Journal of
Creative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching (CPLT)
Volume 8, Number 1, 2020

EXPLORING WRITTEN AND SPOKEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACCURACY VIA DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Nor Nadia Raslee

norna9830@uitm.edu.my

Academy of Language Studies

Universiti Teknologi MARA, Tapah Campus

Tapah Road 35400, Tapah, Perak, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This study was an exploration of Digital Storytelling as a pedagogical tool in the undergraduates' ESL classroom to measure ESL learners' written and spoken English language accuracy. Digital Storytelling has five main stages that allow students to be tested in various soft skills and language skills, specifically, writing and speaking. Over the duration of ten weeks, Digital Storytelling was developed, and data was collected at the end of this period. Seventeen reflective journals and 38 vlogs from 55 participants were analysed for errors based on the measurement for language accuracy which were the T-unit and C-unit. The findings indicated that both written and spoken language accuracy were not impactful following the completion of Digital Storytelling. 13 language accuracy errors were discovered in participants' written language, while, spoken accuracy revealed 12 errors. Accuracy was highly affected by subject-verb agreement errors, vocabulary errors, first language interference, and verb forms. These findings affirmed other literature which found that ESL learners lack mastery in grammar, tenses, sentence structure, and vocabulary, among many others. Conclusively, the literature indicated that the influence of the first language, learners' inhibition, lack of exposure and negative attitudes were among the causes of poor English language accuracy.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, ESL, spoken accuracy, written accuracy, error analysis

ISSN: 1823464-X

INTRODUCTION

English has been part of the Malaysian public-school syllabus as the second language (English as a Second Language) since 1957 with the realization of the Education Ordinance, then reaffirmed in the Education Act 1961 and 1996, and finally issued in the National Education Policy in 1970 (Azman, 2016). Students attend six years of primary school and five years of secondary school. Every week for 11 years, students are exposed to approximately 200 minutes of English at school (Sanusi, Azmin, Abdullah & Kassim, 2019). Unfortunately, the reality in the Malaysian ESL classroom does not reflect the expected levels of proficiency among students. As an example, the ongoing phenomenon of graduate unemployability has been the focus for many empirical studies (such as Hesketh, 2000; Hodges & Burchell, 2003; Hinchcliffe & Jolly, 2009; The Gallup Organization, 2010; Lowden, Hall, Elliot and Lewin, 2011; and Oliver, 2011, as cited in Cheong, Hill, Fernandez-Chung, & Leong, 2016).

At the tertiary education, educators often have certain expectations when dealing with students. These expectations included the notion that students in the institution of higher learning had at least the basic knowledge of the English language, such as mastering grammar, constructing sentences, paragraphs and short essays, and being able to converse at least at a lower intermediate level, before specialising and advancing further in higher learning. Ideally, students who enrolled in higher learning should be able to communicate, and understand English at an intermediate level, as an outcome to their many years of formal schooling.

Unfortunately, the reality in public universities nowadays is often the opposite. There is a disparity in students' actual capability and level of knowledge, with the expectations towards them. The purpose of this case study was to explore the extent of a task-based pedagogical tool, which is Digital Storytelling on ESL learners' written and spoken English language accuracy. The investigation was carried out based on a task-based language teaching syllabus (TBLT). Over a duration of nine to ten weeks, participants will go through the stages in Digital Storytelling. This research is guided by the following research questions in order to measure ESL learners' written and spoken English language accuracy:

1a) How does the implementation of Digital Storytelling enhance learners' written accuracy?
1b) How does implementation of Digital Storytelling enhance learners' spoken accuracy?

Digital Storytelling as a Research Method

The Value of Digital Storytelling as a Research Method

The creation of digital storytelling usually reflects the perception and experiences of its creators, or more aptly in this study, its participants. Its creators control their content and how they intend the content to be shared. Digital storytelling reflects what the participants intended to share, represent, and inform audience through their stories (Flicker & MacEntee, 2020). Hence, with the opportunity of creating their own digital storytelling, audience and researchers are allowed a peek into the participants' visual narratives and see the world through their eyes.

The internet has been a catalyst in the recognition of digital storytelling as a research instrument, a tool for language development, and soft skills, on the whole. Additionally, social

media and video sharing websites such as YouTube and Vimeo allow for sharing, expanding, and popularising such content with ease. Youth today, specifically, range between proficient to expert users in visual communication and literacies because digital content plays such a huge part of their lives (Flicker & MacEntee, 2020). They are regularly exposed to digital content that oftentimes; youths can skilfully create and manipulate digital content and literature. Thus, the implementation of digital storytelling build on these trends and norms amongst participants. Digital storytelling helps enrich participants' aptitudes in developing content and engaging with the content and popular culture.

Digital Storytelling in The Classroom

The process of developing Digital Storytelling included the five main stages of brainstorming, storyboarding, scriptwriting, rehearsing and presenting. These processes are iterative, depending on many factors such as the students' proficiency, teamwork, or the complexity of their content, which required more attention and detail. In other words, weaker students may find themselves repeating certain stages. In the pilot study, students were found to repeat scriptwriting the most. Generally, students could produce up to three drafts of script due to language errors. Commonly, nearing the end stages of developing their Digital Storytelling, participants required less facilitation.

First stage in Digital Storytelling: Brainstorming

The first step to create Digital Storytelling began with the brainstorming process. About one to two lessons should be allocated for the process of dividing students into groups of three to four persons, to introduce and familiarise students to the activity, and to allow for group discussions. The discussion sessions should include the processes of identifying a story, sharing of ideas and opinions with each other and roughly, developing the storyline.

The duration of Digital Storytelling in an educational setting might vary. For instance, Girmen, Özkanal and Dayan (2019) suggested that the length of Digital Storytelling could be subjective, depending on the proficiency level of the participants, while Dewi, Magfiroh, Nurkhalisa and Dwijayanti (2019) recommended that the length of a Digital Storytelling ranged between 10 and 15 minutes. In this study, in consideration of the objective of the study, and the sampling, the ideal duration of participants' Digital Storytelling was between 15 to 20 minutes. This duration included the music, sound effect and any other visual and auditory content. Additionally, a suitable duration that was not too short or too lengthy would allow for proper elaboration and development of the plot and storyline.

Second stage in Digital Storytelling: Storyboarding

Once the students have the general idea of their topic/theme and storyline, they should start developing their storyboard. A storyboard is a combination of written or imagery depiction of the core elements that existed in a Digital Storytelling (Dewi et al., 2019). Therefore, each group's storyboard would be different than the rest, depending on their plot. Every plot should consist of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. Consequently, storyboarding would help identify any plot holes that students might have overlooked. Storyboarding is a fundamental part of the creative process, as it allows students to visualize the storyline and how

their Digital Storytelling will come together through images and texts. Most importantly, it helps to provide an estimation of the resource students need to gather, any cost they may bear, software they may need to master and any external help and guidance they may need. Essentially, creating the storyboard could take up four days to a week. For participants developing Digital Storytelling for the first time, more time may need to be allocated for this process. Instructors play an important role in helping to develop the storyboard, such as acting as a sounding board, particularly in asking students to justify and clarify the main ideas of the story. Instructors also act as a facilitator in organizing the story chronologically and logically as students might sometimes miss certain aspects. Once the storyboards are completed, students' tasks are to plan and structure the visual elements in their story, namely the transition between scenes, animations, images, music, and sound effects. Software such as *Microsoft PowerPoint*, *Photo Story* or *Storyboardthat* are cost-effective, practical and user-friendly for such purposes.

Third stage in Digital Storytelling: Scriptwriting

The next stage is the preparation of a script. A script refers to the predictable oral exchanges for social situations such as greeting, apologizing, complimenting, or inviting. Scripts are culturally and socially embedded and they have a structure, pattern, and script even when uttered (Nugent, 2020). Therefore, the script prepared should have certain qualities, and issues or themes that the audience can relate to. Scripts should be perused for suitability in length, propriety, and most importantly, language errors. The pilot study revealed that students tend to produce lengthy scripts that would be nearly impossible for them to recall during presentation. Participants will normally be anxious; however, this will test the participants' reasoning and language capability quite extensively by requiring them to recall from their language bank and construct their own utterances when memory fails them.

Fourth stage in Digital Storytelling: Rehearsing

Rehearsing is carried out during students' personal free time to inculcate the element of surprise, as well as to eliminate interferences from the instructor or other classmates. Students also tended to be nervous since Digital Storytelling is a form of public speaking. Thus, rehearsing should be done privately to better prepare them. Additionally, there should also be a plan for contingencies such as an absent group member or technical difficulties. Rehearsing was an important part of preparation that most students tended to overlook and take lightly. The phrase, practice makes perfect, is very important because it was observed during the pilot study that students often did not expect problems. Thus, they were not prepared for unexpected surprises. Rehearsing is also crucial to estimate important details such as the duration and the necessary equipment or prop that will be needed.

Fifth stage in Digital Storytelling: Presenting

Students' morale was at the highest during presentations. Each member of the class, even the most reluctant participant, would be supportive of everyone else's presentation. Undeniably, this group dynamic was what the researcher valued the most, as it was a morale boost in so many aspects such as public speaking and teamwork. Jordan (2019, p. 11) posited on the Digital Storytelling experience, 'teachers observed that students were learning without realizing'. Digital Storytelling allows students the opportunities to develop an all-around skillset in an environment

of meaningful learning. The use of technology in education contributes to the growth in the various skills that students possess, while also assisting students in mastering spelling, sentence formation, and forming a whole body of texts that they previously perceived as impossible.

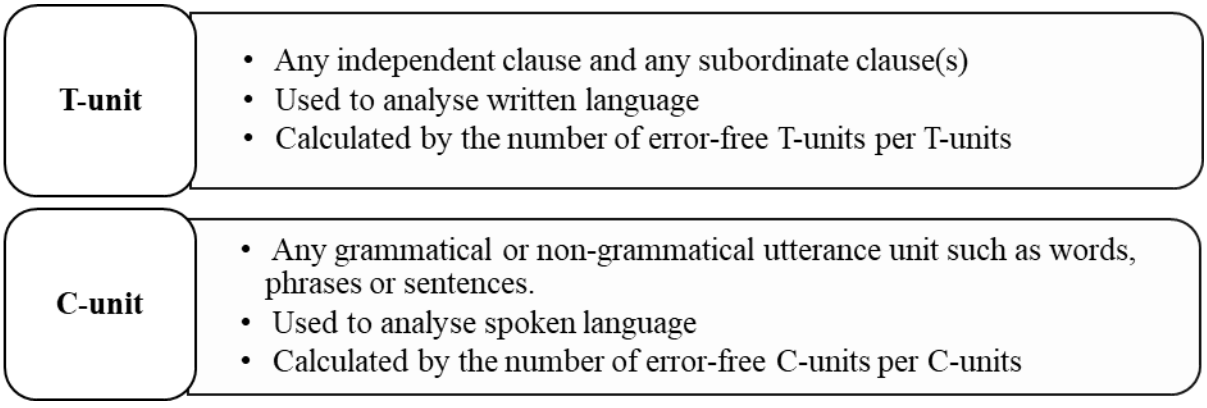
Measuring Language Proficiency

Language proficiency is measured using T-unit, and C-unit (Kim, Nam & Lee, 2016). The most extensively used unit of analysis to evaluate language production is the T-unit (Foster, Tonkyn & Wigglesworth, 2000 in Kim et al., 2016, p. 151). T-unit is a 'minimally terminal unit' referring to an independent clause and any subordinate clause(s) (Kim et al., 2016, p. 151). Sentence clauses can be attached together with conjunctions, whether they are coordinating, subordinating, correlative. Even if two independent clauses are connected with any coordinating conjunction, it still counts as one T-unit. The 'C-unit refers to a word, a phrase, a sentence, or a grammatical/non-grammatical utterance unit' (Pica, Holliday, Lewis & Morganthaler, 1989 in Kim et al., 2016, p. 151). Accordingly, certain spoken language aspects that are not analysable through the T-unit, such as omissions, additions, interjections, and incomplete clauses are analysed with the C-unit (Kim et al., 2016).

Written and spoken language production would commonly have different structures. Researchers like Pica et al., (1989 in Kim et al., 2016), and Foster and Skehan (1996) recommended the use of the C-unit to measure spoken language production. The boundaries in spoken language could be hard to identify and structurally different. For instance, spoken language is synonymous with omissions, partial sentences, use of interjections (wow, yeah), and acronyms (LOL, OMG, FYI). Figure 1 displays the summary of the two measuring units for language accuracy in this study.

Figure 1

Units of analysis for written and spoken language



Limitations of this study

The researcher only focused on the accuracy measure of written and spoken language. Other measures of language performance included complexity and fluency. Between the three measures, accuracy was the most crucial for beginner and intermediate learners (Allen & Waugh, 2016). Exposing learners to accuracy could limit ambiguity, communication breakdown, fossilization and refine learners' communication skills. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the other measures were of less importance. However, in the context of this research, the accuracy measure was seen as the most viable and applicable to the selection of participants who were among the English second language learners.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Participants

The participants selected for this study consist of 55 undergraduates in a local, public university. These participants were from two different faculties, namely Accountancy and Applied Sciences. For the first three semesters of their undergraduate studies, they were required to enrol in English class as preparatory courses for their diploma. These English classes include intermediate skills in language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). There are 14 weeks in a semester which include approximately three weeks of semester break, tests, assessments and class presentations. Hence, Digital Storytelling was adopted into the syllabus where the stages include elements of working in a group setting, and integration of language skills. The implementation of Digital Storytelling was stretched into a period of 10 weeks in order for participants to produce Digital Storytelling that is substantial in content. Above all, it aims to make the experience more meaningful and memorable for them. Students were placed into groups of three to four students per group. Therefore, among 55 participants in this study, there were eighteen groups of students completing their Digital Storytelling.

Instruments

The data to explore and measure participants' written and spoken accuracy were collected via vlog and journals. After completing their Digital Storytelling (post-presentation), participants can choose to record their reflections via a vlog or journal. Participants were given one week to record their reflection based on questions were given. Participants were advised to think and reflect as honestly as possible. Seventeen participants chose to share their thoughts via reflective journaling, meanwhile, 38 participants reflected via vlogs. Some recorded up to three videos and the shortest vlog was approximately 7 minutes.

Overall, participants shared and elaborated more, reflected deeper and were less guarded on vlogs. Comparatively, journals were less elaborative and shorter, more succinct and generally, less informative. Vlogs were a great way to engage the digital natives. They are more familiar with interacting with digital tools such as vlogs and online journaling as represented by digital sources such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and others. Microblogging through channels such as Twitter is also a norm among youths today.

Table 1 lists the questions that were provided to students to guide their reflection process. These questions also expand concurrently in terms of task complexity, with the participants' experience in completing their Digital Storytelling.

Table 1

List of questions for personal reflection

No.	Questions
1	Do you enjoy working with other people? Why/why not?
2	How do you rate your commitment in completing a task in a group work?
3	When you are given a task in a group work, how serious were you in completing it?
4	Did you think you were given opportunities to voice your thoughts and opinions in group work?
5	What are the things that you wish were different in this group work?
6	What do you like about this group work?
7	What do you dislike about this group work?
8	Was Digital Storytelling an easy or difficult task to undertake? Why?
9	There are five main stages in Digital Storytelling, which are brainstorming, storyboarding, scriptwriting, rehearsing, and presenting. When you reflect on the different tasks in Digital Storytelling, what do you think you improve?
10	How is Digital Storytelling different from other language tasks you did before?
11	What are the challenges? How did you solve/overcome them?
12	What do you like about Digital Storytelling?
13	What do you dislike about Digital Storytelling?
14	Before you first started Digital Storytelling, what was your assumption about the task?
15	Did your assumptions change as you completed the task? Did you change in a positive way or otherwise?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Accuracy of Written Language

The data for written language consisted of the analysis of 17 journal entries. From these 30 sets of documents which amounted to 39,747 words, the total number of errors made by participants were 3512 errors. The minimum word length was 253 words per entry, while the maximum word length was 492 words per entry. The unit of analysis for language production is the T-unit; an independent clause and any subordinate clause(s) that it is attached to (Kim et al., 2016, p. 151). Hence, accuracy was measured by the number of error-free T-units per T-units. The accuracy in written language was 3,956 /8,517, which means that the total number of error-free T-units were 3,956.

Table 2 lists the hierarchy of errors as analysed from the transcribed journals. The errors were in subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, vocabulary, tenses, vocabulary, direct translation from first language, preposition, cohesive devices, articles, case markers, and coherence and cohesion, misspellings, apostrophe, modals and be verbs. In brief, the document

analysis process has identified 13 reoccurring linguistic errors committed by ESL learners in their written language. Participants' interactions were recorded verbatim and marked with numbered indicators such as [1], [2] and so on. It is important to note that these interactions were littered with predominant grammar errors, slangs, as well as, spelling errors to indicate that the errors in participants' reflection were verbatim.

Table 2

Total errors in written language

No.	Errors identified in written language	Frequency	Percentage
1	Subject-verb agreement (SVA)	945	27%
2	Sentence structure	678	20%
3	Vocabulary	646	19%
4	Tenses	628	18%
5	Direct translation from first language	134	4%
6	Prepositions	99	3%
7	Cohesive devices	87	3%
8	Articles	76	2%
9	Case markers	54	2%
10	Coherence and cohesion	54	2%
11	Misspellings	32	1%
12	Apostrophe	27	1%
13	Modals and be verbs	52	1%
Total		3512	100%

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement (henceforth SVA) errors were the most consistent type of error. As many as 945 (27%) errors occurred. SVA errors were detrimental to both written and spoken production in the English language. SVA could be rather tricky for students because the rule of subject-verb agreement does not exist in their first language, which is Malay. For example, students had difficulties in assigning verbs to adverb of frequency such as 'most of the time' in [1], or to collective nouns such as 'pool of ideas' in [2]. In [3] and [4], participants also experienced SVA errors when writing long sentences.

[1] The challenge I think *most of the times* is that I can't seem to understand or comprehend some bombastic words or slangs usually used in movies.

[2] When I write, my pool of ideas always *dry* up.

[3] Group tasks usually will have to present in front of class and to many people which will make myself feel more confident and *does not afraid* in communicating with people.

[4] My *speaking skills are* not so bad, I just need to polish *up* them a bit. *Having a lot of presentation* definitely *helps* me improve my speaking skills.

Sentence Structure

Six hundred and seventy-eight (19%) errors were committed in syntax or sentence structure. There were mainly three types of sentence structure errors, which are run-off sentences, fragmented sentences, and rambling sentences. [1] and [2] are examples of run-on sentences, which are two (or more) sentences that are not separated with punctuation marks or joined with any conjunction. Rambling sentences such as in [3] occurred when students pair too many clauses, both independent and dependent in their sentences.

[1] In my opinion, I am not really good in English *as* I usually speaks in my mother tongue daily *plus* people around me make Bahasa Malaysia as their native language especially my family and friends.

[2] Firstly, I always find that it is hard for me to recognise the real words especially when I listen to English songs and English movies without subtitles *as* I am quite weak when the speaker speaks as fast as lightning and there are also a few accents those I could not catch.

[3] Describing my proficiency in English, in terms of years of use and study, I have studied English literally almost 13 years as my argument is not terribly useful at all because learning and practicing are two different things unless if I were studying in England, I would immerse in their culture and live there for several months with nothing to do but to work with the language for a several months it would be useful to me to be good or great in English.

Vocabulary

There were 646 (19%) vocabulary errors. In [1], the student placed words that made the context understandable, but the vocabulary errors made the sentence faulty. Besides vocabulary errors, there was also an error in the use of perfect tense (*have see* instead of *have seen*). Words like ‘world’, ‘every study’ and ‘100% using English’ were used to get their meaning across. Perhaps one of the most serious occurrences of vocabulary errors is in [2], where poor vocabulary made sentences became unnecessarily lengthy, redundant, and confusing.

[1] Now, when I am in the university world, I have see the importance in mastering English language because every study or learning in class, 100% using English.

[2] It's been 11 years I have been learning my English formally in school but sometime I don't feel good enough and still feel of lack knowledge when it’s come to speak in English. However, I start noticing that I slowly improve my English when I started to *hook up* on watching English movie. On top of that, English subtitle will help me when I do not understand what the actor said *for a certain word*. Furthermore, having a foreigner as my best friend really is the best way to learn. Due to, *mostly of my peer and my family member speak in our native language* so I did not practice my English with them. Meanwhile, he will correct my grammar if I'm wrong or give me alots of confidence to speak. Moreover, *dictionary is really vital for me to have so I can easily find the definition by searching the word or Google it.* I believe if I keep learning without giving up or not feeling shy to seek *someone else help who is better than us we will dominate our second language English.*

ISSN: 1823464-X

Tenses

As many as 628 (18%) errors in tenses were made. Tenses could be particularly challenging for students because not only did they have to consider the tense, but also the aspect. In the first clause of [1], the student used simple past tense and perfect progressive tense, which was immediately followed with simple future tense and simple past tense again. In [2], the student confused between present perfect tense and simple past tenses. Another recurring error in [3], tenses was in the use of perfect tenses, where the student was unclear of when and what verb form to apply.

[1] The challenges that I need to face in writing is I mistakenly *used the grammar and vocabulary* but whenever *I have done writing, I will definitely check* my grammar and vocabulary in case I *did not realised* my mistakes earlier.

[2] This challenges *has happened* when *I took place* in listening test *during I was* in semester one.

[3] In addition, the challenges that I face in reading in English is losing my focus while reading a passage. *I have been reading* passage and realised halfway through that I have no idea what I have just read. Instead of paying attention to the text, sometimes I *am thinking* about what I am going to do later and what some friend said.

Direct Translation from First Language

A large portion of the participants resorted to directly translating from their first language when their English failed them. The frequency of errors in direct translation from first language were 134 errors (4%). Second language learners tend to transfer elements of their first language such as forms, meaning and culture into the second language in their attempts to use the language (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). The difficulties in phonology, vocabulary and grammar that students faced in their second language were often due to the interference of habits from first language (Beardsmore, 1982 in Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015, p. 2113).

[1] admitted that he pronounced English words with a Malay accent and his written language particularly the sentence structure and word order, was also influenced by his first language. Likewise, in [2], the student stated that he preferred to translate into their first language, even while reading English materials. In [3], this student who possessed a low proficiency in English could be seen struggling to deliver his message, thus he resorted to translating directly from his first language.

[1] I believe this incompelency is partially caused by my Malay heritage which made me pronounce the words using similar to Malay words pronunciation.

[2] Other than that, reading books in English is language also *be* one of the challenges that I need to face. When I *reading* English books, *I prefer to directly translate into Malay language.* I also have a lack of knowledge about *the synonym* in English.

[3] As well as, my weakness to comprehend with a new word since my grammar it's not that powerful…This because of I straight away feel embrased and my self-esteem become low when I necessarily speak in this language. A mix feeling of scared what I say is wrong start to fill in my blank mind that I can't fight off.

Accuracy of Spoken Language

Written and spoken language place a different cognitive load on its users. In spoken language, natural utterances that did not impede the meaning or message intended were not considered errors. Such natural utterances included 'clause duplications' as an effect of repetitions, adjustments or reforming (Kim et al., 2016, p. 162). In the sample, the entire utterance is one C-unit, which is one independent clause connected with dependent clauses. The italicised clauses were the errors that were identified and registered as input in the framework of error analysis, while the underlined clause was what Kim et al. (2016, p. 162) referred to as clause duplications.

ONE C-UNIT

The challenge is for me I think aaa I'm a shy person *how do I overcome* and *solve* I think I just do it, I don't look at the audience I just do the work with my teammate and group or group I just aaa *at the when I presenting* I just aaa at certain part I just certain part *I just spontan and I think it perceive well*.

To guide error identification in spoken language, the researcher adopted the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay and Burt (1982). Errors are organised into four categories which were omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. This taxonomy considers the cognitive process in students' attempts at reconstructing their mother tongue and the target language in communication (Dulay & Burt, 1982). Table 3 presents the four elements in the taxonomy that were added to supplement the errors identification process. In spoken language, there were some errors that are not sufficiently captured through error analysis because of the nature of spoken language that is predominant with clause duplications. Hence, it is felt that the adoption of the Surface Strategy Taxonomy can help improve the process of error analysis in spoken language.

Table 3

Description of types of errors in Surface Strategy Taxonomy

Category	Example	Explanation
1 Misinformation The application of the wrong form of morphemes or structure. Errors committed by regularization or alternating forms.	I did this by spin the handle. Instead of: I did this by spinning the handle.	Missing *-ing* form
2 Addition The addition of unnecessary word(s). Errors committed by double marking, regularization or simple addition.	We discuss (about) our homework.	Addition of the unnecessary preposition about
3 Misordering The error in the order of words thus affecting the form of the utterance.	Whom did you sent the letter? Instead of: To whom did you send the letter?	Prepositions are incorrectly placed
4 Omission The absence of a necessary word or form in an utterance.	Why do you always look (at) me?	Omission of the preposition at in the sentence

The analysis process for spoken language continued with the process of transcribing and analysing the 38 vlogs for language errors. The accuracy of spoken language based on 38 vlogs was 10,996 /49,067. Table 4 displays the types of errors that were identified in the spoken language data corpus. The 12 errors identified in spoken language were arranged hierarchically from the highest frequency to the lowest frequency. In total, there were 10,996 errors committed in 12 different areas.

Table 4

Total errors in spoken language

Errors identified in spoken language		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Misinformation	1,989	18%
2.	Subject-verb agreement	3,366	31%
3.	Verb form	1,341	12%
4.	Addition	1,143	10%
5.	Word form	1,071	10%
6.	Misordering	837	8%
7.	Omission	756	7%
8.	Direct translation from first language	738	7%
9.	Cohesion	666	6%
10.	Pronoun	585	5%
11.	Preposition	324	3%
12.	Question form	169	2%
Total		10,996	100%

Misinformation

The most occurring error in spoken language was misinformation which were 1,989 (18%) errors. Misinformation meant that the students were misinformed about the language forms that they should have applied in the context. Hence, when misinformation happened, the students would most probably commit errors due to the gap between the grammatically accurate and correct form, and what they thought was correct and acceptable. Misinformation errors happened when students committed errors in morphemes such as in [1], as well as in [2], where the student attempted to refer to their improved language proficiency. Unfortunately, the student in [2] kept confusing the correct verb to use by adding auxiliary verbs such as *have* and *was* in front of the verb *improved*. He also confused the meaning of the words improvised and improved, which happened at least twice in the utterances.

[1] I want to improve uh my *talking* skills, I want to get used *to speak English -speak English.*

[2] I have improvised- I have improved my English in terms of language and soft skills…my- ah English was improved In terms of language, communicating, and soft skill, all the other stuff. Because I did a lot of work using English will improve- It was improvised by itself.

Students typically confused the words *avoid* and *prevent*, as in [3]. In [4], this student confused the words *make* and *do*, *in terms* and *in the term*, and the comparative adjective: *more nice* instead of *nicer*. Other instances of students confusing the comparative adjectives were in [5] and [6].

[3] We need to have good English knowledge *to avoid incorrect grammar*, incorrect tenses used and many other things so I think uh I- I improve my grammar and tenses *used* in

scriptwriting.

[4] If we *do mistake*, the lecturer will ah say "Ok we *have mistake* here *in the term* of grammar, we should do this kind of thing, which is *in the term* of language *it is more nice* than if we use *this kind of words* rather than this word.

[5] So, it is *more easier* for me to gain more ideas.

[6] I enjoy working with them because, they can help me and they delegate task *more easily* uh to *its earlier completion*.

Subject-Verb Agreement

SVA occurred in both written and spoken language. The grammatical rule of assigning the suffix *-s* to singular verbs in the present tense was almost alien in many students' first language. There were 1,377 errors (13%) committed in SVA. Students struggle with SVA even in simple utterances. In longer utterances, such as in [4] errors in SVA were more glaring.

[1] We…have *so much thing* to do.

[2] There are a lot of *process* and we cannot do it all at once.

[3] It may- *it have many positive result* to student- students' performance so it needs to be continue.

[4] …it's not like we *don't* give him the opportunity to talk, it's just that *he refuse* to talk. On the presentation day, he did talk but *he just don't memorize* the script. I asked him to memorize the script but he didn't, but that's ok at least *he do* it...

Verb Form

Errors in verb form were closely related to SVA errors. There were 1,341 errors (12%.) committed in verb forms. The English simple sentence structure consisted of subject + predicate and most often, students confused the verb forms that they used. Students continued to struggle with perfect tenses such as in [1] to [3]. In [3], there were errors in the use of perfect tenses as illustrated in *have been improve* and *have been up*, but there was also self-correction where the student self-corrected (*have been increasing*). In [4] to [6], verb form errors were consistent; the suffix *-ing* was unnecessarily assigned to verbs such as *I will focusing, when we working,* and *if we only working.*

[1] I will make sure that all the work *have done*…

[2] …I feel like digital storytelling *have been take* a lot of time.

[3] My skills in doing script writing *have been improve*, to be honest. For my ah soft skills…I think that my level of confidence *have been up*, have been increasing day by day.

[4] I *will focusing* 100% to the task.

[5] *When we working* with other people, ah will make us and then ah other person will meet different kind of attitude *…If we only working* with same team work, working with same person we will not make a new friends.

[6] *They helping each other* to complete the task uh and *they're help me* in script writing and storyboarding, and they help me how to pronounce uhh words correctly.

Addition

Addition refers to students' unnecessary addition of words to their sentences. There were 1,071 errors (10%) committed. Generally, most students struggle with the use of articles. In [1] to [3], the students added the unnecessary addition: *the different task* (instead of *different tasks*), *in the term* (instead of *in terms*).

[1] I wish that ah that *the* different task delegated to me.

[2] *In the term* of language I manage to know, um more about grammar.

[3] If we do mistake, the lecturer will ah say "Ok we have mistake here *in the term* of grammar, we should do this kind of thing, which is *in the term* of language…

[4] and [5] provide examples of students' lack of knowledge in the correct application of auxiliary verbs. The addition of *are* in *we are learn our grammar* and *am* in *I am very enjoy* were unnecessary and redundant. Undoubtedly, these errors affected the accuracy of the language.

[4] When ah we pass out our script to the lecturer sometimes rejected our script…*it's a kind* of way of *we are learn our grammar*.

[5] *I am very enjoy* working with other people in a group, because ahh I can learn a lot from my group members.

Discussion

There is indeed a need for greater accuracy in the participants' English language as the level of written and spoken accuracy were insignificant. This is especially considering the fact that the participants were undergraduates in the public university, who had attended 11 formal years of formal schooling, their proficiency was severely lacking. In response to the research questions, the researcher found that although the accuracy of written language was insignificant, the inaccuracies identified within written language were not as poorly as in spoken language. Inaccuracies in written language were severely affected by basic errors in SVA. Similarly, the accuracy of spoken language was most affected by errors in misinformation, consisting of a mix of SVA and verb form errors. In the case of spoken language, a notable amount of errors could occur even in short utterances, where one error could include many others, or led to more serious errors. For instance, errors in misinformation included errors in identifying the correct

vocabulary and word form to use, errors in structure which contributed to lack of cohesion, and overuse of conjunctions and cohesive devices.

In the context of Digital Storytelling, language accuracy of the participants did not improve as significantly when compared with the duration of time that it took to produce Digital Storytelling. This was supported by Sasayama who noted in his study that regardless of the task difficulty, accuracy in spoken language was noticeably lesser than written language (Sasayama, 2011, p. 119). Khan (2005) found that upper secondary students in a Malaysian public school were weak in grammar despite their years of schooling. Lower secondary Malaysian ESL learners committed consistent errors in tenses, prepositions, as well as, subject-verb agreement (Azimah, 2005). Errors such as spelling errors, incorrect use of prepositions, structural verb errors, concord or SVA, and tenses were synonymous with lower secondary Malaysian ESL learners (Ho Peng, 1976). Likewise, errors in tenses, word choice and use of prepositions were among the most frequently committed linguistic errors among Malaysian secondary school students, and one reoccurring error among Malaysian ESL learners was errors in subject-verb agreement (Vahdatinejad, 2008). Undeniably, SVA errors were caused by first language interference since Malaysian ESL learners' mother tongue, commonly Bahasa Malaysia does not have this linguistic feature. Therefore, it was unsurprising that this kind of error persisted even until undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Stapa & Izahar, 2010, p. 16).

The second most occurring error in written language was sentence structure error where participants produced stilted, fragmented or run-on sentences. Syntax errors might originate from problems in tenses, vocabulary, word form, prepositions, articles, cohesive devices and more. In a study among Arabic ESL learners in the United States, Atawneh (1994) found that they faced consistent syntactic problems in tenses, particularly perfect tenses, construction of relative clauses, and use of prepositions. Similarly, Zughoul (2002) reported other syntactical errors faced by ESL learners, such as errors in noun and verb phrases, which were existent in the present research as well. Participants in the study faced difficulties in using prepositions, articles, case markers, apostrophes, modals and be verbs correctly. Unfortunately, these smaller elements were what formed the bigger picture that determined correct sentence structure, tenses and cohesion.

What is apparent in the errors produced in both written and spoken accuracy is the influence of participants' first language in impeding their English proficiency. Mukundan and Saadullah (2013) investigated the use of modals in argumentative essays among upper secondary school students, and although students were able to use the modals correctly, the modals used were very limited and repetitive. Additionally, the modals were sometimes inaccurate and resulted in different meanings. Mukundan and Saadullah (2013) claimed that errors in modals did not affect the syntax of the writing. Likewise, the errors in modals that were committed in this research did not seriously affect the syntax of the written language, although the researcher still noted the errors under inaccurate language. Neda (2012 in Ngangbam, 2016) adopted similar demographic as Mukundan and Saadullah's, which was secondary school students and it was found that students faced issues in their use of grammar, conventions and punctuations.

There was limited literature on spoken language in comparison to literature on written language. Ting, Mahadhir and Chang (2010) claimed that there was a scarcity of research in the area of spoken language in the Malaysian context. Previous studies discussed speaking skills (Lourdunathan & Menon, 2005; Nair, Krishnasamy & De Mello, 2006 in Ting et al., 2010), ESL speakers' reluctance (Jassem, 1997 in Ting et al., 2010), and the characteristics of Malaysian English (Cheng, 1995; Razali, 1995 in Ting et al., 2010). This scarcity was perhaps due to the challenges and intricacies in exploring the nature of speech in relation to the linguistic accuracy of spoken language (Ting et al., 2010). In exploring spoken language accuracy, researchers were expected to look at real-life dialogues, and analyse its accuracy in terms of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Therefore, 'error analysis of spoken language is a highly complicated and complex task' as it 'required a corpus on spoken language' (Yunus, Sulaiman, Kamarulzaman & Ishak, 2013, p. 20). Additionally, to analyse spoken language, researchers needed to be aware of the regional variations, slang and idiosyncrasies of the target language (Brown, 2003; Pillay, 2004 in Yunus et al., 2013). Meanwhile, López Valero, Encabo Fernández, Iseni and Clarkson (2008) explained that most often, the errors in spoken language were neglected since the message is still comprehensible if the audience referred to the contextual clues.

Yunus et al. (2013) investigated Malaysian undergraduates' accuracy in spoken language, and they highlighted the concern regarding the students' limitations and struggles in producing error-free language structures. The dominant errors committed by students were developmental in nature, in oppose to first language interference. Hence, students continued to struggle with English even when they enter the tertiary level. In a learning environment such as the tertiary level, students face certain expectations, such as the need to know and use English correctly. It was postulated that to prepare students for their professional life after university, many universities have made English as a compulsory component in their curriculum. Faculty courses were assessed through students' reports and presentations, and some of the ways to complete these tasks were by reading, researching, planning, and writing in English. Participants in this research lacked the opportunities to practice English in their peer interaction. In fact, English was often only used in formal and academic contexts. Between the four language skills, participants reported that speaking was the hardest skill to learn. Participants worried about being ridiculed, labelled, and judged negatively which resulted in them being overly cautious and shy in speaking English. This was mentioned repeatedly throughout the data and led them to have poor confidence in using English. Adding to the fact that they lacked exposure and motivation to practice their English, they continued to suffer. As a result, they depended much on fillers and redundancy such as in their overuse of conjunctions and language structures. Additionally, their unfamiliarity with the English vocabulary led language learners to code switch in their mother tongue. Unfortunately, as students advanced in the target language, the linguistic difficulties that they faced also do not decrease, but tend to extend to vocabulary register, organisation of ideas, lexical errors and semantic errors (Gedion, Tati & Peter, 2016).

Suggestions for future research

As a recommendation, future research may involve longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term outcome of TBLT such as Digital Storytelling on learners' language performance. In fact,

this was also a recommendation by Robinson (2007, p. 174). He specified that there was a need for further investigation at longitudinal effects of cycles of simple to complex task versions taking place over longer periods of time, as well as to examine the extent of performing cycles of simple to complex tasks, over periods of time. The purpose of such longitudinal studies was to find out whether the findings would support Robinson's (2003) assumptions that cognitively demanding tasks would lead to successful real-world transfer of the performance and production abilities that they helped develop.

CONCLUSION

As students advanced in their studies, they are expected to reach a certain level of proficiency in the target language. Rahman and Ali (2015) affirmed that there existed a positive relationship between students' levels of academic achievement and the ability to write coherently. They concurred that these two factors were expected to positively correlate as supported by Hubbard (1989). There must be an urgency for students to help them cope with their academic tasks and language demands. At tertiary level of education, the medium of instruction, textbooks and reference materials, assignments and coursework are in English, and even other courses such as business, social studies, science or math are all taught in English. As Hubbard (1989, p. 2) reiterated, students were unlikely to improve in their writing 'by way of hit-or-miss, impressionistic remarks in the margins of their assignments'. Therefore, the identification of students' problem areas and a framework to analyse students' language production could help them learn English more accurately and effectively.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is an extraction from Nor Nadia Raslee's thesis as a PhD candidate in Education in Kuliyyah of Education in International Islamic University, Malaysia.

REFERENCE

Allen, W., & Waugh, S. (1986). Dealing with accuracy in communicative language teaching. TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL Du Canada, Special Issue 1, 193-205.

Atawneh, A. (1994). The syntactic features of english spoken by advanced bilingual Arabs. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, Washington, D. C. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED378832

Azimah, H. (2005). *Analysis of errors in in composition of form one secondary school in Kuala Lumpur*. Unpublished Masters thesis. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi.

Azman, H. (2016). *Implementation and challenges of English language education reform in Malaysian primary schools.* 3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature®, 22 (3).

Cheong, K. C., Hill, C., Fernandez-Chung, R., & Leong, Y. C. (2016). *Employing the 'unemployable': Employer perceptions of Malaysian graduates*. Studies in Higher Education, 41 (12), 2253–2270. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079. 2015.1034260

Derakhshan, A., & Karimi, E. (2015). *The interference of first language and second language acquisition.* Theory and Practice in language studies, 5 (10), 2112-2117.

Dewi, N. R., Magfiroh, L., Nurkhalisa, S., & Dwijayanti, I. (2019). The Development of Contextual-Based Science Digital Storytelling Teaching Materials to Improve Students' Critical Thinking on Classification Theme. *Journal of Turkish Science Education*, *16*(3), 364-378.

Dulay, B., & Burt, M. (1985). *Krashen. 1982*. Language Two.

Flicker, S., & MacEntee, K. (2020). Digital storytelling as a research method. The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods, 267-281.

Gedion, A., Tati, J. S., & Peter, J. C. (2016). *A syntactic errors analysis in the Malaysian ESL learners' written composition.* Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 3 (6), 96-104.

Girmen, P., Özkanal, Ü., & Dayan, G. (2019). Digital Storytelling in the Language Arts Classroom. Universal Journal of Educational Research, 7(1), 55-65.

Hubbard, H. (1989). *Cohesion errors in the academic writing of second-language users of English.* English Usage in Southern Africa, 20 (2), 1-19.

Jordan, S. (2019). Postdigital Storytelling: Poetics, Praxis, Research. Routledge.

Khan, P. (2005) *Analysis of errors in a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur*. Unpublished MA thesis. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Kim, Y., Nam, J., & Lee, S. Y. (2016). *Correlation of proficiency with complexity, accuracy, and fluency in spoken and written production: Evidence from L2 Korean.* Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages, 19, 147-181. Retrieved from https://doaj.org/article/5b33f84d53354f8d8ac 35353aa2c107e

López Valero, A., Encabo Fernández, E., Iseni, A., & Clarkson, C. P. (2008). *Teachers' attitudes towards correcting students' written errors and mistakes.* Retrieved from http://digibug.ugr.es/handle/10481/31777

Mukundan, J., & Saadullah, K. A. (2013). *Malaysian ESL students' syntactic accuracy in the usage of English modal verbs in argumentative writing*. English Language Teaching, 6 (12), 98-105.

Ngangbam, H. (2016). *An analysis of syntactic errors committed by students of English language class in the written composition of Mutah University: A case study*. *European* Journal of English Language, Linguistics and Literature, 3 (1), 1-13.

Nugent, P. (2020). Drama and Language Learning. The Centre for the Study of English Language Teaching Journal, 8, 25-34. Retrived from http://hdl.handle.net/11470/844.

Rahman, M. S., & Ali, M. M. (2015). *Problems in mastering English tense and aspect and the role of the practitioners*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 20 (1), 131-135.

Robinson, P. (2003). The cognitive hypothesis, task design, and adult task-based language learning. University of Hawai'i Second Language Studies, Paper 21 (2).

Robinson, P. (2007). Task complexity, theory of mind, and intentional reasoning: Effects on second language speech production, interaction, uptake and perceptions of task difficulty. IRAL-International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 45(3), 193-213.

Sanusi, A. N. Z., Azmin, A. K., Abdullah, F., & Kassim, M. H. (2019). Climatic adaptations of colonial school buildings in Malaysia. In Sustainable Vernacular Architecture (pp. 275-292). Springer, Cham.

Sasayama, S. (2011). *Cognition hypothesis and second language performance: Comparison of written and oral task performance.* University of Hawai'i Second Language Studies Paper 29 (2).

ISSN: 1823464-X

Stapa, S. H., & Izahar, M. M. (2010). *Analysis of errors in subject-verb agreement among Malaysian ESL learners.* 3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature®, 16 (1).

Ting, S. H., Mahadhir, M., & Chang, S. L. (2010). *Grammatical errors in spoken English of university students in oral communication course*. GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies, 10 (1).

Vahdatinejad, S. (2008). *Students' error analysis and attitude towards teacher feedback using a selected software: a case study*.Unpublished Masters thesis. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi.

Yunus, M. M., Sulaiman, A., Kamarulzaman, M. H., & Ishak, N. M. (2013). *Language learning difficulties among Malaysian gifted students.* Asian Social Science, 9 (15), 130.

Zughoul, M. R. (2002). *Interlanguage syntax of Arabic-speaking learners of English: The noun phrase.* ERIC document #: ED479649.