

## Language Needs of Malaysian Public Relations Undergraduates in ESL Writing

Low Shun Jun  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,  
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman,  
Malaysia

Paul GnanaSelvam Pakirnathan  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,  
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman,  
Malaysia

Mariann Edwina  
English Language Department,  
Politeknik Bagan Datuk,  
Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

In recent years, it has become increasingly evident that Public Relations (PR) undergraduates are not competent in ESL writing even though communicating through writing is an important skill in the PR industry. This study aims at accessing the ESL writing performance and exploring language challenges and needs of Malaysian PR students. Using the embedded mixed methods research design, 45 Malaysian PR undergraduates were selected through a purposive sampling. Data were collected through students' speech writing samples and semi-structured interviews. Students' writing performances were descriptively measured using SPSS while textual and thematic analyses were conducted to explore the types of errors and students and teachers' feedback on their writing experiences. This study found that the majority of the students scored average grades ( $M=52.37$ ) in their writing exercises. The main concerns for language needs included subject-verb agreement, syntax error, tenses, language used, preposition, mechanics, semantics, conjunction, dangling modifiers and verb consistency. It was also found that the difficulties faced by the PR students in writing were not only caused by their language needs, but the lack in generating critical and matured content. This study is significant in informing undergraduates and English language Teachers (ELT) who are teaching the PR programs at Malaysian universities and the PR industry in general.

**KEYWORDS:** ESL writing, language needs, Public Relations, and undergraduates

### Introduction

Although Malaysian students have been learning the English language as a second language (L2), there has been an apparent drop in the Malaysian students' English language proficiency level post-language policy (Low, 2018; Aziz, 2017; Siew, 2010). According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013, p. e-12), the current education system produces creditably strong Bahasa Malaysia learning outcomes. However, with only 28%

of students achieving a minimum credit in the 2011 SPM English paper according to the Cambridge 1119 standards, the operational proficiency in the English language is much lower, even though they had spent around 11-13 years learning the English language (six years in primary school and between five to seven years in secondary school). This problem continues when students enter tertiary education, as English language is used as the medium of teaching at most universities in Malaysia (Too, 2017; Menon, 2017; Chan, 2012; Siew, 2010).

One of the utmost priorities of the education system shift as stipulated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is to boost students' English language proficiency, due to the fact that since 2006, poor English language proficiency among fresh graduates has been consistently ranked as one of the top five issues faced by Malaysian employers where 35% remained unemployed after six months of graduating and 52% of them were graduates from the Arts and Social Sciences (Leo, 2018). Most notably, Malaysian undergraduates were unable to communicate properly during interviews (Tradmin, 2017) and unable to competently address job requirements using the English language (JobStreet, 2015). The same scenario affects Malaysian Public Relations (PR) undergraduates (Su, Ernisa, Kee, Jecky & Collin, 2017).

Public Relations practitioners strive to establish an effective communication between an organization and its target audience, or between an individual and the audience who they wish to influence (Clark, 2000). In order to do so, PR practitioners have to communicate through both spoken and written forms to establish these goals. Apart from event management and gaining media coverage (Frantz, 2018), PR practitioners also produce written texts such as pitch letters, press releases, newsletters, backgrounders, fact sheets, speech, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), advocacies and opinion letters, shareholder notifications, as well as investor and chairman reports. Therefore, the ability to write creatively, interestingly and clearly is one of the most important skills to be compatible in Public Relations (Wise, 2005; Cabot, 2012). However, according to Braun and Thomas (2013) the writing quality of PR undergraduates in the industry differed very much from the desired expectations and the PR writing of today's industry. Fresh PR graduates who enter the industry are unable to write competently at the required standards of their employers and gauge their organizations at a global level (Lane & Johnston, 2017).

Globalization has intensified the use of the English language through the internet. Therefore, in order to operate and keep their competitive edge, most tasks in today's organizations require the use of writing, especially in the global language, English. This research stems from the lack of literature in the ESL aspect of PR writing, both in the academics and the Eastern workplace contexts. Although there are some international studies, their number is relatively low. This study hopes to broaden the research of ESL writing in the Public Relations context. The general objective of the study is to find out the language needs of Malaysian PR undergraduates in ESL writing. Specifically, it aims at answering three research questions:

- (RQ1) What is the writing performance of Malaysian university PR undergraduates in ESL writing?;
- (RQ2) What are the language needs of Malaysian PR undergraduates in ESL writing?;
- (RQ3) What are the challenges faced by PR undergraduates in ESL writing?

## Literature Review

English is acquired as a second language in Malaysia, after Bahasa Malaysia (Ganapathi, 2012). In Malaysia's tertiary educational system, the primary medium of instruction is in the English language and therefore, Malaysian universities offer English language as one of the compulsory subjects (Darmi, 2013). The problems of ESL writing difficulty become more intense when undergraduates enter the workforce and are expected to write critical, matured ideas and the sound language conventions to match with their perceived level of intelligence (Ismail, Hussin, & Darus, 2012). However, many Malaysian ESL undergraduates still view writing in English as a challenging task, unable to write cohesively, unable to compose clearly structured sentences, and properly organize ideas with a wide range of vocabularies (Fareed, 2016).

### *Language Needs of Malaysian ESL students*

Language needs refer to the requirement of linguistic resources, in order for an individual to proficiently cope with the communication process in which he or she is participating (Akyel & Ozek, 2010). Needs analysis is a crucial tool that helps pinpoint and examine true needs. It helps researchers and educators to develop effective curriculum as the foundation for language courses and students' communication needs (Lepetit & Cichocki, 2002).

Giridharan (2012) states that the lack of academic writing competency among universities' ESL students greatly affects their academic performances. In a qualitative study to identify the gaps in academic writing among universities' ESL students, a total of 206 participants were selected from the foundation studies programme of Curtin University, Miri, Malaysia. The language needs in writing were identified through text analysis and students' feedback via semi-structured interviews. The study found that students were unable to expand their ideas due to limited vocabulary expected in their college writing subjects. The study concluded that there was a need to enrich students' vocabulary and integrated in the writing syllabus. This would help ESL learners to be able to efficiently develop proficiency in academic writing skills.

Similarly, David, Thang and Azman (2015) conducted a survey to determine the English language needs and the challenges faced by Malaysian undergraduates in a public university. 138 first year Social Sciences and Computer Sciences undergraduates from Universiti Sains Malaysia were selected. Using a needs analysis questionnaire, students were required to rank their English language competency based on their understanding, and answer multiple-choice questions to gauge perspectives on their different language skills. The data analysis showed that more than half of the participants thought that the most important English language skill is the writing skill. Also, the respondents thought that writing skill is the most difficult and challenging skill to be acquired and they suffered from low motivation and determination in improving their English language proficiency. 94% of the respondents stated that they were not confident in producing written texts using the English language, while 88% of them stated that they were lack of vocabulary skills.

According to Kho-Yar and Tan (2015), grammar is a crucial aspect in second language acquisition, and is considered as the foundation for writing. Their research was conducted to investigate the issues in the learning of grammar, and how the accuracy of grammar affected the reading and writing performances of Malaysian ESL learners. A total of 250 participants from a higher

secondary school in Penang were selected for the quasi-experimental research, where intervention was administered in the form of grammar instruction, error identification exercises and guided writing. The study also employed a pre and post-test of reading comprehension and writing. The grammatical errors were then categorised and coded in order to identify the type of errors committed by the participants. The students' scores positioned their English language proficiency from average to low. The study identified two crucial issues about the learning of English grammar. The first being the interference of the students' first language, where the grammatical conventions of Bahasa Malaysia had a strong influence on their English language learning and, second, contributed to many of the errors related to English grammar accuracy.

A study on error analysis using descriptive essays was conducted by Gedion, Tati and Peter (2016) on 50 ESL pre-university students in Sabah, Malaysia. The participants were given a list of topics to choose from for their descriptive essay writing, where they were given 45 minutes to complete the 200 to 250 words essay. Identification of errors from the writing sample was then conducted and a total of nine different errors were categorised. The results of the data analysis showed that the most common error was errors associated with verbs, followed by spelling, sentence fragments, and punctuation. This study concluded that the errors made by the students were often caused by the combination of learner's mother tongue or the interference of their first language and limited vocabulary.

As Public Relations concerns the communication process between organizations and the public, Public Relations undergraduates are taught to communicate effectively with a large number of audience, using the knowledge of developing effective and appropriate messages, intending to influence the belief and behaviour of their audience (Baines, Egan & Jefkins, 2004). Public Relations undergraduates are generally trained to have good spoken and written communication skills. Their writing requires skilful use of vocabulary, above-average spelling abilities, knowledge of grammar, syntax development, good application of punctuation, as well as inverted pyramid style of writing understanding (particularly for news releases, reports, business letters and proposals), and the ability to write persuasively. These often prove to be difficult skills for PR students to develop (Garret, 2018; Mahadi, Husain, Joganathan, Fesal & Mohamad, 2018). Apart from academic writing, PR undergraduates are also taught courses such as Writing for Public Relations (TAR-UC), and PR Writing and Advanced PR Writing (UTAR), in order to effectively communicate, inform, and persuade their audiences.

Braun and Thomas (2013) pointed out that in order for Public Relations undergraduates to improve the writing proficiency, the teaching of Public Relations writing courses should be conducted through developing the cognitive process of the students. Cole, Hembroff and Corner (2009) through their study proposed the usage of learning logs in PR writing classes. 60 second-year PR undergraduates in Canada were selected as participants in the study. They were instructed to maintain and edit a learning log during their writing course throughout the semester. The maintaining of the learning log included recording errors from their evaluated written assessments, corrections made, and referral sources used when correcting errors. The findings showed that the majority of the students utilized their logs in recording technical items that focused on language need areas such as tone and style of writing, grammar, syntax and punctuation.

Lane and Johnston (2017) pointed out that the journalism industry does not seem to deal with the same problem, as journalism graduates were able to produce quality writing, even though both

disciplines cater for mass communication. A study was conducted to investigate the differences between the writing samples of students in both writing courses of Public Relations and Journalism across 30 universities in Australia. Content analysis was used to review the language needs in the selected writing courses. The data were categorised and compared according to course content; implementation, and assessments. Using thematic analysis, points for comparisons between the two writing courses were then identified. The findings showed that Millennial Public Relations students were lacking in basic technical writing skills as compared to journalism students. Specifically, PR students in this study were lack of vocabulary pertaining to the conventions of PR tools and genre. They were also not able to structure their written texts with the correct tones. This study suggested that undergraduate PR writing courses should focus on developing students' basic writing skills first, with a limited focus on other genres of academic writing.

## Methodology

This study used a mixed method approach to determine the language needs of Malaysian Public Relations students in ESL writing. The embedded design was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously and allow qualitative data to complement quantitative data (Creswell, 2012). Through purposive sampling, 45 Year 2 students enrolled in a Public Relations writing course at a Private Institution of Higher Learning in Perak were selected. They have also passed a pre-requisite paper before enrolling into this course. Speech writing formed part of an in-class assessment and was used to determine students' writing performance (RQ1). The graded speech writing scripts were collected from the teacher. The marking rubric and format, adapted from Bivins (2008) is currently used as the participating university's speech writing rubric. Textual analysis was carried out to determine the types of errors PR graduates committed in ESL writing (RQ2). An independent rater with more than five years of ELT experience and teaching of PR Writing was recruited to ensure consistency between the markers. The Pearson Product-momentum Correlations test was carried out for inter-rater reliability check, obtaining an average correlations score  $r=0.973$  ( $N=45$ ). Data analysis for the preceding RQs was conducted using the SPSS- 23. Using the NVIVO-12, thematic analysis was done on the transcribed data collected through focus groups interviews with students and one-to-one interview with the teacher (RQ3) to induce themes pertaining to the underlying factors that influenced the language needs of the Malaysian PR undergraduates. The rater then was given samples of the marked scripts. Member checking was conducted in an informal session with the rater and the teacher at the end of the textual and thematic analyses. The themes from the qualitative analysis were later used to triangulate data from the quantitative analysis.

## Results

Research question 1 (RQ1) aimed to find out the writing performance of Malaysian university PR undergraduates in ESL writing. The pre-existing marking rubrics for speech writing used by the course instructor were utilised. Marks were categorised using the university's grading system. Table 1 shows the average marks that students obtained in their speech writing which is 52.37 ( $M=52.377$ ). This is equivalent to a grade C.

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the students' marks*

|      |         | Marks  |
|------|---------|--------|
| N    | Valid   | 45     |
|      | Missing | 0      |
| Mean |         | 52.377 |

Research question two (RQ2), intends to find out the frequent types of language errors the Malaysian PR undergraduates made in ESL writing. Therefore, a textual analysis was conducted to identify the language errors made by them. Table 2 shows the frequency of errors and type of errors found in the scripts of the samples. The errors committed were subject-verb agreement ( $M=7.044$ ), followed by syntax ( $M=4.311$ ), tenses ( $M=4.111$ ), language usage ( $M=3.044$ ), preposition ( $M=1.689$ ), mechanics ( $M=1.333$ ), semantics ( $M=1.289$ ) and conjunctions ( $M=1.022$ ).

*Table 2. The frequency counting of language needs*

|         | Subject verb agreement | Tenses | Verb consistency | Conjunction | Language usage | Preposition | Dangling modifiers | Mechanics | Semantics | Syntax |
|---------|------------------------|--------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| N Valid | 45                     | 45     | 45               | 45          | 45             | 45          | 45                 | 45        | 45        | 45     |
| Missing | 0                      | 0      | 0                | 0           | 0              | 0           | 0                  | 0         | 0         | 0      |
| Mean    | 7.044                  | 4.111  | .333             | 1.022       | 3.044          | 1.689       | .511               | 1.333     | 1.289     | 4.311  |

To answer research question 3 (RQ3), five focus group interview sessions involving 45 undergraduates from the PR writing course, as well as an in-depth interview with the PR Writing teacher were conducted. The themes from the qualitative data analysis mainly fell within four main factors; importance of PR writing, challenges in ESL writing, aspects of the English language, and ways to improve ESL writing. Figure 1 shows the themes and sub-themes induced from the qualitative data.

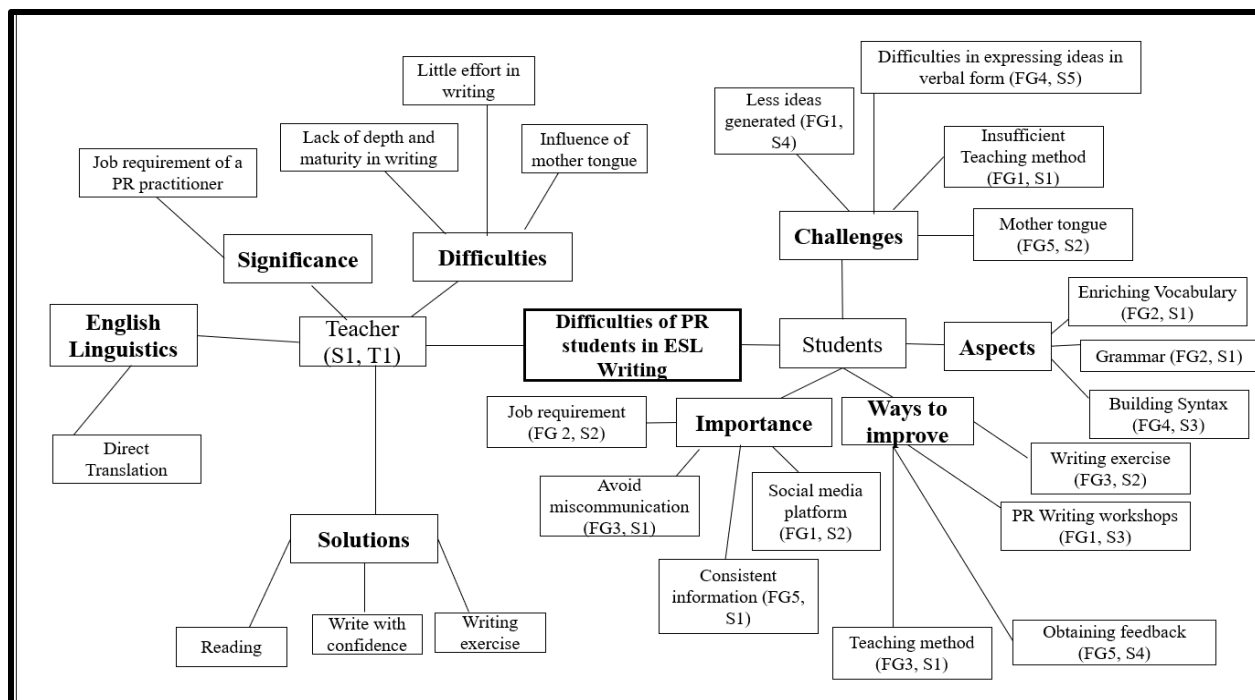


Figure 1. Themes and sub-themes of PR undergraduates' challenges in ESL writing

#### 4.1.3.1. Importance of ESL Writing

Overall, most interviewees positively perceived having good writing skills as important for them as PR practitioners to communicate with their stakeholders, and produce creative, engaging and good quality communication materials. The participants were also aware that the PR industry sets a high language expectation from them.

This is evidenced by the excerpt below:

*Writing skills are really important for a Public Relations practitioner, as we are expected to communicate with external stakeholders, write a pitch to editors, as well as writing pre and post news releases to the press. (FG2, S2)*

The interviewees also mentioned that good writing skills were necessary for a PR practitioner to disseminate accurate and clear information that serves the public's interest. This is proven by the excerpt below:

*Public Relations practitioners need to ensure all the information and content are accurately disseminated in the communication process with the public. (FG5, S1)*

The Public Relations industry is an ever changing industry that utilizes the latest communication technology in order to create a more effective communication process. Therefore, the interviewees

thought that a PR practitioner needs to have good writing skills to produce effective social media content for an organization. This is verified by the excerpt below:

*It is very important for Public Relations practitioner to have a good writing skill in social media. As social media is a big communication platform, Public Relations practitioners can use it to attract audiences and create awareness for their organization. (FG1, S2)*

#### 4.1.3.2. Challenges in ESL Writing

Most interviewees admitted that they have difficulties writing in English. The interviewees pointed out that they were unable to generate ideas for formatted writing, which is a very common type of writing in the context of Public Relations. This is evidenced by the excerpt below:

*The biggest challenge that I often face when writing in English is when I am required to write letters; my mind will be stuck on what kind of ideas should I use. (FG1, S4)*

Contrarily, the qualitative data also revealed that those who could generate ideas had difficulties putting them into words and constructing proper sentences to deliver their ideas or messages. This is proven by the excerpt below:

*I think the biggest challenge that I face when I am writing in English is, I am unable to construct my messages into words. (FG4, S5)*

Some of the interviewees thought that they have difficulty writing in English because the teaching method was inefficient. One interviewee pointed out the flaws of English language education in the primary and secondary school. This is confirmed by the excerpt below:

*When I was in primary or secondary school, my teachers used to encourage us to use bombastic words, because it was fancier. They used bombastic words instead of correcting our grammar and sentence structure. (FG1, S1)*

Another interviewee pointed out that it was hard for her to improve English proficiency at tertiary level as most lecturers seemed to not highlight or correct students' errors when using the English language during lectures and tutorials. This is verified by the excerpt below:

*Although I am studying in university now, it seems like no one will help us in correcting our mistakes. Even after we have submitted our assignments, our lecturers will not correct us or return our assignments to us, so we do not really know our mistakes. (FG1, S3)*



However, the teacher who participated in the in-depth interview pointed out that one of the biggest problems in students' writing is caused by the lack of reading and sole reliance on the internet as knowledge sources. This inhibited PR students from producing critical and interesting writing that is well organised with clearly established goals. This is evidenced by the excerpts below:

*It is not only about the language problem, but the lack of depth and maturity in the content as well. This is likely due to the fact that students do not have enough knowledge in producing a piece of good writing. It comes from the fact that most of our students do not read, or do not read enough. (S1, T1)*

*There is this tendency where students like to Google for information, and they can get a lot of it. The problem is that they do not filter the information obtained. Even if they do not understand it, they just copy and paste from the internet. They tend to produce a piece of writing without looking back at what they wrote, which is a very big problem. (S1, T1)*

#### 4.1.3.3. Aspects to improve in ESL writing

The qualitative data also revealed that the interviewees were aware that they have to improve their English writing skills and understand their weaker aspects of the English language. Most interviewees revealed that the biggest obstacle they encountered in ESL writing was word usage and choice of words when writing in English, or that their vocabulary was simply limited. This is verified by the excerpt below:

*I think the problem in my writing skill will be the vocabulary, I always use the same word when writing an article, and it makes the writing less interesting. The word that I use might not be suitable for the article as well. (FG2, S1)*

The interviewees also revealed that they should improve on building their syntax, especially sentence construction which seemed influential by the interference from their first language. This is substantiated by the excerpt below:

*The problem with my writing skills will be the structure of the sentence. Our native language is not English, but Mandarin. Most of the time I will directly translate Mandarin sentences into English sentences, which causes the structure of the sentence to be incorrect. (FG4, S3)*

The third aspect of the English language that most interviewees thought they should improve is grammar, particularly tenses. Many of them mentioned that English grammar is confusing, and it is almost impossible to understand it completely. This is proven by the excerpt below:

*The problem with my writing skills will be the grammar, especially the tenses. I think that is the most confusing part of the English grammar. (FG2, S1)*

#### 4.1.3.4. Ways to Improve ESL Writing

The interviews suggested that more writing practices during tutorials would be helpful in improving their writing styles for PR. This is confirmed by the excerpt below:

*Lecturers should actually give us more writing practices, in different types of writings, such as press release, newsletters, and so on, so that we familiarize ourselves with it. (FG3, S2)*

One of the interviewees also suggested that universities should collaborate with PR companies to provide PR writing workshops for the students. This is evidenced by the excerpt below:

*In my opinion, I think universities that offer Public Relations courses should collaborate with Public Relations companies to hold Public Relations writing workshops to guide students in improving their Public Relations writing. (FG1, S3)*

## Discussion

The results in this study indicated that the writing performance of the Malaysian Public Relations students was below average. The result of this study was consistent with the findings of Lane & Johnston, (2017) and Cole et al., (2009) on the writing performance of PR undergraduates at work-entry levels.

The results also revealed that the writing performance of PR undergraduates in this study was much affected by their own language needs for grammatical accuracy and application. Kho-Yar and Tan (2015) pointed out that grammar is a crucial aspect in language acquisition, and is considered as the foundation in writing. However, many Malaysian ESL students find that English language grammar confusing and difficult to understand and use. This study revealed that grammar-related language needs of the PR undergraduates included subject verb agreement, tenses, prepositions, conjunctions, dangling modifiers and verb consistency. This is consistent with the studies by Mohammed (2014) and Kho-Yar and Tan (2015). Other areas of language needs included syntax, language usage, mechanics and semantics. This study confirms the findings of Gedion, Tati and Peter (2016) that constant syntactic errors in Malaysian ESL learners' writings were caused by their mother tongues' interference and direct translation of texts. Consistent with Ibrahim's (2015), this study also confirm that language usage, prepositions and mechanics are also one of the language needs of the students nowadays. This study is also consistent with the findings of Muhammad Fareed, (2016), David, Thang and Azman (2015) and Giridharan (2012) that ESL undergraduates struggle with appropriate language usage, particularly vocabulary. These include

choosing the right words and applying a wide array of words or terminologies to express, explain or elaborate ideas in written texts. Therefore, it is vital for ESL instructors to address these needs in the teaching and learning of English in the PR writing classrooms.

Through the focus group and in-depth interviews that were conducted, the main factors that cause the difficulties of PR students in ESL writing were identified. This extends the understanding of the challenges faced by the PR students which include the inability to generate ideas for the purpose of writing, as well as difficulties in expressing ideas from verbal forms into written texts. Most students have difficulties in writing in English due to their poor proficiency in the English language, where their English language proficiency is heavily influenced by their mother tongue. Their language needs were mainly vocabulary and syntax development. However, the teacher pointed out that the difficulty dealt by students when writing in English is not purely based on the language, but many other factors as well. It is mentioned that the characteristics of students affect their writing skills as well. Students were generally passive and lack confidence when they were required to produce a piece of writing. This study also highlights on students' severe lack in maturity and content. This is due to the factor that students rarely or never read, rendering themselves unable to develop critical and well-thought ideas. Lack of real world knowledge also limited their abilities to write creatively with effective attention grabbers and establishing sound objectives in PR writing. Most of the students had a general idea on how they should improve their writing skills but they were generally afraid of being criticized and laughed at although aware they needed constant practice and feedback from their teachers.

## **Conclusion**

It must be noted that the data obtained in this study may not be generalised to all PR undergraduates' writing performances in Malaysia as it was conducted at only one Malaysian private university. However, the goals of this study are to determine the performance of the public relations students in their ESL writings, find out the language needs of Malaysian Public Relations students and explore the difficulties faced by the students in their ESL writing. Most of the students performed below average or even failed in their assessments. The results showed that the language needs of the PR students included subject-verb agreement, syntax error, tenses, language usage, prepositions, mechanics, semantics, conjunctions, dangling modifiers and verb consistency, as well as producing matured and critical content. PR practitioners and ELT instructors involved in the teaching of PR Writing are therefore, inundated with the task to not only improve grammatical functions and usage, but also vocabulary enrichment and creating of critical and creative content. This study posits that it is important that ESL teachers imbibe language awareness and language usage activities in the teaching and learning of PR writing courses as well as consistently expose students to persuasive writing skills and the demands of the PR industry in innovative content writing.

## References

- Akyel, A. S., & Ozek, Y. (2010). A language needs analysis research at an English medium university in Turkey. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 969-975. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.136
- Aziz, H. (2018, August 10). Miles to go for English proficiency. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from, <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2018/08/399958/miles-go-english-proficiency>
- Baines, P., Egan, J., & Jefkins, F. (2004). *Public Relations Contemporary Issues and Techniques*. Elsevier: Routledge.
- Bivins, T.H. (2008). *Public relations writing: The essentials of style and format*. (6th Ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Braun, L., & Thomas, S. (2013). Student perceptions of the use of learning logs to teach Public Relations writing. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 1456-1460. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.063
- Chan, S. H. (2012). Defining English language proficiency for Malaysian tertiary education: Past, present and future efforts. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 3(2), 152 – 154, doi: 10.7575/aiac.all.v.3n.2p.150
- Cabot, M. (2012). *Public Relations Defined: Introduction to Public Relations* San Jose State University: Ajeep.
- Clark, C. E. (2000). Differences between Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility: An analysis. *Public Relations Review*, 26(3), 363-380. doi: 10.1016/S0363-8111(00)00053-9
- Cole, R. T., Hembroff, L. A., & Corner, A. D. (2009). National assessment of the perceived writing skills of entry-level PR practitioners, *Journalism & Mass Communication Education*, 10-26.
- Darmi, R. (2013). *Learning English: Challenges for Malaysian language learners*. Paper presented at the 11th Asia TEFL International Conference, Quezon, Philippines.
- David, A. R., Thang, S. M., & Azman, H. (2015). Accommodating low proficiency ESL students' language learning needs through an online writing support system. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, (1), 118-271.
- Frantz, C. (2018). *The Role of Public Relations in Marketing*. Retrieved March 10, 2019, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2018/06/14/the-role-of-public-relations-in-marketing/#f6ae7be40b6a>
- Ganapathi, U. (2012). *The Need for English Language in Malaysia*. 1-98.
- Garrett, M. (2018). Retrieved September 5, from [Meltwater website: https://www.meltwater.com/ap/blog/why-strong-writing-skills-matter-more-than-ever-for-todays-pr-pros/](https://www.meltwater.com/ap/blog/why-strong-writing-skills-matter-more-than-ever-for-todays-pr-pros/)
- 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.
- Giridharan, B. (2012). Identifying gaps in academic writing of ESL students. *US-China Education Review*, 6, 578-587.
- Ibrahim, A. M. (2015). University students' English writing problems: Diagnosis and remedy. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 3(3), 40-52.

- Ismail, N., Hussin, S., & Darus, S. (2012). ESL tertiary students' writing problems and needs: Suggested elements for an additional online writing program (IQ-Write) for the BEL 311 Course. *The International Journal of Learning*, 18(9), 70-88.
- JobStreet. (2015). *Employers: Fresh graduates have unrealistic expectations*. Retrieved March 13, 2019, from <https://www.jobstreet.com.my/career-resources/employers-fresh-graduates-unrealistic-expectations/#.W91TieLmi01>
- Kho-Yar, A. S., & Tan, B. H. (2015). Relationship between grammar accuracy, reading and writing performance among Malaysian ESL learners. The International Conference on Language, Education, Humanities & Innovation. 21-22 March, 2015. 10- 19.
- Lane, A. B., & Johnston, K. A. (2017). Bridging the writing gap between student and professional: Analyzing writing education in public relations and journalism. *Public Relations Review*, 43(2), 314-325. doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.008
- Leo, M. (2018). *What You Didn't Know About Fresh Graduate Unemployment in Malaysia [Infographic] (UPDATED)*. Retrieved February 22, 2019, from <https://educadvisor.my/articles/what-didnt-know-fresh-graduate-unemployment-malaysia-infographic/>
- Lepetit, D. & Cichocki, W. (2002). Teaching languages to future health professionals: A needs assessment study. *Modern Language Journal*, 83(3), 384-396. doi: 10.1111/1540-4781.00156
- Low, B. I. (2017). *English language use among Malaysian tertiary level students: A Case Study of Tunku Abdul Rahman University College* (PhD's thesis). International Islamic University Malaysia.
- Mahadi, T. S., Hussain, F., Joganathan, P., Hassan, A., Fesal, S.N.H. & Mohamad, A (2018). Developing Narrative Writing Skills via a Reading Programme for Low English Language Proficiency Undergraduates. *Journal of Language Studies*, Vol. 18 (2), 1-16, doi: <http://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2018-1802-01>
- Menon, S (2017, Nov 12). Use of English at Tertiary Level. *The Star Online*. Retrieved from, <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/education/2017/11/12/use-of-english-at-tertiary-level/>
- Ministry of Education, Malaysia. (2013). Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, <https://www.moe.gov.my/menumedia/media-cetak/penerbitan/dasar/1207-malaysia-education-blueprint-2013-2025/file>, p. E-12 (Executive Summary)
- Muhammad Fareed, A. A. (2016). ESL learners' writing skills: Problems, factors and suggestions. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 83-94.
- Mohammed, A. S. (2015). Conjunctions as cohesive devices in the writings of English as Second Language learners. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 208, 74–81. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.182
- Siew, K. E. (2010). How Different are the monophthongs of Malay speakers of Malaysian and Singapore English? *English world-Wide*, 31(2), 162-189. doi: 10.1075/eww.31.2.03tan
- Su, H. T., Ernisa, M., Kee, M. C., Jecky, M. & Collin, J. (2017). Employers' views on importance of English proficiency and communication skill for employability in Malaysia. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(2), doi: dx.doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i2.8132
- Tradmin, T. (2017). *The Struggles Faced by the employers towards the fresh graduates*. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from <https://therecruiter.com.my/the-struggles-faced-by-the-employers-towards-the-fresh-graduates/>

- Too, W. K. (2017). English language teaching and policies at the tertiary level in Malaysia. University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, 2-4, doi: 10.4324/9781315391588-7
- Wise, K. (2005). The Importance of writing skills. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 50(2), 37-40.