85
Ease of Access & Use	4.48	0.61
Appropriateness of Materials & Resources	4.25	0.92
Group Work - Collaboration	4.24	0.75
Attitude & Motivation	4.20	0.98
Writing Skills Enhancement	4.12	0.99



#### 4.4 Students' Views of the Ease of Access & Use of StoryBird

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics indicated by the means and standard deviations of the views of the students with regards to the ease of access & use of StoryBird as a learning platform with 10th Grade English Foreign Language Students. As seen in Table 6, the overall average mean of the domain ( $M = 4.48, SD = 0.61$ ). The means of the items in this domain ranged between ( $M = 4.85, SD = 0.37$ ) and ( $M = 4.1, SD = 0.91$ ). There were 3 items within this domain that were reverse items and were analyzed negatively. The items of this category included the following: “I do not have access to devices to use StoryBird\*” ( $M = 4.85, SD = 0.37$ ); “StoryBird is easy to access” ( $M = 4.06, SD = 0.5$ ); “StoryBird allows me to create my online stories fast” ( $M = 4.45, SD = 0.76$ ); “The instructions are difficult to understand\*” ( $M = 4.40, SD = 0.50$ ); “It is difficult to navigate the site to complete my writing tasks” ( $M = 4.10, SD = 0.91$ ).

Table 6: Students' Views of Ease of Access & Use of StoryBird (n = 20)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
1	I do not have access to devices to use StoryBird*	100.00%	4.85	0.37
2	StoryBird is easy to access	100.00%	4.60	0.50
3	StoryBird allows me to create my online stories fast	85.00%	4.45	0.76
4	The instructions are difficult to understand*	100.00%	4.40	0.50

\* Reverse Item

Table 7: Students' Views of Ease of Access &amp; Use of StoryBird (n = 20) (Continued)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
3	StoryBird allows me to create my online stories fast	85.00%	4.45	0.76
4	The instructions are difficult to understand*	100.00%	4.40	0.50

#### 4.5 Students' Views of the Appropriateness of Materials & Resources of StoryBird

Table 7 describes the views of students with regards to the appropriateness of the materials and resources of StoryBird. The Appropriateness of the Materials and Resources domain had the second highest average mean ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). There was 1 item within this domain that was reverse items and were analyzed negatively. This domain included the following items from highest ranking to lowest: "It is easy to access the resources in StoryBird" ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ); "Some resources found in StoryBird are not appropriate for my culture\*" ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ); "StoryBird contains a variety of themes and pictures to choose from when creating my story" ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ); "With StoryBird, I can use different resources that help me in my writing" ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ); "There are plenty of supporting resources to choose from on StoryBird" ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ).

Table 8: Students' Views of the Appropriateness of Materials & Resources of StoryBird (n = 20)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
1	It is easy to access the resources in StoryBird	100.00%	4.55	0.51
2	Some resources found in StoryBird are not appropriate for my culture*	90.00%	4.50	0.95
3	StoryBird contains a variety of themes and pictures to choose from when creating my story	80.00%	4.40	0.82
4	With StoryBird, I can use different resources that help me in my writing	80.00%	4.35	0.81
5	There are plenty of supporting resources to choose from on StoryBird	50.00%	3.45	1.50
	Appropriateness of Materials & Resources Mean		4.25	0.92

\* Reverse Item

#### 4.6 Students' Views of Group Work – Collaboration when Using StoryBird

Table 8 describes the views of students with regards to the group work and collaboration when using StoryBird. This domain had the third highest average mean ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ). This domain included the following items from highest ranking to lowest: "I can comment and reflect on my peers' work" ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ); "StoryBird allows me to access global or local writers that inspire me" ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ); "Exchange of ideas and information through StoryBird improves my English

language skills” ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ); “I enjoy receiving feedback from my peers using StoryBird” ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ); “StoryBird allows me to engage in group writing assignments” ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ).

Table 9: Students’ Views of Group Work – Collaboration when using StoryBird (n = 20)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
1	I can comment and reflect on my peers’ work	100.00%	4.50	0.51
2	StoryBird allows me to access global or local writers that inspire me	95.00%	4.45	0.76
3	Exchange of ideas and information through StoryBird improves my English language skills	85.00%	4.35	0.88
4	I enjoy receiving feedback from my peers using StoryBird	70.00%	4.00	0.79
5	StoryBird allows me to engage in group writing assignments	65.00%	3.90	0.79
	Group Work - Collaboration Mean		4.24	0.75

#### 4.7 Students’ Attitude & Motivation when Using StoryBird

Table 9 describes the attitudes and motivation of students with when using StoryBird. This domain had was the fourth average mean ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ). There was 1 item within this domain that was reverse items and were analyzed negatively. This domain included the following items from highest ranking to lowest: “I am motivated to complete my writing assignments using StoryBird” ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD =$

0.67); “I enjoy learning in the classroom when using StoryBird” ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ); “StoryBird is boring to use\*” ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ); “I recommend StoryBird to other students” ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ); “StoryBird is fun to use” ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ).

Table 10: Students’ Attitude & Motivation when Using StoryBird (n = 20)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
1	I am motivated to complete my writing assignments using StoryBird	90.00%	4.35	0.67
2	I enjoy learning in the classroom when using StoryBird	90.00%	4.25	0.91
3	StoryBird is boring to use*	80.00%	4.20	1.28
4	I recommend StoryBird to other students	80.00%	4.10	1.07
4	StoryBird is fun to use	80.00%	4.10	0.97
	Attitude & Motivation Mean		4.20	0.98

\* Reverse Item

#### 4.8 Students’ Views of their Writing Skills Enhancement when Using StoryBird

Table 10 describes the views of students with regards to their writing skills with when using StoryBird. This domain had the lowest mean ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ). This domain included the following items from highest ranking to lowest: “StoryBird allows me to receive feedback about my writing from my teacher” ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ); “StoryBird improves my dialogue narrative writing skills” ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD =$

0.97); “StoryBird helps me write more effectively” ( $M = 4.20, SD = 1.01$ ); “I enjoy learning English writing skills when using StoryBird” ( $M = 4.15, SD = 1.04$ ); “I feel independent when using StoryBird” ( $M = 3.65, SD = 0.99$ ).

Table 11: Students’ Views of their Writing Skills Enhancement when Using StoryBird (n = 20)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
1	StoryBird allows me to receive feedback about my writing from my teacher	90.00%	4.35	0.93
2	StoryBird improves my dialogue narrative writing skills	75.00%	4.25	0.97
3	StoryBird helps me write more effectively	80.00%	4.20	1.01
4	I enjoy learning English writing skills when using StoryBird	75.00%	4.15	1.04
5	I feel independent when using StoryBird	60.00%	3.65	0.99
	Writing Skills Enhancement Mean		4.12	0.99

#### 4.9 Overall Student Perceptions about Using StoryBird

Table 11 describes the views of the students in all domains. The overall domain mean showed a high value ( $M = 4.23, SD = 0.85$ ). There were 5 items within this domain that were reverse items and were analyzed negatively. The highest five items were found to be in the 3 domains of Ease of Access & Use, Appropriateness of Materials & Resources and the Group Work – Collaboration domain. They are identified as the following: “I do not have access to devices to use StoryBird\*” ( $M =$

4.85,  $SD = 0.37$ ); “StoryBird is easy to access” ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ); “It is easy to access the resources in StoryBird” ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ); “I can comment and reflect on my peers’ work” ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ); “Some resources found in StoryBird are not appropriate for my culture\*” ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ).

The lowest 5 viewed items were identified as the following: “It is difficult to navigate the site to complete my writing tasks\*” ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ); “I enjoy receiving feedback from my peers using StoryBird” ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ); “StoryBird allows me to engage in group writing assignments” ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ); “I feel independent when using StoryBird” ( $M = 3.65$ ;  $SD = 0.99$ ); “There are plenty of supporting resources to choose from on StoryBird” ( $M = 3.45$ ;  $SD = 1.50$ ).

Table 12: Students’ Overall Views of the Usage of StoryBird (n = 20)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
1	I do not have access to devices to use StoryBird*	100.00%	4.85	0.37
2	StoryBird is easy to access	100.00%	4.60	0.50
3	It is easy to access the resources in StoryBird	100.00%	4.55	0.51
4	I can comment and reflect on my peers’ work	100.00%	4.50	0.51
4	Some resources found in StoryBird are not appropriate for my culture*	90.00%	4.50	0.95
5	StoryBird allows me to access global or local writers that inspire me	95.00%	4.45	0.76
5	StoryBird allows me to create my online stories fast	85.00%	4.45	0.76
6	The instructions are difficult to understand*	100.00%	4.40	0.50
6	StoryBird contains a variety of themes and pictures to choose from when creating my story	80.00%	4.40	0.82

Table 11: Students' Overall Views of the Usage of StoryBird (n = 20) (cont'd)

Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
7	StoryBird allows me to receive feedback about my writing from my teacher	90.00%	4.35	0.93
7	I am motivated to complete my writing assignments using StoryBird	90.00%	4.35	0.67
7	Exchange of ideas and information through StoryBird improves my English language skills	85.00%	4.35	0.88
7	With StoryBird, I can use different resources that help me in my writing	80.00%	4.35	0.81
8	I enjoy learning in the classroom when using StoryBird	90.00%	4.25	0.91
8	StoryBird improves my dialogue narrative writing skills	75.00%	4.25	0.97
9	StoryBird is boring to use*	80.00%	4.20	1.28
9	StoryBird helps me write more effectively	80.00%	4.20	1.01
10	I enjoy learning English writing skills when using StoryBird	75.00%	4.15	1.04
11	I recommend StoryBird to other students	80.00%	4.10	1.07
11	StoryBird is fun to use	80.00%	4.10	0.97
11	It is difficult to navigate the site to complete my writing tasks*	75.00%	4.10	0.91
12	I enjoy receiving feedback from my peers using StoryBird	70.00%	4.00	0.79
Rank (Highest to Lowest)	Statement	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean	SD
13	StoryBird allows me to engage in group writing assignments	65.00%	3.90	0.79
14	I feel independent when using StoryBird	60.00%	3.65	0.99
15	There are plenty of supporting resources to choose from on StoryBird	50.00%	3.45	1.50
	Overall Mean		4.23	0.85

\* Reverse Item



#### 4.10 Interview of Students

Qualitative data were collected through interviewing 8 students that had used StoryBird about their experience. The researcher attempted to recognize patterns within the interview as part of the thematic analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The researcher interviewed the students, transcribed the interview in English and analyzed the interview using a thematic analysis. The interview questions included general and specific questions related to the students' views towards StoryBird, the impact StoryBird has on developing writing skills that they felt when using StoryBird, the feedback aspect of using StoryBird, the collaborative aspect of using StoryBird and the challenges they faced when using StoryBird.

Four major themes surfaced from the interview conducted that show the student's perceptions about StoryBird. The themes that emerged were as follows: positive general perceptions when using StoryBird, positive impact on the students' writing skills and motivation when using StoryBird, promotion of collaborative skills and feedback when using StoryBird, and students had no major challenges when using StoryBird.

##### Positive General Perceptions when Using StoryBird:

The students had a generally positive view of using StoryBird. Most of the students explained that StoryBird was useful and helpful. They further enunciated that they would recommend it to others and that it was effective and positive to use. The students also found the digital platform to be a new resource that was effective.

Sultan: "StoryBird is an amazing application that helps us."

Ahmad: "When I was introduced to StoryBird I thought it was not useful and was a waste but with more use, I could see how useful it is."

Students explained further that the platform is helpful and especially in writing. They enunciate that StoryBird helps with their creativity in writing.

Omar: “I think it’s a very nice platform that helps any writer to write more professionally.”

Khalifa: “I find it very helpful and useful in using pictures to help me describe clearly in my writing.”

Mustafa: “I think StoryBird is a great platform for writing as it helps a lot with ones’ creative thinking and writing as it provides pictures to help with creativity and ideas and great for making stories for people to read.”

Positive Impact on the Students’ Writing Skills and Motivation when Using StoryBird:

When asked about the use of StoryBird and its impact on writing skills, most students explained that there was a positive impact on their writing skills. Students mention that the platform provides pictures, multiple strategies of writing and ideas and tips to improve writing.

Sultan: “They provide us with pictures so that we can get more information.”

Omar: “StoryBird provides us with ideas and tips on writing better.”

Khalifa: “I find it very helpful and useful and using pictures help describe clearly.”

Mustafa: “Provide pictures to help with creativity and ideas and is great for making stories for people to read.”

Ahmad: “You’ll learn many ways to write.”

Students also recall that as they progressed with using StoryBird, their writing becomes better as it helps them write professionally and helps in their future by practicing their writing using the platform.

Theyab: “(Platform helped in improve writing skills) My future will rely on these writing skills as it is an essential skill in life and studies and everyone should be practicing it.”

Mustafa: “(Platform helped in improve writing skills) Yes I do. Because writing is an essential skill in and of itself that everyone needs to learn it is extremely mandatory as you will need it in your everyday life.”

Ahmad: “At the start, I didn’t know how to write but I improved over time and overcome this challenge.”

Omar: “Helps any writer to write more professionally.”

The students also mentioned that they felt motivated to write using StoryBird and enunciated the increase in creative writing. Additionally, the students felt that they preferred StoryBird to the traditional way of writing.

Sultan: “StoryBird (preferred over traditional writing) of course, because I have said it gives you pictures and gives you more information and helps you think creatively.”

Ahmad: “It’s better to use the StoryBird platform because it's more effective and quicker with images.”

Zayed: “StoryBird (preferred over traditional writing) because of the pictures.”

Mohammed: “StoryBird (preferred over traditional writing).”

Theyab: “Yes (motivated to write with StoryBird) because of the pictures and resources available at hand.”

Mustafa: “I did (feel motivated) because of how simple it is to use and the wide range of ideas they hand you so I would always be excited to write because I’d never get stuck on a certain point.”

#### Promotion of Collaborative Skills and Feedback when using StoryBird:

As the students were being interviewed, they mentioned collaborative strategies that were being used in the platform including collaboration with teachers and peers and receiving feedback from teachers and peers. Collaboration is a 21st Century Skill that students are expected to master and grow in during their schooling years.

Sultan: “We have created a group for our class on the platform and we can exchange our stories and ideas there.”

Ahmad: “Yes (I received feedback from teacher) because these stories became widespread and so I got remarks from my teacher.”

Omar: “Yes we exchanged (peers) our stories and learn from each other and we all improved in this process of sharing.”

Khalifa: “Sometimes we can chat about them (exchange stories with colleagues).

Mustafa: “Yes it did (to exchange ideas and stories) our teacher had set up a classroom of sorts on StoryBird where we can show each other our stories and learn from them and maybe read them for enjoyment when we are free.”

Theyab: “Yes (I received feedback from my teacher), I send him the story and he sent me feedback on my mistakes and corrects what I should do.”

However, 2 students did not feel that the platform helped them in their collaborative skills.

Mohammed: “No (I did not exchange ideas with classmates).”

Zayed: “No not much. (Allow me to share ideas with colleagues).”

Students had no major Challenges when using StoryBird:

Most of the students did not have any major challenges when using StoryBird. They answered the question that asked them directly about any challenges they faced with the answer No or a brief explanation. Only one student mentioned that he faced writing challenges when he first started using StoryBird.

Omar: “No not really.”

Mohammed: “No.”

Khalifa: “No.”

Theyab: “No it just helped me with my dialogue and writing.”

Mustafa: “No none at all”

Ahmad: “Yes at the start I didn’t know how to write but I improved over time and overcame this challenge.”

All in all, the students favored the usage of StoryBird. They perceived it as a platform that improves their writing skills by providing them with pictures, strategies,

ideas, and tips in writing. They also felt motivated to write whilst using the platform because it helps them write professionally and creatively. Most of the students also perceived StoryBird as a platform that provides collaborative opportunities with teachers and peers and it also allows them to receive feedback from both their teachers and peers. Additionally, the students did not face major challenges when using StoryBird.

#### **4.11 Summary of Results**

This chapter focused on reporting the findings of the study. First, the results showed that the impact of StoryBird on 10th Grade EFL students was found. The highest positive difference was an increase of 66.67%. Additionally, all the students had an increase with the lowest increase being 8.33%. As for the individual skills, it was found that the highest impact was on the narrative dialogue skill increase of 42.50%. To further analyze the impact a t-test analysis was completed on the overall skills, focus skills, organizing of ideas within the body skills and the narrative dialogue skills. It was found that through the t-test analysis there was a significant difference between the means of the pre-test and post-test.

In the analysis of the survey and the views of students, the overall views were positive ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ). The highest viewed domain was found to be the ease of access and use domain ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ). In the domain of ease and access of use, students found that they do have access to devices to use StoryBird (reverse item) was the highest of that domain ( $M = 4.85$ ,  $SD = 0.37$ ). It was found that the lowest viewed item within this domain is that the students found that StoryBird is not difficult to navigate the site to complete their writing tasks (reverse item) ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ).

In the appropriateness of materials and resources domain ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ), the highest viewed item was that the students found the resources in StoryBird to be of easy access ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ). The lowest viewed item was that students found the resources to be plentiful on StoryBird ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ). As for the group work – collaboration domain ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), students found that they can comment and reflect on their peers' work ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) and the lowest viewed is that StoryBird allowed them to engage in group writing assignments ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ). In the students' attitude and motivation towards StoryBird ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ), students were found to be motivated to complete their writing assignments using StoryBird ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ) and their least viewed item was that they found StoryBird fun to use ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ). In the lowest viewed domain, writing skills enhancement ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ), it was found that students were allowed to receive feedback about their writing from their teacher when using StoryBird ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). The least viewed item within this domain was found to be that students felt independent when using StoryBird ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ).

When analyzing the qualitative data that included interviewing 8 students that had used StoryBird, the students perceived the platform in a positive way. They enunciated that it helped improve their writing skills, motivated them to write, and allowed them to receive feedback and collaborate with their teachers and peers. Additionally, the students did not face major challenges when using StoryBird.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This study investigated the impact of using the digital platform StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students in their dialogue writing skills. Additionally, it investigated the student perceptions and challenges of the students when using the platform. It used a case study quasi-experimental design in a private school in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. The instruments that were used were the rubric to measure impact, a survey, and individual interviews. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the data presented in Chapter 4. It also presents comparisons of the results obtained from this study with previous research studies as reported in the literature. The findings of the study are then discussed in relation to the research questions and the context of this study. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

### **5.2 Impact of StoryBird on Student Skills**

The impact of the digital resource was studied by completing a pre/post-test analysis. The research question that was attempted to answer was 1) What is the impact of using StoryBird on 10th grade EFL students' dialogue writing skills?

One of the major findings of the study found was that StoryBird had a significant impact on all of the student's skills which include the 'Narrative Dialogue' skills, the 'Organizing of Ideas in the Body of the Text' skill and the 'Focus' skill from most impacted to least impacted. This agrees with the study by Stobl (2014) where the students used a digital platform at the university level and students' content selection and organization and recursive writing improved. This is also similar to the study by Ali, Malek, Abidin & Razali (2018) where students' scores significantly increased

when using Web 2.0 technologies in writing essays. With regards to narrative writing specifically, Chin, Gon & Tay (2015) found that narrative writing improved when using a digital platform that employed an online scaffolding technique. In a similar setting, EFL students' in the UAE's writing scores improved when using a blended learning approach (Elorbany, 2014).

### **5.3 Perceptions of Students Towards Using StoryBird**

The students had positive perceptions about using StoryBird. The survey attempted to answer the second question: 2) What are the students' perceptions of using StoryBird in their writing activities?

The five domains that were analyzed in this study include (1) Ease of Access & Use, (2) Appropriateness of Materials & Resources, (3) Group Work - Collaboration, (4) Attitude & Motivation and the (5) Writing Skills Enhancement. The overall perceptions of the students were positive ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ). This was in agreement with the study by Naaj, Nachouki and Ankit (2012) where undergraduate students perceived the use of a digital platform favorably. Also, Herrera (2013) found that EFL students' that used StoryBird had a positive attitude towards producing more stories.

As for the highest perceived domain, it was found to be the perception of students with regards to ease of access and use ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ). This agrees with the previous findings by Mustafa (2015) where students found the use of a digital platform to be favorable and especially in the ease of its use. The next highest perceived domain was the appropriateness of materials and resources ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). The study by Mustafa (2015) further agrees with this finding. Group Work



and collaboration, attitude and motivation were the next domains respectively ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) and ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ). These are also in agreement with the study by Zakaria, Yunus, Nazri and Shah (2016) where EFL students had a favorable experience when using StoryBird and in increasing their interest and working collaboratively with their classmates via the platform. Additionally, Papntoniou and Hadzilacos (2017) found that students had a positive change in the way of their thinking and modification in their learning when using an e-learning platform. Gan, Menkhoff & Smith (2015) found that a digital learning platform supported collaborative project tasks in an Asian university setting. The students used the collaborative techniques to develop their key competencies by tackling challenges with their peers. These results further enunciate the importance of including a tool for students to collaborate and communicate. Hence, this study may be beneficial for educators in the UAE to find effective collaborative resources in the classroom.

As for writing skills improvement, as explored previously, many studies have found that there are writing difficulties found (Ai, 2015; Haddad, 2018; Al Murshidi, 2014). Students' views with regards to their writing skills enhancement were also positive when using StoryBird ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ). Additionally, a study by Shams-Abadi, Ahmadi, and Mehrdad (2015), found that online learning platforms had an increase in writing performance. Wang (2014), also found that when using a digital platform with EFL students, they were motivated to write and hence, their writing performance was impacted positively.

The interviews that were conducted with 8 students after the survey also showed the perceptions of the students about using StoryBird. The major themes that were found further enunciated that the students had a generally positive perception of

StoryBird. They found the platform to be useful and helpful, describing the platform as “a platform that helps a lot with ones’ creative thinking and writing.” This is in agreement with the study by Olson (2014) where students found an online learning platform to encourage their learning.

The interviews also showed that students’ perceived StoryBird as a platform that motivates them to write and that their writing skills were positively impacted. This further elaborates on the survey results which showed the perceptions of students to be similar. This is also in agreement with the study by Hwang, Chen, Shadiey, Huang, and Chen (2014) where it was found that using mobile learning platforms saw that the students were motivated to participate in writing assignments. Additionally, they were more inclined to write more sentences clearly and thoroughly.

The next theme that was revealed in the interviews was the promotion of collaborative skills and feedback when using StoryBird. The students’ elaborated that they enjoyed collaborating with their peers and teachers, especially when receiving feedback. This further supports the survey results where students perceived StoryBird as an effective digital learning platform that supported collaborative practices in learning. Taylor (2015) states that the use of technology in the classroom supported collaboration, a needed 21st-century skill. Furthermore, Goodyear, Jones, and Thompson (2014) enunciate the need for a learning platform that promotes Supportive Collaborative Learning (SCL) that hence helps students build their knowledge progressively. The Social Constructivism Theory builds its entity on social contact between students and that it allows for learning to occur. Hence, the perceptions of the students’ further support this theory.

#### 5.4 Challenges of Students When Using StoryBird

The survey and the interviews studied the perceptions of students with regards to the challenges that students face when using StoryBird, this attempts to answer the following question: 3) What are the challenges faced by grade ten EFL students' when using StoryBird in their writing activities?

The questions in the survey that were placed for challenges that students may face when using StoryBird were found to be with the lowest means. Hence, students did not face major challenges when using StoryBird. In the domain of ease of access and use of StoryBird, it was found that students did not find the instructions difficult to understand or difficult to navigate the site to complete their writing tasks ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) and ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), respectively. Furthermore, in the domain of appropriateness of materials and resources of StoryBird, it was found that students did not find the resources to be inappropriate to their culture ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ). In the domain of attitude and motivation, students did not find StoryBird to be boring. The interviews also show that there were no major challenges when using StoryBird. Most of the students replied with "No" when asked about StoryBird.

These findings were in agreement with major studies using different learning platforms (Khathiri, 2015). Most of the studies found only found minor challenges that are not about the platforms themselves but rather technological problems (Al-Said, 2015). Purnawaran and Sundayana (2016) also found that minor technical difficulties were faced by students when using online learning platforms.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings reported in this study showed that StoryBird is an important platform that impacts students writing skills. It is also perceived positively by students' in domains that include usefulness and easy access, appropriateness of materials and resources, collaboration, attitude and motivation and impact on writing skills enhancement. The findings reported here may also contribute to further exploring the impact of StoryBird on students' writing skills. It also may further contribute to students' perceptions studies about online platforms and what are the main reasons for students to favor such platforms. Although this study is small scale and was conducted in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, yet it can act as a precursor to larger studies that can be conducted in the region to better understand the views of students with regards to online learning platforms. To better expand upon this study, the following recommendations and further research implications may be suggested:

1. To further study the perceptions of students by conducting studies with a larger number of participants from all around the UAE. Further exploration of student perceptions with regards to StoryBird specifically and online learning platforms generally may be administered. This study showed positive views of students about the platform, however, a larger number of participants from different regions and setting may show different results, or may further support this study. Additionally, more interviews may be administered to obtain more information about the perception of the students with regards to the online learning categories.
2. Teachers' views and practices studies should be conducted about online platforms. These studies will give a better understanding of what practices are

currently used, the perception of teachers about their usage and what is needed to further develop these uses. Additionally, the skills of teachers may be explored and what is needed to further develop these skills.

3. Further studies on the impact of StoryBird specifically and online learning platforms generally on writing and other language skills. A larger-scale study on different regions and areas on EFL students may result in similar or different results that would open doors to further explorations of online learning platforms and their impact on students' learning.
4. Implementation of an online learning platform policy within schools. Various studies have shown a positive indication with regards to using online learning platforms. Hence, educators may start implementing a policy that may be part of teacher performance appraisal programs that aim at implementing such new technologies in the classroom. This can further be developed by allowing educators to perform action research about such platforms.
5. Start collaboration platforms to discuss the impact of online learning platforms between educators and the sharing of best practices. Teachers learn best from each other and hence, starting an online learning platform or discussion groups that further explore the usage of teachers of online learning platforms in the classroom may be beneficial. This develops professional learning communities and allows best practices to be implemented in different classrooms.
6. As a result of the current study, the school where I work has already put the platform of StoryBird in action to be used all over the school grades. So far, English teachers have found it to be very valuable for enhancing students' writing level. This is also observed by the Irtiqaa inspection team (Ministry of Education Quality Inspection) and mentioned in their final report.

7. The results of my study will have pedagogical implications for policymakers in regards to integrating technology in the EFL curriculum across the UAE. The results of this study will also be shared with the Ministry of Education in hopes of the Ministry sharing it with other schools across the UAE.

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