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Interlanguage Analysis of the Vocational High School Students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta

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Abstract: The research entitled Interlanguage Analysis of the Vocational School Students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta aims to describe the interlanguage of tenth-grade students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta through an analysis of linguistic errors found in students' writing. The background of this research is derived from the students' low writing proficiency, which is influenced by their first language, limited mastery of grammatical structures, and inconsistent application of target language rules. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with data consisting of students' written texts collected from classroom assignments. The data were analysed to identify forms of interlanguage, the sources of their occurrence, and the relationship between these errors and the students' language development stages. The findings show that students produce various interlanguage features, particularly in the use of verb forms, tenses, prepositions, and sentence structure. These errors are influenced by first language transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, and learning strategies. The results indicate that the students' interlanguage is still in an unstable developmental stage and requiring continuous guidance. This study concluded that interlanguage analysis is essential for understanding students' language development and for helping teachers design more effective instructional strategies.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Interlanguage Analysis, Second Language Analysis, Interlanguage Analysis, Second Language Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

English teaching has an important role in Indonesia in helping students develops their ability to communicate both academic and global settings. As a foreign language, English is taught from primary school to university and is considered essential for accessing knowledge, technology, and international communication. Language learning could be seen as a planned and continuous process to acquire new linguistic skills, while applied linguistics provides a foundation for understanding how languages are taught and learned in educational contexts (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

Nowadays, English is widely recognised as an international language used across nations for communication, education, and professional purposes. In Indonesia, the main focus of

English learning is not only on grammar but also on the ability to use language effectively in real communication. This concept is known as communicative competence, which involves several components such as linguistic, discourse, sociocultural, actional, and strategic competence (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). In addition, learners are encouraged to develop their own effective way of using English rather than trying to speak exactly like native speakers (Cook, 2014).

Writing is often seen as the most difficult rather than three other English skills. It required students to organise ideas, choose appropriate words, and apply correct grammar and sentence structure. Many students faced problems in writing because their first language influenced how they construct English sentences. As a result, errors frequently appeared in verb forms, tenses, prepositions, and sentence patterns (Sa'adah, 2020). These errors are a natural part of learning and show the process of developing language ability.

The development process is explained through the concept of interlanguage, which refers to the temporary language system created by learners as their moves from their first language (L1) to the target language (L2). Interlanguage contains elements of both languages and shows differences from standard English, reflecting the learner's current stage of development (Al-Khreshah, 2015; Fauziati, 2016; Selinker, 1972). Hence, in understanding these differences, Error Analysis (EA) is used as an important approach in applied linguistics. Error analysis helps identify the types and causes of errors made by learners and provides insight into their learning strategies and language knowledge (Ellis, 1995). According to (Heidi et al., (1982), errors are divided into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

At the vocational high school level, English is important because students are prepared for future work environments which require good communication skills. However, many vocational students still find it difficult to produce correct English writing. Their writing often shows grammatical errors caused by the influence of Indonesian language and limited exposure to proper English usage. This situation shows the need to study students' writing to understand their interlanguage system and to support more effective teaching methods. Therefore, this study focuses on analysing the interlanguage found in the English writing of X-grade students at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta, especially in terms of grammatical errors as evidence of their language development.

This research aims to identify the types of interlanguage errors made by the students, analyse the possible sources of these errors, and describe how these errors reflect their stage of English language development. The study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What types of interlanguage errors are produced by X grade students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta in their English writing? (2) What are the possible sources of these interlanguage features? (3) How do these errors reflect the students' stage of English language development? These questions will guide the discussion and will be answered through careful analysis in the following sections.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore interlanguage features in the English writing of vocational high school students at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate because it prioritises in-depth understanding of linguistic phenomena within their natural context and emphasises interpretation of meaning rather than statistical measurement. A qualitative case study design is adopted to provide a detailed and contextualized description of students' interlanguage as it appears in their written production.

The population consists of tenth and eleventh-grade students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta in the 2025/2026 academic year. The sample is selected purposively, focusing on written compositions that represent varied levels of English proficiency and observable interlanguage features. The study was conducted from March to November 2025 at SMK

Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta, covering the stages of planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

The main instrument is the study process itself, supported by document analysis sheets used to classify linguistic errors. The data consist of errors found in students' English written texts collected from classroom assignments and writing tasks. These errors are examined using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which categorises interlanguage errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This theoretical framework enables systematic analysis of how learners' developing linguistic competence influences their written output.

Data collection is conducted through document analysis by closely examining students' compositions and identifying erroneous linguistic structures. Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This process reveals recurring patterns and provides insight into the characteristics of students' interlanguage development.

In ensuring credibility, expert judgment is applied through consultation with specialists in applied linguistics and English language teaching. Ethical principles are strictly maintained through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and secure handling of all data. Objectivity is upheld throughout the study to ensure that the findings accurately represent the linguistic phenomena observed and contribute theoretically to the understanding of interlanguage in second language acquisition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data, analysis, and interpretation of the research results in relation to the previously formulated research questions. The results are derived from the analysis of 85 student utterances produced by Grade X students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta. The findings are organised into three main sections: (1) types and frequency of interlanguage errors, (2) sources of interlanguage errors, and (3) reflection of interlanguage errors on students' language development stages. Tables are used to clarify the quantitative data and support verbal interpretation.

Types and Frequency of Interlanguage Errors

The analysis of 85 utterances shows that students produced four major types of interlanguage errors based on Selinker's taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. These errors were further classified into more specific subtypes to provide a comprehensive picture of students' interlanguage performance.

Omission

Omission errors occur when obligatory grammatical elements are absent in the sentence. Five subtypes of omission were identified: omission of article, copula/auxiliary, subject, infinitive marker, and plural marker. A total of 34 omission errors were found, making this the most dominant error category.

The distribution is presented in Table 4.1.

No.	Type of Omission	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Omission of Article	15	44.12%
2.	Omission of Copula or Auxiliary	6	17.12%
3.	Omission of Subject	2	5.88%
4.	Omission of Infinitive	7	20.59%
5.	Omission of Plural -s/-es	4	11.76%
Total		34	100%

The high frequency of article omission indicates that students experience difficulty with English determiners, which do not exist in Indonesian. Similar patterns appear in the omission of copula, plural markers, and infinitive markers, all of which are not obligatorily marked in Indonesian grammar. These findings suggest that students tend to simplify sentence structures and rely on L1 grammatical patterns when constructing English sentences.

Addition

Addition errors involve the insertion of unnecessary words or morphemes. Only 2 instances of simple addition were found, such as the unnecessary use of “only” or “out”. This indicates that addition errors are minimal and not a major characteristic of students’ interlanguage.

Mis-formation

Mis-formation errors occur when students supply an incorrect form of a structure or morpheme. Six subtypes were identified with a total of 22 errors.

Table 4.2 Type and Frequency of Mis-formation

No.	Type of Mis-formation	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Wrong Verb Tense Form	12	54.55%
2.	Wrong Auxiliary and Verb Combination	3	13.64%
3.	Wrong Past Form After Modal	1	4.55%
4.	Wrong Continuous Used for Past	3	13.64%
5.	Wrong Adjective -ing or Adjective -ed	1	4.55%
6.	Mis-formation of Lexical Verb	2	9.09
Total		22	100%

The most frequent mis-formation involved incorrect tense usage, showing that students recognize past time reference but struggle to apply correct verb forms consistently. These errors reflect incomplete mastery of English tense system and confusion in auxiliary-verb relationships.

Mis-ordering

Mis-ordering errors occur when students arrange sentence elements in an incorrect sequence. A total of 7 mis-ordering errors were found, mainly involving noun phrase and clause structure. These errors clearly show the influence of Indonesian word order transferred directly into English.

Overall Distribution of Error Types

The overall frequency of interlanguage error types is summarized as follows:

- Omission : 34 cases
- Mis-formation : 22 cases
- Mis-ordering : 7 cases
- Addition : 2 cases

Omission is the most dominant error, indicating students often leave out essential grammatical elements. This reflects both L1 influence and the tendency to simplify complex target language rules.

Sources of Interlanguage Errors

Table 4.3 Based on Littlewood’s framework, five sources of error were identified

Stage	Frequency
Language Transfer	36
Overgeneralization	36
Simplification	23
Teaching Strategy	3
Non-systematic process	4

Language transfer and overgeneralization are the two most dominant sources. This shows that students rely heavily on Indonesian structures and at the same time attempt to form internal rules that are not yet fully accurate. Simplification also plays a significant role, as students tend to reduce sentence complexity to ease production.

Teaching strategy contributes minimally, indicating that classroom memorization is not the primary cause of error. Non-systematic processes appear infrequently and represent incidental mistakes rather than stable interlanguage patterns.

These results demonstrate that most errors originate from systematic developmental processes rather than random mistakes, highlighting the evolving nature of students’ interlanguage.

Language Development Stages

4.4 Students’ interlanguage was classified into four developmental stages:

Stage	Frequency
Low Beginning	14
High Beginning	40
Low Intermediate	28
High Intermediate	3

Most students fall within the High Beginning and Low Intermediate stages. At the High Beginning stage, sentences are communicative but grammatically inconsistent, showing partial understanding of English rules. At the Low Intermediate stage, students demonstrate better control of sentence construction, though errors in tense, articles, and prepositions persist. This distribution indicates that students are transitioning from reliance on direct translation to more structured, rule-based sentence formation. Their interlanguage reflects an active developmental process rather than fossilization.

Discussion

The findings confirm that Grade X students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta produce systematic interlanguage errors influenced mainly by negative L1 transfer and overgeneralization. The dominance of omission errors suggests that students struggle with grammatical elements absent in Indonesian, such as articles, plural markers, and copulas. Misformation and mis-ordering further illustrate the incomplete internalisation of English syntactic and morphological rules.

The distribution of language development stages shows that students are still in the process of stabilizing their interlanguage system. Their errors reflect transitional competence as they experiment with English structures and attempt to construct grammatical rules.

Overall, the results answer the research questions by demonstrating that:

1. Students produce varied types of interlanguage errors, with omission as the most dominant.
2. The main sources of these errors are language transfer and overgeneralization.

3. These errors indicate that students are mostly positioned at the High Beginning and Low Intermediate stages of English language development.

This evidence highlights the need for instructional strategies that focus on explicit grammatical awareness, contrastive analysis, and structured practice to support the transition toward more accurate and stable English proficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study, entitled *Interlanguage Analysis of the Vocational High School Students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Surakarta*, concludes that the interlanguage system of the students reflects a transitional stage of English development characterised by systematic patterns of error shaped by first language influence and incomplete mastery of target language rules. The analysis confirms that omission, mis-formation, mis-ordering, and addition errors function as clear indicators of how students construct and adjust their internal linguistic system while moving toward greater accuracy. These findings directly answer the research objectives by demonstrating that the identified error types, their dominant sources, and their distribution across developmental stages represent an evolving and unstable interlanguage, rather than random or incidental mistakes. From a broader perspective, this study contributes to educational science by reinforcing the importance of interlanguage analysis as a diagnostic tool for improving pedagogical design, especially within vocational education contexts. A clearer understanding of students' linguistic development supports the design of more targeted English instruction, which ultimately enhances the communication competence required in industrial and professional environments. Improved language proficiency among vocational students strengthens their readiness for workplace demands, supports clearer technical communication, and contributes to higher efficiency and accuracy in industrial practices, thereby offering meaningful implications for vocational training and applied language education as part of human resource development in industry.

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