An Analysis of Interlanguage Error on Writing Functional Text Application Letter by Mediterranean Students

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**Abstract:** This study is intended to find out and analyze on the interlanguage error in writing functional text application letter of Mediterranean students. Due to the problems discussed, the theories suggested in this research include interlanguage error definition and application letter definition. The method applied is descriptive qualitative in nature and the data are from Mediterranean students in Food&Beverage Production. The subjects of this research were 24 students of Mediterranean. Then, the data analysis is performed to find the type of interlanguage error done by Mediterranean students in writing functional text of application letter, the errors of application letter layouts in writing functional text of application letter done by Mediterranean students and how the interlanguage error can occur to Mediterranean students. This study used the surface strategy taxonomy and errors in formats of business letters theory as methodological framework. This study found the most problematic areas respectively were made by wrong spelling, preposition, verb, tense and the a/an article. The error of interlanguage is considered as the major cause of the error. Furthermore, the errors were in arranging layouts of business letters. There were 89 errors in wrong spelling, 11 errors in the preposition, 28 errors in used verb, 36 errors in used tense and 22 errors in the a/an article.

Keywords: interlanguage error, writing, application letter

**INTRODUCTION**

A letter plays an important role in company business, it is a bridge that links to communicate the company’s products. As the business letter acts as an ambassador for the company, it is vital that should make the reader give a good impression the letter. According to Taylor (2004), a good business letter should be well organized; you should say everything necessary to your message but not too much and knowing when this letter should be finished and using a courteous style. Furthermore, in composing good letter writing, you should notice some aspects and one of the important aspects that should be mastered in getting a well-structured writing is the use of a high-standard English grammar. Poor grammar and spelling which are unprofessional can damage the reputation of both you as the writer and your company; by setting high standards in the important area of written communications you will be helping to create and enhance the corporate image your organization. It can be concluded that principally, the business letter should look attractive, clear and neat as well as complete. Consequently, it should be written on good paper of the right size or presentable paper, neat and nicely designed. Finally, the most important element of writing a good English business letter is how show the ability to identify and write to the audience.

One of the English business letter is job application letter. Generally, most people, however, find a job through advertisements in the internet, newspapers or magazines through the situation vacant columns. The attractive application letter with its resume can do much to help secure the job of choice. Therefore, writing effectively is perhaps the most demanding work to do. In regard to the writing skill, it cannot be denied poor grammar and spelling which are unprofessional can damage the reputation of both the writer and the company; by setting high standards in the important area of written communications will be helping to create and enhance the corporate image the organization. Furthermore, to present the first impression of the reader not only well-organized sentences should you write but also you should perform well-arranged formal letter layouts with its right expressions as
stated by Geffner (1995), the physical condition of a letter makes the first impression of the reader. It means that should be control the organization of letter appearance with its expressions written in each part of the letter before sending it in order that the reader will not read the covering letter with incorrect expression in one of the parts of letter.

Selinker (1997), interlanguage is a language system that has developed in the minds of language learners that learn a second language. Ellis (1997) state that the interlanguage is the learner language. Interlanguage system is mix between native language and target language. The fact that learners do make error and these error can be observed, analyzed and classified to reveal some things of the system operating within the learner led to a surge of study learners error. Beside analysis in the interlanguage error, the researcher will also consider errors in arranging parts of the application letter layouts with its expressions because layout of letter is one of the important things to express the professional in writing letter if want to convey the proper image. Error analysis is conducted to identify strategies which learners use in language learning, try to identify the causes of learner errors, and to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, as an aid to teaching or the preparation of teaching materials (Richards, 1992). One of the aims of error analysis is to help teachers give assessment more correctly what remedial work would be needed for the learners of English.

According to Ashley (1984), the way we write a letter of application letter is as same as we write business one, such as making sure it says everything we want to say, using a simple but polite style of language, the writer should take care with abbreviations and figures, and paying special attention to titles, names and addresses. Beside that, Geffner (1995) states that this letter usually consists of overview of yourself to the employer by presenting your personal information in a coherent format, not more than one page in length and of course it should be clear, concise, consistent, and error-free writing and easy to read in order not to make the golden career path away from you. No matter how carefully a letter is prepared, it is not good if it is sloppy formatting or badly organized, if its message is poorly expressed and unclear, and if the rules of etiquette are not followed. It can be concluded that the important thing to do is should attract an employer’s attention and try to make reader grant an interview. Besides, Curriculum Vitae attached should look as good as covering letter, it must look professional.

As a formal letter, at least there are three format styles used in business letter, they are fully block, blocked, and semi blocked style. In fully blocked style all letter parts begin at the left margin, except for the printed letterhead; the body of the letter is not indented, and double spacing is used to separate the paragraphs. While blocked style, like fully blocked, all letter parts begin at the left margin, except the dateline, complimentary closing, company signature with the writer’s name are placed up to the right-hand margin. The next style is semi-blocked, the date, complimentary close and signature with the writer’s name are set to the right-hand margin, and the body is indented for each paragraph. Open punctuation is often used; this reduces typing time as there is no need for any unnecessary full stops and commas. Whichever layout, enclosure usually appears below the signature element and flushes with the left margin. It is important to know that whichever format you adopt, you have to be consistent, do not mix styles. It is stated by Taylor (2004) explaining that whichever layout you use for business documents, the most important rule is consistency, i.e. ensuring that all documents are displayed in the same format. A well-displayed, easy-to-read letter will attract attention at once and create a favorable first impression.

The following is an explanation of the parts of the application letter. (Geffner, 1995):

1. Sender address, at the minimum, contains the street address, the city, the state, and the code. The sender’s name does not appear at the top of the letter.
2. *Date* is typed a few lines below the sender. It should not be written in figures as they can be confusing; (i.e. 11.1.12 means 11th January 2012 in the UK but 1st November 2012 in the USA) it is better 11 January, 2012.

3. *Inside Address typed* begins with flush with the left margin. If you know the surname you are writing, the appropriate courtesy title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) should be shown. It is written on the first line of the address. If you do not know the name you can write The Personnel Manager or HRD Department or Carroll & Associates, Inc.

4. *Salutation* is a kind of greeting to open letter. There are several types of salutations, as shown below.
   a. *Dear Sir* opens a letter written to a man whose name you do not know.
   b. *Dear Sirs* is used to address a company.
   c. *Dear Sir or Madam* is used to address a person of whom you know neither the name nor the sex.
   d. *Dear Madam* is used to address a woman, whether single or married, whose name you do not know.
   e. *Dear (name)* is used when you know the name of the person you are writing to, for example: *Dear Mr Smith,* not *Dear Mr J Smith* or *Dear Mr John Smith.*

5. The body consists of three or four paragraphs; the important thing is you must be consistent in writing the body.
   a. The first paragraph/opening must attract favorable attention.
   b. The second paragraph consists of personal data, educational background, experience and qualification,
   c. The third paragraph/closing, you close your application letter with a specific request for action and give the reader a good reason for inviting you for an interview.

6. *Complementary Close* placed below the last line of a letter’s body has two most common complimentary closes, *they are Yours faithfully and Yours sincerely.* If the letter opens with *Dear Sir or Dear Madam,* then close it with *Yours faithfully* while it opens with *Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms Smith* then close it with *Yours sincerely*.

7. *Signature* is very important, because a letter is not really complete until it has been signed in the author’s own handwriting. Your name which is not followed by the courtesy title is written after your handwritten signature. However, it is also possible to include the title in the typewritten signature, usually in brackets.

8. *Enclosure* is followed by a list of the enclosed items is written bellow the signature element with the left margin.

In the process of learning a foreign/second language, errors made by the learners are usually found in their sentences; it could be caused by the interference from the mother tongue or the first language. Richards (1971) believes that development errors derived from faulty comprehension of distinction, in the target language. In attempting to get native-speaker like rules, students often make errors as reflection of their inter-lingual as stated by Brown (1991) saying that errors made by first language transfer are called inter-lingual errors, on the contrary errors which are as results of their incomplete comprehension of target language rules are called intra lingual errors. Furthermore Richards, (1992) states that error is a deviation from the target language rule which reflects inter-language competence of a learner, or which results from incomplete knowledge of a learner. In writing, not only do the learners make errors but also they present some mistakes. Richards (1992) says “Mistakes made by a learner when writing or speaking and which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance”. It can be concluded
that mistake which is not a result of deficiency in competence is regarded as slips of the tongue. However, error and mistake are due to incomplete acquisition of the language. According to Richards (1971) errors made by learners are caused by inter-lingual transfer and intra-lingual transfer.

1. Inter-lingual Transfer

   In the process of learning a foreign language/second language, learners make errors that are caused by the interference from the mother tongue or the first language. Richards (1992) says “Inter-lingual error is an error which results from language transfer, that is, which is caused by the learner’s native language”. Positive interference occurs when there are similarities between L1 and TL, while negative interference refers to the differences between L1 and TL.

2. Intra-lingual Transfer

   In intra-lingual transfer the main source of the interference is the TL, which includes overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, false concepts hypothesized, and ignorance of rule restriction. According to Dulay et al (1982) there are four types of errors which belong to Surface Strategy Taxonomy, they are as follows:

   1. Omission. This is a kind of error characterized by the absence of an item appearing in a well-formed utterance.

   2. Addition. This type of error is characterized by the presence of an item which is not necessary to appear in a well-formed utterance. Addition errors usually occur in the later stages of L2 acquisition, when the learner has already acquired some target language rules.

   3. Mis-formation. This type of error is characterized by the use of the wrong form of a morpheme. While in omission errors the item is not supplied at all, in mis-formation errors the learner supplies something, although it is incorrect.

   4. Mis-ordering. This type of error is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in an utterance.

METHOD(S)

The method applied in this research is descriptive qualitative in nature and the data are from Meditteranean students in F&B Production. The subject of this research are 24 students of Meditteranean, Bali in F&B Production. The instrument is in writing functional text of application letter done by Meditteranean students in F&B Production. This study use the surface strategy taxonomy theory by Dulay et al (1982), and errors in formats of business letters theory by Geffner (1995) as methodological framework. The technique of data collecting is first collecting the letters about 24 letters and checking the mistakes and classifying based on the type of mistakes of error done by Meditteranean students in writing functional text of application letter. The researcher uses elicitation method to get the data accurately. Elicitation method is the method to elicit students to produce language. Nunan (in Fauziati, 2009), states that elicitation that elicitation techniques very enormously in scope, aim, and purpose. They include studies, which obtain their data by means of stimulus, such as as picture, diagram or standardized text as well as those based on questionnaire, survey and interview data. The writer analyzes those using following steps: identification of errors, classifying the errors, describing the dominant type of error and describing the sources of error.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
This study finds the kinds of errors in writing the parts of letter layouts found made by the 24 Mediterranean students. The error most problematic areas respectively are wrong spelling, preposition, verb, tense and the least is article. The error of interlanguage is considered as the major cause of the error. Furthermore, the errors in arranging layouts of business letters based on UK concept are classified into 6 categories, sender address, enclosure, after that complimentary close, then salutation, date, and the last is style.
From the research of the writing functional text of application letter, the result of the analysis is as follow:

A. The Types of Interlanguage Error Done by Mediterranean Students in Writing Functional Text of Application Letter

a. Wrong Spelling
The error appeared because the students apply Indonesian language into English language. The highest number of errors is wrong spelling. The total of 89 errors of this part has been found. Below is the example of error in writing wrong spelling:

1. In the job training in Greand Hyatt Hotel, I had learned about......
2. I have technical sekils, i can cook in the on time....

Based on the sentences above, the students make error in their spelling. In this case, the students was using wrong letter in writing. The students use words trening and sekils. It occurs caused the students do not reflect the writing. They only wrote it based on their comprehension. It makes the sentences meaningless. The correct words are training and skills..

b. Preposition
The number of error in writing prepositions are 11 of this part has been found. Below is the example of error in writing prepositions:

1. I am going to join with your company.*

The English verb ‘join’ in the above sentence needn’t the proposition. It is predicted that the addition of preposition ‘with’ after the verb join is due to the interlanguage error as the result of L1 transfer. (In Bahasa Indonesia: Saya akan bergabung dengan perusahaan anda.)

2. I am writing to apply a Chef position.....*

The English verb ‘apply’ in above sentence needs the proposition ‘for’ relating to job. This omission of preposition is due to L1 interference and it is a kind of an interlanguage error. It is predicted that the students are careless in using preposition because in Bahasa Indonesia there is no specific preposition after verb. (In Bahasa Indonesia: Saya menulis untuk melamar posisi sebagai Koki).

c. Verb
The number of error in writing verbs are 28 of this part has been found. Below is the example of error in writing verbs:

1. My background seem to match your job requirements. *
In this sentence the verb ‘seem’ cannot be accepted in English grammar rule as the subject is singular, consequently the verb ‘seem’ should be added by inflectional suffix ‘s’ to be ‘seems’. This mis-formation is predicted by L1 influence called interlanguage error. It occurs because in Bahasa Indonesia there is no difference in using verb relating to Subject.

2. I have skilled at making all the pastry and decorating them

In this sentences the verb skilled can not be accepted in English grammar rule. Consequently the verb “skilled” should be “skill”. This mis-formation is predicted by L1 influence called interlanguage error.

d. Tense
The number of error in tenses are 36 of this part has been found. Below is the example of error in writing tenses:

1. I have graduated from Meditteranean Bali Hotel&Cruise Line Training Centre in May 2015.*

The sentence is not accepted by correct English grammar sentence considering that Present Perfect Tense need not adverb of time. On the contrary Simple Past Tense is possible to use adverb of time. The student has made this error due to L1 transfer called interlanguage error. We can see that the first sentence pattern is typical Bahasa Indonesia. (Bahasa Indonesia: Saya sudah lulus dari ……..)

e. Article (a/an)
The number of error in writing articles are 22 of this part has been found. Below is the example of error in writing articles:

1. I am hardworking person...
2. I am ambitious person.....

In Standard English, we use a/an with a singular noun when we describe someone to say what type of thing someone is. In the sentence above the student describes what type of man he himself is, so the article ‘a’ should appear before his own character, hardworking, creative and ambitious. The students have not yet mastered where and when to use the articles of target language. In Bahasa Indonesia need not the article relating to a singular noun, therefore it has made the students not carefully write sentences whose nouns should use articles or not.

B. The Errors of Application Letter Layouts Done by Meditteranean Students

This part of course is also very important to be discussed. Making such errors in layout can turn a reader away from letter as the reader might question the legitimacy of ability to deal with work offered. The errors in arranging layouts of business letters based on UK concept are classified into 6 categories, sender address, enclosure, after that complimentary close, then salutation, date, and the last is style. There are many kinds of errors in writing the parts of letter layouts found made by the 24 Mediterranean students as follow:

a. Sender Address
The total of 3 errors of this part has been found. Below is the example of error in writing sender address:

- Ni Luh Putu Adyani *
HRD Manager of Grand Hyatt Bali
Nusa Dua

Sender address appears when the letter is sent by an individual. It is better there is no sender name above address because it has been written after giving signature in complimentary close.

b. Enclosure

Typing ‘Enc’ at the foot of the letter is the most common form of indicating enclosures. The total of 2 errors of this part has been found. The example of the error, as follows:

- I’m looking forward to have further personal meeting as my qualifications on attached resume.
Yours Sincerely,*
I Ketut Picantara*

Because an application letter is usually accompanied by a resume, the word enclosure (enc) should appear below the signature element and flush with the left margin. In this example the word enclosure and signature element in the right margin. So, it is wrong of write in enclosure.

c. Complimentary Close

There are two kinds of the errors found in writing complimentary close. The total of 3 errors of this part has been found. The examples of these errors can be seen below:

- Dear Sir/Madam

This is in application for cook position in your hotel as attached on job vacancy stated in Bali Post Newspaper......

Sincerely yours *

If the salutation opens with Dear Sir/Madam, then it closes with Yours faithfully

- I have big desire to be a part of your company........

Your sincerely,*
Ni Wayan Ekayanti

The word ‘your’ in above expression cannot be accepted in complimentary close concept. The word ‘yours’ is instead of ‘your’.

d. Salutation

The total of 3 errors of this part has been found. The example of the error, as follows:

- HRD of Ayodya Resort and SPA
Kemangi Barat 19 A Nusa Dua, Bali
Dear Sir,*

Dear Sirs’ should be written in salutation above, it is impossible if it is written ‘Dear Sir’ because if the letter is addressed generally to an organization and not to a specific person, the more formal salutation ‘Dear Sirs /Madams’ should be used.

d. Date

The total of 1 errors of this part has been found. The example of the error, as follows:

*Today, November 10, 2015

In writing date in covering letter, the more formal date is name of the day should be used, not write by “today”.

e. Style

When writing a covering letter, some students have not been consistent in their letter layouts. For example of the error of style, one of the students has used a full-blocked style for his covering letter, but when writing a body of letter, beginning of each paragraph has been appeared in indented. The writing of this indented paragraph is far from UK business letter concept, the rule of full-blocked style is all letter parts should begin at the left margin as explained above. It seems the errors above made by the students have been caused by their carelessness. The learners have not applied the rules how to do well-organized layouts correctly. In other words, the students have not completely mastered rules of letter layout with its expressions, and therefore they have not implemented them in accordance with the right rules based on the theories. When they know nothing about the rule, they may guess what it should be there.

C. The Interlanguage Error Occur to Mediterranean Students.

According to McLaughlin (1988) transfer errors can occur because learners lack necessary information in second language. It means that the students have probably lack of the information, especially in the knowledge. So, the students do not of English business letter concept and they still find difficulties in writing an English business letter. The students not use most of their spare time in reading English books or newspapers or magazines and they be lazy to practice more how to write well-organized letter.

CONCLUSIONS

Having analyzed those twenty four data, the writer comes to the conclusion. Firstly, the subjects has errors while in writing letter layouts. Based on surface strategy taxonomy analysis, the writer finds the errors in wrong spelling, preposition, verb, tense and the least is writing functional text of application letter done by Mediterranea students in F&B Production. It shows that most of them have already mastered the rules how to place the words in the right positions to build well-formed sentences. The students seem to have difficulty in mastering the rules of English. Additionally, the errors are caused by interference from Bahasa Indonesia, the students transfer grammar rules of Bahasa Indonesia into those of English. It is regarded as interlanguage errors. It is evident that in process of acquiring another language, interlanguage transfer is inevitable. Second, with regard in letter layouts, errors are plentiful in writing sender address, enclosures, complimentary closes, salutations, date, and style. The occur of the interlanguage errors is the students have probably lack of the
knowledge of English business letter concept and they still find difficulties in writing an English business letter.

Finally, the researcher sincerely hopes that this study would be beneficial for English teachers and the learners. For English teachers especially Business English teachers, they could use the result of this study as an input to prepare teaching materials. There are two things should be done by them. Firstly, the teachers should put an emphasis on teaching business letter especially the rules how to organize a good business letter by giving more practicing and homework and check them together with the students. Secondly, relating to writing competence to support writing letter, the teachers should also pay more attention to writing to help learners to develop skills in using Standard English sentences. The error patterns made by the students could help the teachers in focusing the materials. While for the students, they should not be careless anymore in their work. Reading more English books, newspapers, and magazines is one of the ways to overcome their problems besides doing some practicing themselves.

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