MULTIMODAL SPACES FOR DIGITAL TRANSLANGUAGING: USING *STORYJUMPER* TO ENGAGE BI/MULTILINGUALS IN INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING

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Title	Multimodal spaces for digital translanguaging: Using Storyjumper to engage bi/multilinguals' in interactive storytelling
Type of product	Bookmaking website
Minimum Hardware Requirements	A device running iOS; Android; PC/MAC; windows 8
Platform	
Contact information	**Help** provided online 24hour through chat
Target Language	Multilingual
Target Audience	K-12 level of education, but applicable to other contexts as well
Price	Basic free online account with all the features, Four publishing price rates: Audio Book download (US$2.99 for 16 pages + $0.10/extra page), eBook download/print (US$2.99 for 16 pages + $0.10/extra page), Paperback Book (US$12.99 for 16 pages + $0.25/extra page), Hardcover Book (US$24.99 for 20 pages +0.50/extra page)

1. Introduction

The need for multimodality in meaning-making and knowledge representation is critical in this contemporary time when teachers are faced with not only diversity in classrooms but also a great number of technological tools to choose from. Dealing with cultural differences and linguistic diversity requires affirming and giving people access to metalanguage of multiliteracies as a means of understanding and discussing meaning-making in diverse modalities needed for closing economic and power gaps (Gee & Hayes, 2011). According to Cowan and Kress (2017), "in the multimodal semiotic world, one fundamental issue is to develop ways to provide a satisfactory account for meanings in any mode" (p. 50). The meaning of literacy has gone beyond the ability to read and write to include a whole lot of multiplicities: including being digitally literate and being literate in more than one language, hence the need for learners to be given opportunities to create meaning and represent

knowledge in diverse modes. Alongside digital literacy, digital storytelling and translanguaging are critical tools for literacy and language development.

Digital storytelling implies creating stories with multimodal tools including text, images, audio and videos. As a literacy tool, it is instrumental in giving multilingual students, who are often minorities, the opportunity to not only share their personal narratives with their linguistic resources, but also make further connections with a piece of information presented to them during a lesson, while honing and building their literacy skills (Emert, 2014). While digital storytelling serves as a means of giving students voices (Cordi & Masturzo, 2013), it enhances students' higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking and creativity, writing skills including expository writing, narratives and report writing, and digital literacy skills (Emert, 2014; Ohler, 2005). By virtue of these skills and enhanced students' voices, storytelling could be deemed fit as a suitable means of engaging students. The process can be well supported by *Storyjumper*, an interactive story creating application. *Storyjumper* enhances the use of stories for literacy and language development with the options it gives students to create multimodal stories with texts, images and audio.

Translanguaging refers to how learners employ all their linguistic resources to create meaning. It is a practice that is used to support the academic achievement and language development of bi/multilingual students. Translanguaging practices in the classroom are one way schools acknowledge and build upon the linguistic resources that students bring to school in order to facilitate their learning. As bi/multilingual students' linguistic and experiential resources are engaged, translanguaging potentially triggers bi/multilinguals' metacognitive and higher order thinking skills that enhances writing (Velasco & Garcia, 2014; Kano, 2012). Moreover, giving students writing tasks that require them to translanguage reflect the linguistic realities outside school (Hanson, 2013; Pacheco & Miller, 2015). Benefits of translanguaging to bi/multilingual students' language and literacy development abound in the literature (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Kiramba, 2017; Velasco & Garcia, 2014).

Both storytelling and translanguaging practices can as well be supported with technology in the classroom to engage learners. Translanguaging with an interactive digital storytelling application (*Storyjumper*) entails that multilingual learners are creating and representing meaning in diverse modes including using more than one linguistic mode, learning by storytelling (another mode), and using a platform (*Storyjumper*) that supports use of images, text and audio modes of communication.

This review describes the features of *Storyjumper* and applies the principles of engagement in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as a framework to evaluate it

(Egbert & Shahrokni, 2018). For learners to maximize the opportunities of language and literacy development presented to them, they must be engaged in tasks.

2. A Description of *Storyjumper*

Storyjumper is a bookmaking tool that can be used to make multimodal storybooks or topical books. The books are multimodal because the user has options to use colorful texts, rich images and props, and audio to make meaning. The application can be used to make different kinds of book such as "all about me book", "narrative writing", "reflective journal", "ABCs of any topic", "group book", "teach a topic book", and "diary". Users have the options to model already made books in the repository to make theirs, choose and edit any templates in the repository that suits their topics to create their own storybooks or begin writing a book from the scratch. While other bookmaking applications such as *Storybird* and *Book Creator* can be used to make multimodal books, each of these applications have their unique features while this review focuses on *Storyjumper*. *Storyjumper* allows a teacher to create a class and add any number of students and teachers to the class, model or adapt any lesson plan from the repository to plan their lessons in a variety of subjects (including English, Social Studies, Math, Foreign Languages and Science), create templates for students to use for their book projects, create and control interactive group bookmaking, and manage and review students' work both during the process and on completion. The teacher can create a password for students to login and join the class or add students when students have their accounts. Students have the option personalize the story or book by adding their voice and special effects (sound effects and music).

The main features of *Storyjumper* are outlined below.

1. A free basic plan that allows teachers to create any number of classes and add their students, create templates for their students to easily start off book-making, create group book-making tasks, monitor students' progress, edit, comment and review students' works, and maintain students' privacy.

2. The software supports the making of multimodal books with rich text, image, props, voice, sound effects, music and any linguistic mode (translanguaging).

3. A repository of multimodal digital books comes in a variety of topics and subjects.

4. A collection of templates is available for bookmaking on a variety of topics.

5. A repository of sample lesson plans for a variety of subjects where story writing can be integrated exemplify the process of digital storytelling classroom application.

6. The software supports collaboration by allowing multiple people to edit a book at the

same time and video chat with collaborators. Students can invite audience beyond the classroom to read and comment on their books.

7. *Storyjumper* supports sharing, feedback and review of students' work from a larger audience beyond the classroom both during the creation process and at the end of it.

8. The software is easily accessible to both teachers and students with a guide for teachers on how to use *Storyjumper* for their classes and printable handouts for students to get started. Students have access to work on their stories anywhere as there is compatibility with all platforms.

3. Getting started

The Storyjumper website is simple, accessible, clear, and easy to navigate. On the homepage shown in Figure 1, users can create a free account as a teacher or student to get started. Once account is created, the teaching and learning process starts.
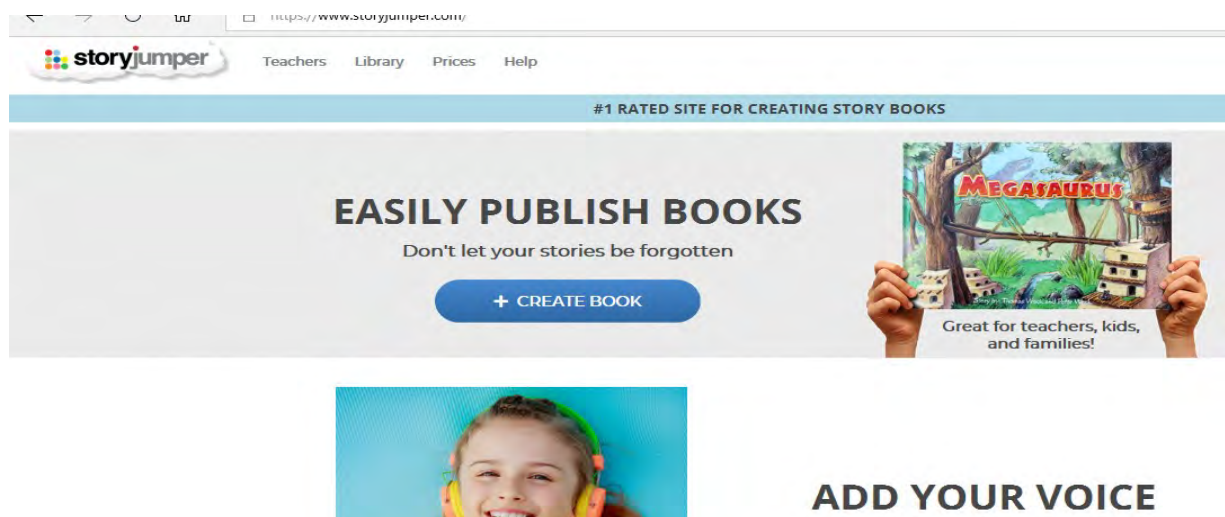

Figure 1. Homescreen

With a teacher account, the user can create or add and manage a class; create and read books while a user on a student account have access to create and save books, and read sample books.
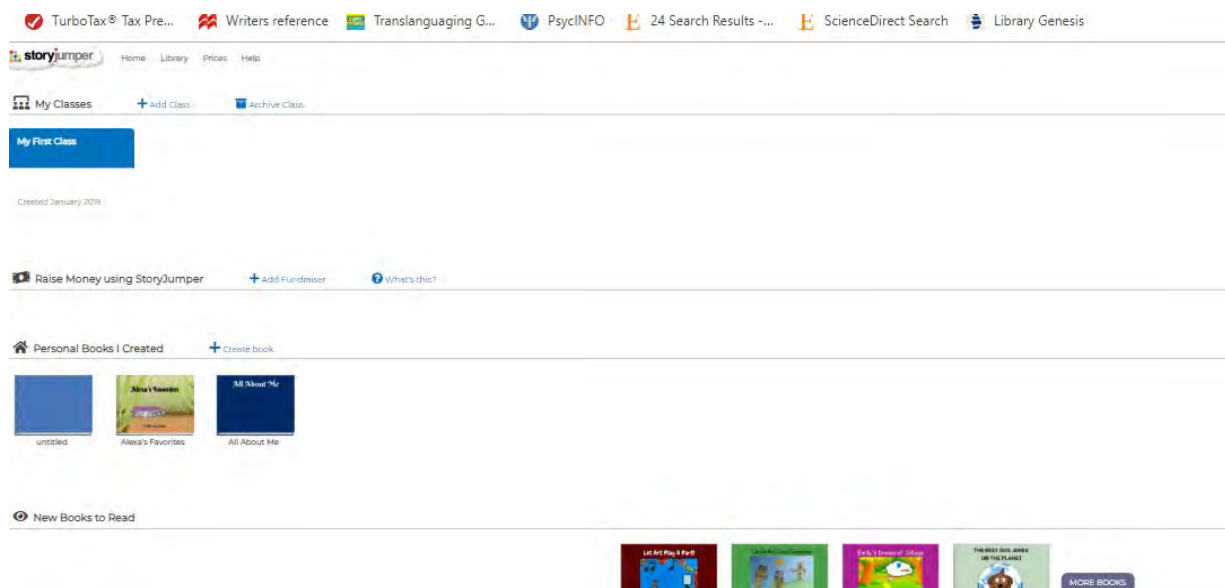
Figure 2. Editing the template

Both student and teacher user can access a repository of sample books on a variety of topics in the library.

To create a book, the user simply need to click on the "+ create book" on the home page and either select a blank template or a template of any book type in the collection of templates. Adding content to the template is straightforward. All the multimodal components that can be added to the story are clearly laid out on the left and bottom of the pages as shown in Figure 2. The user can choose different text box types, props, scenes and photos from the left. By clicking on any of the textbox types, users are presented with a menu bar at the top of the box to choose different font features including, bold, colors, size, type, italics, underline and text alignment. To add props, scenes and photos, the user has the option to either select from the available ones in the application or download from the internet using the search box. Users can also upload photos from their devices. The user can add an audio component to a book by clicking the "add voice" tab right under the pages of the book to record voice. Following voice recording, the user is presented with options at the bottom of the page to add music or sound effects as shown in Figure 3.
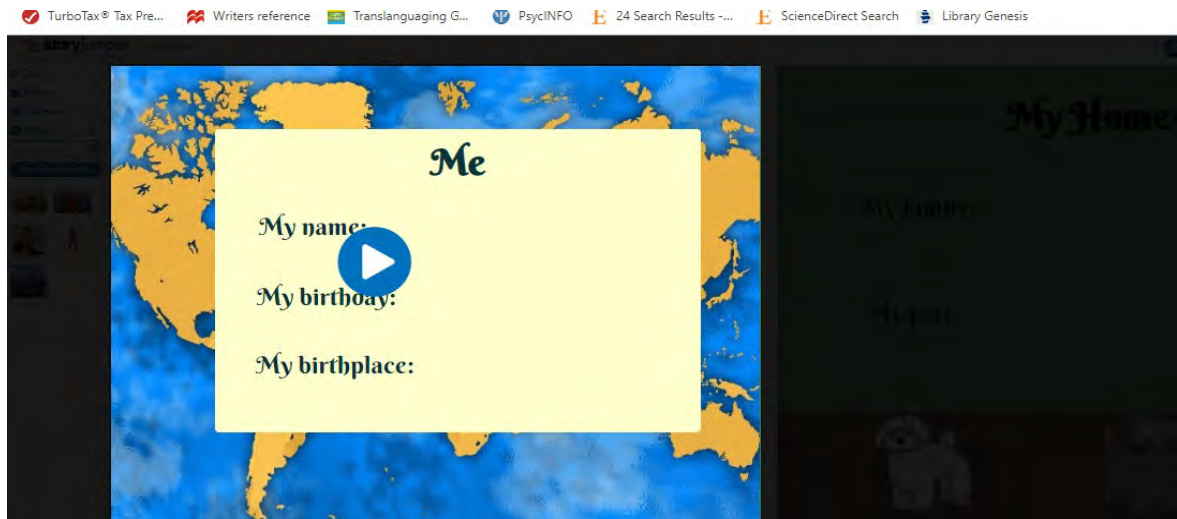
Figure 3. Adding music and sound effects

The application allows collaboration on a book project. By clicking on the "invite" tab, on the top right side of the page, as shown in Figure 2, the user can invite people to edit the same book. On the completion of a book, the user can save the book to a personal library, translate the book to another language, share the book with friends, family and community who can comment on the book, and print/publish the book, as Figure 4 shows.
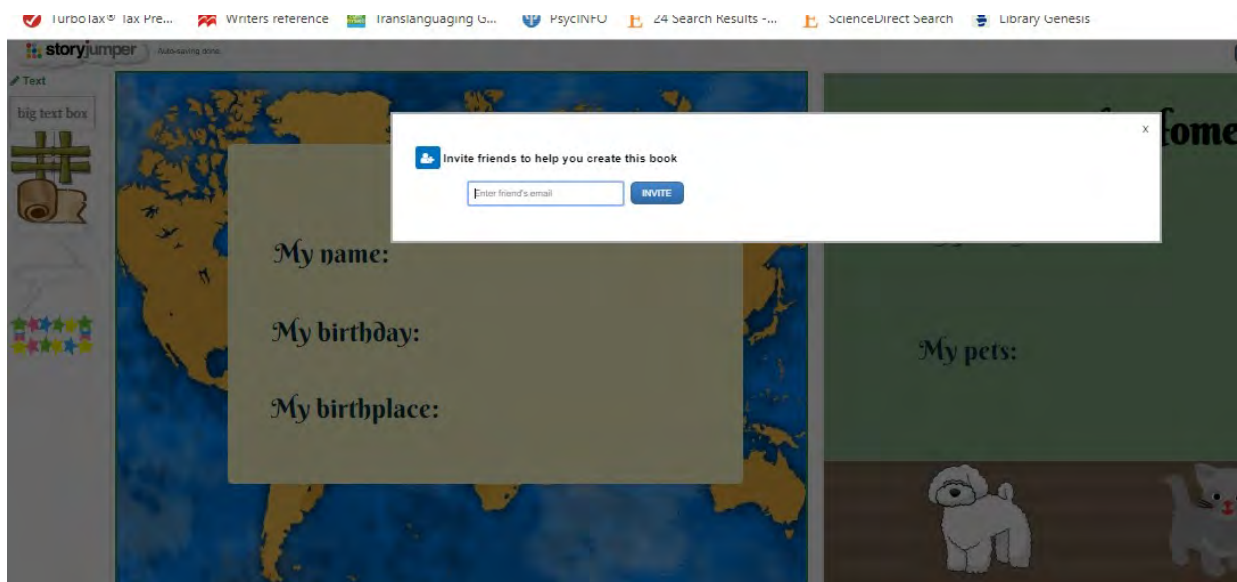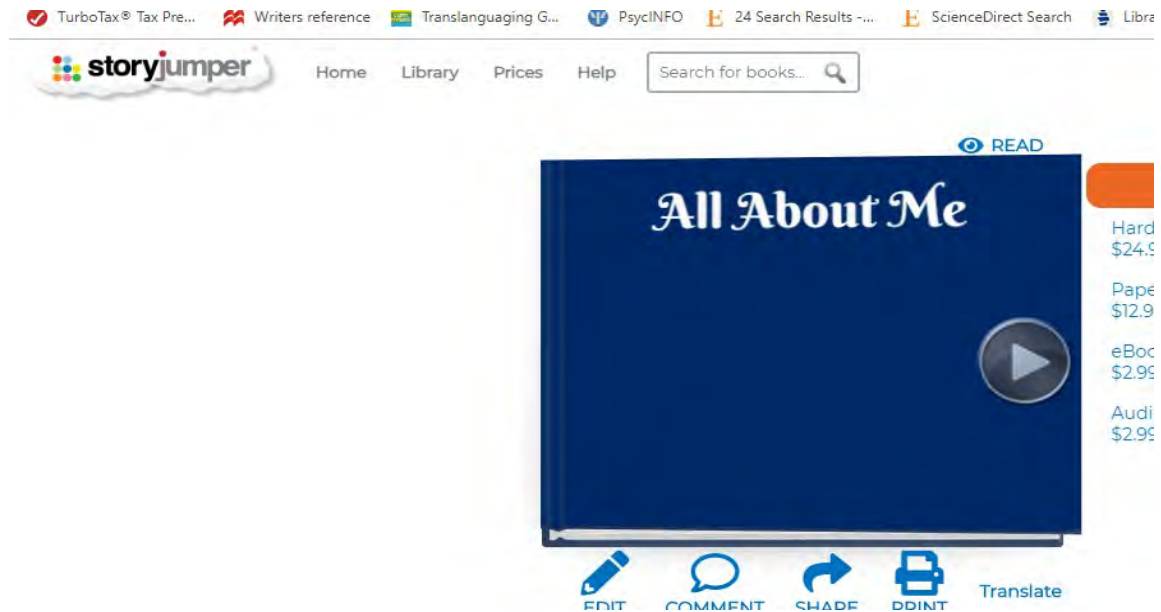
Figure 4. Things to do when the book is complete

The application enables a teacher to create and manage a class. On the class page, as shown in Figure 5, there are three tabs listed at the top. With the "to do" tab, the teacher can print login instructions for students to access the class easily; add students and plan lessons.
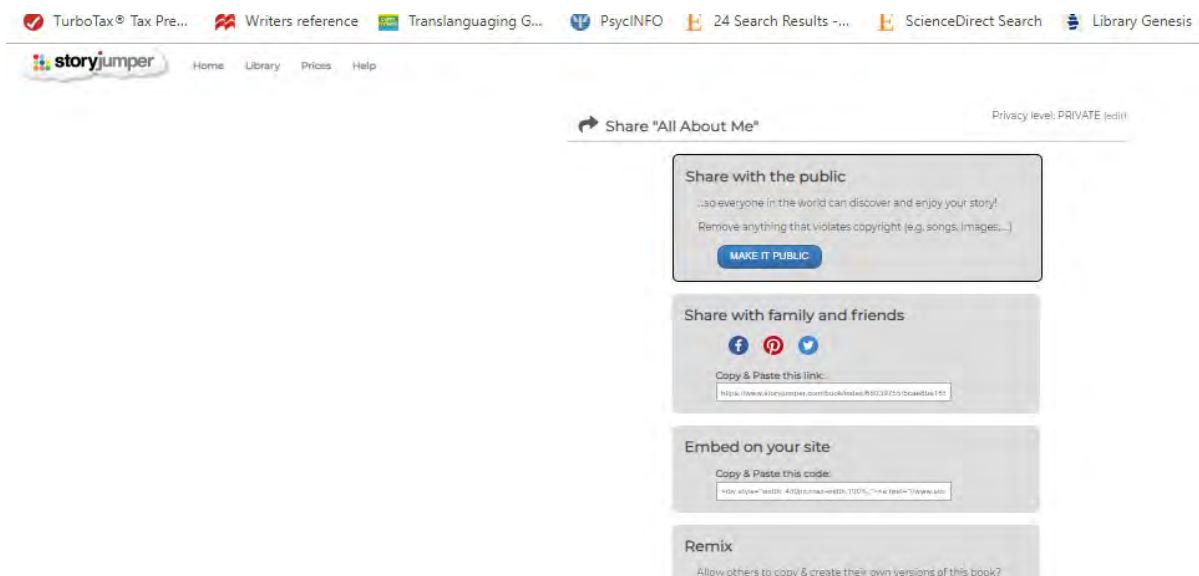

Figure 5. Class page

The "plan lesson" tab leads the teacher to a step-by-step teachers' guide (see F*igure 6) on how to integrate* Storyjumper into the curriculum, and a repository of adaptable lesson plans on a variety of subjects/topics.
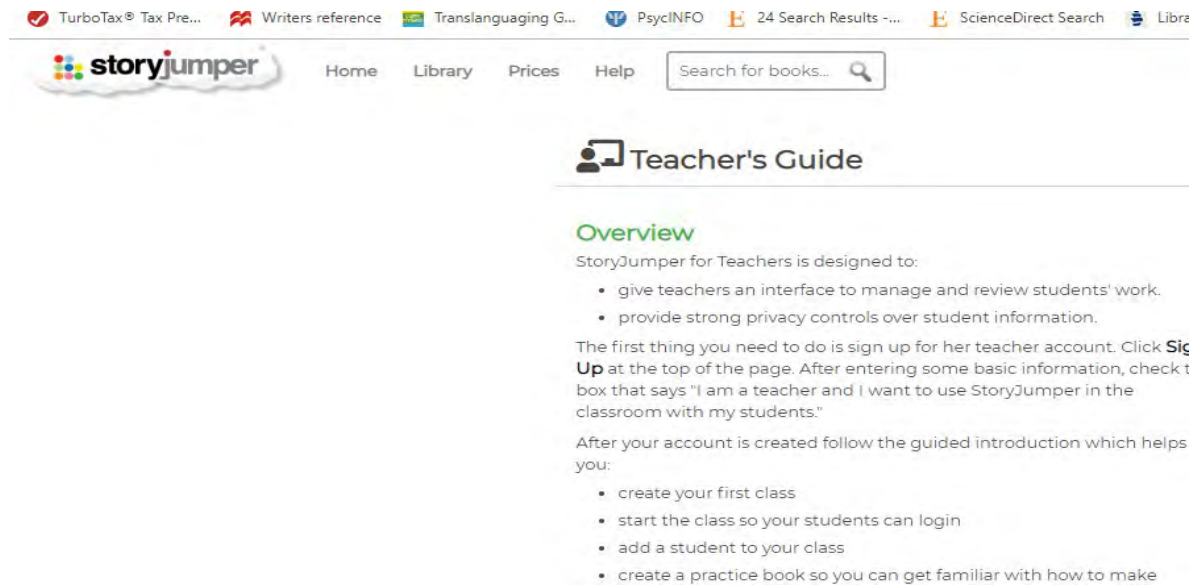

Figure 6. Teacher's guide

By clicking on the first step which is for planning a lesson, the user is provided with a repository of sample lesson plans on different subjects and topics (see Figure 7) that can be modelled to plan a lesson using *Storyjumper*.
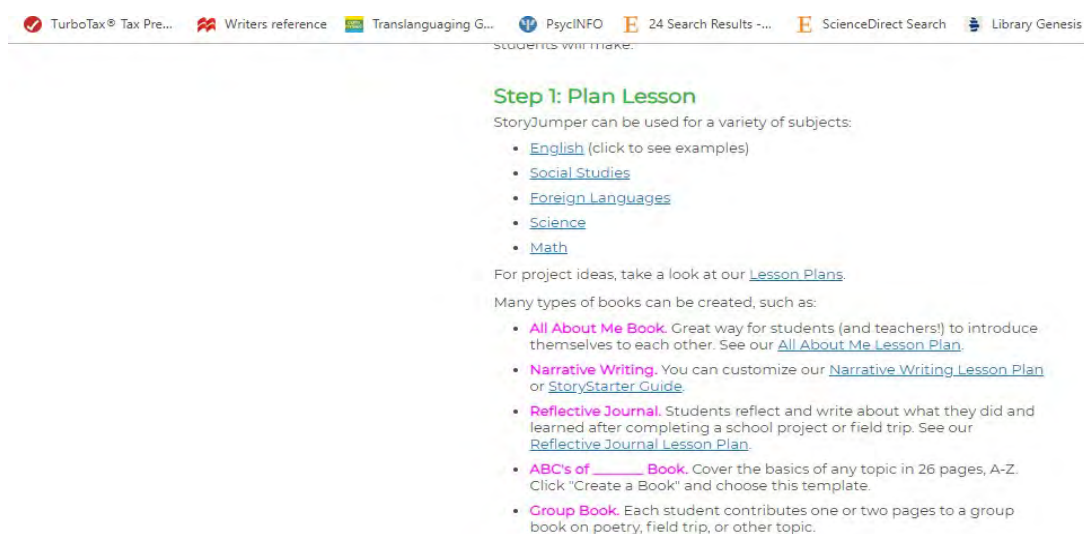

Figure 7. Planning lessons for different subjects

The next tab on the class page, "books", can be used to assign book projects to students. The teacher has the option to create a book template for students to use for a book project, assign group book projects to students for collaboration, and create individual book projects. These are shown in Figure 8.
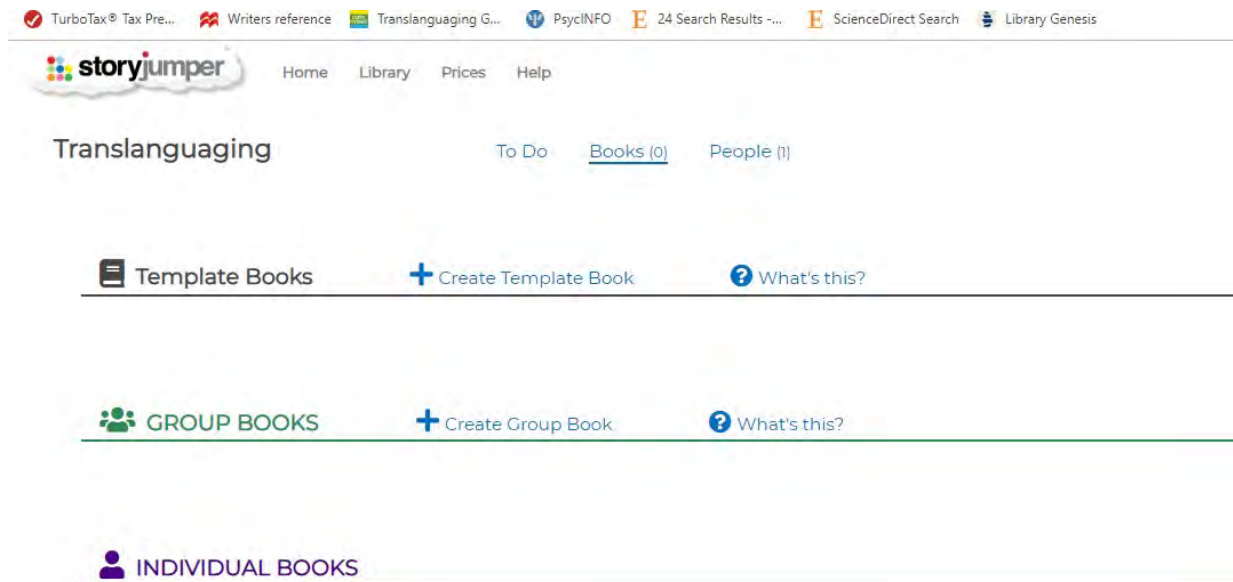

Figure 8. Assigning book projects

4. Evaluation

The diversity of cultures and languages in classroom settings necessitates giving students opportunities to not only access information and meaning in multimodal ways, but also to create meaning in multimodal ways. Moreover, a comprehensive view of literacy includes proficiency development in technological skills as much as language skills. For learners to maximize the opportunities given to them with multimodality, the classroom activities or tasks have to be engaging. Engagement happens when learners are deeply absorbed in and motivated to do classroom activities (Egbert, 2007; 2009). According to Egbert and Shahrokni (2018), there are six principles that underline task engagement including:

Authenticity: A task is authentic when learners perceive that the knowledge gained from it will be relevant to them beyond the four walls of the classroom. When students feel that they can apply gained knowledge in their real world, the task is authentic.

Interest: A task is interesting when it is connected to the lives and experiences of the learners.

Social Interaction: Social interaction is a critical principle of both language learning and engagement. To engage learners in tasks, there should be opportunities for two-way

interactions, conversations and collaborations with their peers, teachers and even audience beyond the classroom.

Challenge and Skill Balance: For a task to engage learners, its difficulty has to be commensurate with students' skills for them to complete it. While a too difficult task could stress and put off students from continuing it, a too simple task could bore them. A balance of challenge and skill is needed to make students stay focused on tasks.

Autonomy: For a task to engage learners, there has to be a room for them to take initiative and responsibility rather than requiring them to always follow some instructions, guidelines and schedule outline by the teacher.

Feedback: Because students have varying skills and work at different paces, they need to be given a good amount of time to complete task and just-in-time feedback to facilitate language learning.

The affordances of *Storyjumper* support learner engagement. I will draw from these mentioned principles as a framework to evaluate *Storyjumper*.

Authenticity: Using *Storyjumper* allows students to use skills and gain knowledge that will be useful to them in their real life. With *Storyjumper*, students are able to share their stories and ideas, and write about different topics in multimodal ways including choosing to write or speak with any language or all the languages they know (translanguaging); collaborating to work on a book, and sharing their works with any audience. These are skills that students need and use in real life contexts. The potential of the software to support these activities and skills makes it engaging. Using *Storyjumper* does not only help students to exploit their skills, but also sharpen and build on their life skills.

Interest: *Storyjumper* has affordances that allow students to make books of different topics that interest them. There are sample books on different topics in the library for students to model anyone that book is connected to their experiences, and templates on different topics that are connected to possible experiences of students that can interest them. Beyond that, the blank template makes it open for students to design books according to their interests. The editing tools of *Storyjumper* allow students to choose any text format, photos, props and scenes that they connect with. Students have the options to write in any language that is connected to their lived experiences. This is where translanguaging plays a role. They can choose to write in one language and add their voice in a different language or write in one language on a page and in a different language on another page. When the books are completely made, they can also be translated into any language of choice. However, this translating function comes only at the end which may not be known to users, indicating a weakness in the design of the application. As

giving students, especially bilinguals the opportunity to write in any language of their choice can engage them in learning (Canagarajah, 2011), the translating feature would have been more engaging to students if it were available earlier when they are in the process of adding content to a book. Students have the options to write individually or in groups and share their work with any audience of their choice depending on their interests. In all, knowing that we have a diverse student body with different interests and experiences and different ways of processing or presenting information, the options *Storyjumper* provides for multimodality makes it engaging.

Social Interaction: Social interaction is a key principle of both language learning and engagement that has become unavoidable in the classrooms of today (Egbert & Shahrokni, 2018). Learners are engaged when they are given opportunities for social interaction. *Storyjumper* supports social interaction in two major ways. The first is that students can share ideas and collaborate on a book project by inviting their peers and teachers. A teacher can also create group projects for students to collaborate on. The second is that students can share their completely made books with audience beyond the classroom who can further comment on their books and could give them ideas to add to their books. They can also video-chat with their collaborators and audience. By these means, students are engaged in two-way interactions and collaboration with not only their peers and teachers, but also their community.

Challenge and Skill Balance: The design of *Storyjumper* is such that allows the teacher to challenge the students and yet ensure that the difficulty levels of the tasks are commensurate with the skill levels of individual students. In the first place, creating a storybook in itself is a good challenge. While there are ready-made templates that can scaffold bookmaking for students who may not yet be able to make a book from the scratch, the application allows the teacher to create book templates of different levels for students to start their book making. The teacher can also choose to ask students to make books from the scratch with a blank template. Moreover, slower students have more time to continue working on their books at home. These options that are embedded in the application make challenge and skill balance achievable and easy to engage students.

Autonomy: *Storyjumper* provide learners with opportunities to not only take initiative, but also to take responsibility for their learning. With *Storyjumper*, students can create books independently. Be it storybooks or topical books, creating a book allows learners to hone their skills, exercise some responsibility and create something. By so doing, they are engaged in the task and the learning opportunities of using *Storyjumper* are maximized.

Feedback: *Storyjumper* has potentials for giving learners on-time feedback which is important for engagement and maximal learning. The teacher can monitor and provide students with feedback during the bookmaking process and upon completion of the book by either editing students' work or commenting on their books. Beside the teacher's feedback, there is the possibility of peer review where students can comment on their peers' books. Beyond the classroom, students can get more feedback on their books from external audience who they share their books with.

5. Conclusion

Storyjumper as a tool that supports pedagogies aligns with the dynamics of today's classrooms in two major ways. On one hand, in the face of cultural and language diversities, students need to be given opportunities to create meaning in multimodal ways including the use of stories, the combination of text, images and audio, and the choice of translanguaging. On the other hand, integrating technology in ways that support learner- engagement is critical to achieve literacy development, especially digital literacy, and language development. Using *Storyjumper* can spark and build higher-order thinking skills. It supports building bi/multilinguals' voices as writers and provides ownership as students are not just consumers of technology, but also, producers of technology (Muhtaris & Ziemke, 2015). Students learn even more when they are provided with diverse opportunities to leverage on technology to work and create knowledge and contribute to the world. According to Egbert and Sharohkni (2018), classroom activities/tasks must be engaging for learners to use the opportunities provided for them. By virtue of the potentials inherent in *Storyjumper* to engage students, learners can maximize the mentioned opportunities for literacy and language development provided for them with *Storyjumper*.

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