

# Interlanguage-based Error Analysis in Higher Vocational and Technological College EFL Education in China

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**Abstract**—The previous traditional second language (L2) acquisition research was lacking of systematic theoretical guidance as regards error analysis and research. Interlanguage firstly provides a reliable theoretical basis, which refers to the entirety of L2 output as a reference context to analyze language learners' errors, significantly reducing the blindness of research practice in error analysis. Error analysis of learners' L2 output contributes to accurately identifying what learners have understood, what they have not yet, what they have misunderstood, what they have mastered, or what they have not yet and so on. This would be of greatly theoretical and practical value to the actual situation of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching for the steady enhancement of EFL instructional reform in higher vocational and technological colleges. Implications are seemingly highlighted respecting interlanguage-based error analysis in higher vocational and technological EFL instruction.

**Index Terms**—interlanguage, error analysis, vocational, technological, EFL

## I. INTRODUCTION

Error analysis is an important topic in second language (L2) acquisition and a hot research issue in recent years (Wedell & Liu, 2012). It is generally agreed that the development period of the error analysis is not long, but its growth rate is fast with increasing research teams and tools constantly being updated, so the outcomes of error analysis have begun to mushroom and sprout in various fields (Widdowson, 2013). L2 acquisition is the process of improving learners' L2 or foreign language proficiency, which is different from first language acquisition (Hu, 1998). Language acquisition is a psychological, cognitive, and linguistic skill development process (Lightbown, 1983). It should be said that the study of L2 acquisition process is aimed at expecting to obtain something beneficial to language teaching and acquisition in order to enhance the effectiveness of L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2012). As such, most L2 acquisition researchers tend to view error analysis as an entry point and a breakthrough in the study of L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2012).

Interlanguage-based error analysis is an effective tool for L2 acquisition research (Selinker, 1972). Cognition of the underlying causes of errors, analysis of errors, and timely adjustment of teaching contents and methods are accurate guidance of L2 acquisition (Tarone, 2012). Studies in L2 acquisition are no longer the induction of sole experience or qualitative analysis description only but should be empirical research via quantitative analysis (Richards & Rodgers, 2013). Through this, a comprehensive, systematic research of description can be made in the case of L2 learners' language performance on top of the investigation and analysis of conditions of language acquisition, and a scientific L2 acquisition module which can render learners' language input and output in a linear relationship model of L2 acquisition can be further established as well (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

## II. ERROR VS. MISTAKE

It seems necessary to distinguish the two linguistic terms “mistake” and “error” before we delve in. Under normal circumstances, these two words are known as “wrong”. Some authors have tried to use the different terms “lapse” or a “fault” to distinguish, but cannot address the problem by its nature (e.g., Selinker, 1974; Tarone, 1979; Tarone, 2011). In fact, from the perspective of L2 acquisition, these two concepts are different (Ellis, 2012). “Mistake” usually refers to fault in performance, which could either be made accidentally due to the speaker's slip of the tongue, or fatigue, or even declination in attention to cause the speaker's performance capacity to reduce (Ellis, 2012). As such, learners have not applied their previous knowledge correctly and thus made mistakes while they should not have since they are fully competent. From this point of view, any person may possibly make such mistakes regardless of speaking the mother tongue or foreign language (Tarone, Bigelow, & Hansen, 2013). In other words, such discourse hesitation, slips of the tongue, occasional violations of grammar rules are not caused by the lack of knowledge but transient imperfections like negligence in the course of language production (Tarone & Liu, 1995). Such faults are known as mistakes. In contrast with this, in the L2 acquisition process, learners tend to deviate from or run counter to the rules of the target language system, and this deviation or contravention is often due to the poverty of the competence of correct expression (Ellis,

2012). Even though such errors are pointed out, it is not certain that the speaker is able to correct them immediately (Ellis, 2012). Rather, he/she will feel at a loss because he/she is unqualified for self-correction right now (Ellis, 2012). For example, a learner will say “Does he can sing songs?”, which indicates that the speaker’s capacity is only limited to the concept that auxiliary verbs can be put at the beginning of question sentences. Perhaps, he/she knows the usage of the auxiliary “does” of the third person in the simple present tense, but has no idea of constituting question sentences by transferring forwards a modal verb to the beginning of the sentence. Such faults are known as errors in L2 acquisition. In accordance with Corder (1967), errors are systematic deviations of language in the course of learner L2 acquisition. The faults discussed in this paper refer to the latter, that is, errors.

### III. ERROR TYPES

Summarizing errors that learners often make will help us to make a better study of the origins and causes of the diverse errors in order to achieve the goal of correcting them to enhance learning effectiveness. Pursuant to Burt and Kiparsky (1972), foreign language learners’ errors can fall into two broad categories: (1) global errors which appear in the important structure of the sentence and affect the learner’s understanding of the sentence and common communication, and (2) localized errors which occur in the secondary structure of a sentence and do not affect the understanding or impede communication though the sentence is not properly structured.

Alternatively, error types can be summarized pursuant to the overtness and covertness of errors (Corder, 1971). Literally, overt errors imply that the learner breaks the grammatical rules of the target language, whereas covert errors suggest that the learner’s statements consistent with the target language grammar rules make no sense from context analysis (Celce-Murcia & Hawkins, 1985). The source and target languages in cultural differences will bring about different solutions to the same problem (Hu, 2002). For instance, Chinese people are accustomed to using “self-deprecation” to reply to appreciation, while the Westerners prefer “thank you” instead.

### IV. THE STATUS AND ROLE OF ERROR ANALYSIS

Error analysis is of great importance to the learners of L2 acquisition (Corder, 1967). In short, error analysis is the research into errors committed by the students in the learning of foreign languages, which can reflect learners’ L2 learning results (Selinker, 1974). Through the analysis of the error, learners will be able to determine whether their own L2 acquisition is successful or not, and judge the appropriateness of their own learning methods and paces, so that they can better allocate their own time identifying which part they should spend more time on (Corder, 1967). Error analysis is also an indispensable aid for the majority of foreign language teachers in foreign language teaching (Widdowson, 2013). The analysis of language errors committed by students would help teachers improve foreign language teaching methods to enable foreign language instruction to be enhanced (Wedell & Liu, 2012). Error analysis pertains to a learner-centered foreign language teaching theory and can shift learners’ attention from external objective factors to the learners themselves and deepen the understanding of themselves since errors are often caused due to learners’ subjectivity (Jiang, 1999). When people identify, describe, explain, and assess learners’ errors, error analysis will show a dynamic and systematic portrayal of the learners so that people clearly identify how and why they have committed errors and how to avoid the same errors (Kleinmann, 1977). Error analysis counts as a major breakthrough in research approaches and methods of teaching an L2, and learners’ errors and error analysis are thus playing a vitally important role in L2 acquisition (Corder, 1967).

### V. THE BASIS OF ERROR ANALYSIS -- INTERLANGUAGE

#### A. *Defining Interlanguage*

Pursuant to Selinker (1972), interlanguage refers to the type of language generated by nonnative speakers in the process of learning an L2 or foreign language. Selinker (1972) asserts that in a given situation the utterances produced by learners are different from those native speakers would produce should they attempt to convey the same meaning. Typically, interlanguage is a dynamic linguistic system that is developed by the learners of an L2 or foreign language who preserve some features of their first language or overgeneralize target language rules in speaking or writing the target language and create innovations since they have not become fully proficient yet but are approximating the target language ((Tarone, 2011). Interlanguage rules are claimed to be shaped by several components, such as first language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of L2 learning, strategies of L2 communication, and overgeneralization of the target language patterns (Carroll & Swain, 1993).

The concept of interlanguage actually involves two layers of meaning, the first of which is the static situation of learners at any stage of language learning, followed by the second layer referring to the learner from the zero starting point gradually to the target language, namely, learners’ language development process (Selinker, 1972). Free between the mother tongue and target language, interlanguage naturally contains numerous errors, which contributes to the recognition of reasonable existence of interlanguage during the course of learners’ L2 acquisition (Tarone, 2011). As such, learners are allowed to make errors in the process of learning. It can thus be said that errors will accompany the development of interlanguage from start to finish (Selinker, 1974). The number of errors and “quality” vary with

different stages, which requires teachers to help students analyze and correct errors, for the sake of eventually achieving the instructional goal step by step (Hu, 2002).

### *B. Evolving Interlanguage*

The language system that L2 learners establish by means of incorrect induction and deduction as regards the regularity of the target language is one of constant change and development continuum, which, along with the intake of new language rules, gradually moves closer to the correct form of the target language (Selinker, 1972). The process of change and development of this typical language system is presented with phases (Selinker, 1972). In particular, when learners could not really understand a rule of the target language, this instability will bring about learners' incoherent, inconsistent errors (Tarone, 1979). In addition, learners of an L2 before learning have already been aware that the language is bound to have its latent rules, so they are always thinking of exploiting the rule system through some kind of assumption, and attempt to apply these not available in the process of language learning (Ellis, 2013). Accordingly, errors made are not systematic.

As far as the stages of learners' interlanguage development are concerned, researchers have once given a description in many different respects. For example, Brown (1986), from the perspective of L2 acquisition language error categories, divides interlanguage into four phases as follows: (a) the random error stage, at which learners are only dimly aware that the target language has a special system of knowledge which needs to be learnt, but they are lacking of this sort of knowledge; (b) the emergent stage, at which the language output of learners gradually becomes consistent throughout, who have already begun to identify the system and internalized certain rules; (c) the systematic stage, at which the learner is able to correct the error once it is slightly pointed out since learners' language use embodies more consistency; (d) the stabilization stage, at which the number of the errors that do not need to be pointed out by others is comparatively small as the learners have already mastered the target language system, made fluent use of the language, and had no problems with the expression of meaning.

## VI. THE CAUSES OF ERRORS THROUGH THE NATURE OF INTERLANGUAGE

Interlanguage-based error analysis theory is still relatively young, which, however, has positive implications for foreign language teaching (Dai & Cai, 2001). The object of the theoretical research is to study the learners, and contemporary applied linguistics research and new-type teaching activities under its guidance tend to be learner-centered, with which research of interlanguage is synchronous (Tarone, 2011). Furthermore, allowing students to make errors during the learning process and positively guiding students to analyze and reduce errors can take protective care of EFL learners' psychological characteristics and thus avoid shortcomings arising out of traditional "errors corrected whenever discovered" (Selinker, 1974, p. 23).

### *A. The Nature of Interlanguage*

The characteristics of interlanguage in nature can be understood through the five actual operation procedures that Selinker (1972) asserts as follows: (a) the interlingual transfer, which implies that while learning a foreign language, learners may process the information of the target language by utilizing the rules of the native language consciously or unconsciously in that they are unfamiliar with the syntax of the target language; (b) the overgeneralization of target language rules, for learners often view some of the target language rules as general ones, oversimplify the target language structure system, and thereby create some structural variations and deviations that do not exist in the target language; (c) the transfer due to the effects of teaching, in which teachers' excessive emphasis on the structure of, for example, "an adjective +ly forming an adverb" will cause students to inappropriately expand such forms of interlanguage as "He treated me friendly"; (d) learning strategies, by means of one of which—simplification by omission, for example, learners often omit the verb morpheme "-s" of the singular third person or the plural affix "-s", giving rise to "She sing very well" or "I can sing three song"; (e) communication strategies, in which, for example, beginners in learning EFL wanted to express "I lost my way" but often said "I lost my road" instead in that they could not think of or know the word "way" for the moment and had to avoid the term and replace it with the misnomer "road".

### *B. The Causes of Interlanguage-based Errors*

Below is the discussion on the specific causes of linguistic errors on the basis of an understanding of the nature of interlanguage.

#### *a. Sentences Transforming into Mechanically-applied Patterns*

In this regard, the author's survey subjects are higher vocational and technological college students, most of whom are rather weak in English proficiency and have not been exposed to sufficient input of materials in English (Hu, 1998; Leng, 1997). They often mechanically apply sentences that are more familiar to them in inappropriate situations, viewing these familiar sentences as formulaic sentence patterns (Campbell & Zhao, 1993). This way surely renders them to say correct sentences and also throw linguistic errors simultaneously (Dai & Cai, 2001). For example, they are acquainted with the sentence "She goes to school every day" (Correct). Undoubtedly, if this sentence pattern is applied mechanically, another correct sentence may arise like "He goes to school every day". Nonetheless, if applied in this

sentence “He goes to here every day” (Wrong), an error triggered by this formulaic pattern application appears.

**b. Misusing Such Logic Means of Expression as Induction and Deduction**

In language learning, learners tend to attach great importance to the universal rules of grammar or general description of grammar (Jiang, 1999). When they are unable to think out an appropriate statement for an idea for a short while, they would tend to be accustomed to the application of induction and deduction by uttering sentences like “He has been there yesterday” or “I saw him to enter the office” and so forth.

**c. Overalertness**

In the process of EFL instruction, teachers often keep on pointing out errors that students have made and require them to correct errors whenever discovered (Ellis, 1990, 2012, 2013). Over time, learners will naturally form excessive awareness of grammatical rules and always seek the most “safe” language to avoid the “error”, and “free formulaic pattern” is just the status quo under this mental pressure (Lightbown & Spada, 1990, p. 431).

**d. Affection Overwhelming Rationality**

Learners’ emotions and feelings are apparently dominant when they undertake purposeful communication activities (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). When learners’ affection gains the upper hand, language rules or sentence patterns learnt will be overlooked and even forgotten (Krashen, 1982). As a result, such simple errors as verb tenses and third person singulars often come into being in usual communication activities (Kleinmann, 1977).

**e. Mixed Application of the Rules of the Target and Native Languages**

During the process of foreign language use, learners are often characterized with the involvement of the mixture of the native and target language rules (Ellis, 1990). Incorrect utterances are not uncommon in the learners such as “He hopes me to help him” and “We suggest them to have another try”. It can be thus noted that learners are attempting to utilize indiscriminately Mandarin word order rules on top of the blind application of infinitive rules in English as well (Ting, 1987).

**f. Fossilization**

After a learner has mastered numbers of sentence patterns of native and target languages, the development of interlanguage comes to halt, and the available sentence patterns would be fossil-like engraved in the learner’s mind (Celce-Murcia & Hawkins, 1985; Dai & Cai, 2001; Hu, 1998). For example, in the learning of English as an L2, Germans are always putting the adverbials of time and place after verbs (i.e., German order); Hindus desire to use *that*-clause after all English verbs (Corder, 1971). No matter how comprehensive these L2 learners’ English knowledge is, similar errors always repeat in the target language learning when learners focus on a new and difficult task or in case of nervousness or excitement (Celce-Murcia & Hawkins, 1985). Even in the situation of extreme relaxation or not speaking the target language for a short time, errors like this arise as well (Selinker, 1974).

## VII. STEPS FOR ANALYZING ERRORS

### A. Collecting Samples of Learner Language Errors

The collection of learner language error samples should be needed at the time of the research of error analysis (Corder, 1967); what error samples to collect and how to collect the samples of these errors will affect the quality and validity of research findings to a large extent (Corder, 1967). Collecting what kind of error samples ought to be a standard issue, which requires that the collected samples of error analysis should be learner’s language materials arising under natural conditions (Tarone, 2012). This kind of language materials has to reduce the interference and impact of researchers and other human factors as much as possible so as to guarantee the objectivity of the collected language materials (Corder, 1971). How to collect sample errors is a method issue, and whether we have adopted the cross-sectional method to collect sample materials or longitudinal capture will inevitably affect the conclusion of the study (Celce-Murcia & Hawkins, 1985).

The error samples of most error analysis studies are conventionally collected by means of horizontal studies (Selinker, 1974). Since language materials collected this way represent the section of learner language development process at some stage, they cannot fully and accurately reflect the learners’ errors occurring in various stages of language development due to their flaws and one-sidedness (Lightbown, 1983). Collecting error samples via longitudinal studies is able to reflect the historical process of learners’ errors occurring in the course of learning and comparatively objectively reflect the actual situation of learners’ second language acquisition as well (Tarone & Liu, 1995). As such, to collect learner error samples through longitudinal research is preferable (Jiang, 1999).

### B. Identifying Errors

The standards of identifying errors will be established for the sake of the confirmation of errors. If errors are viewed as the variants of the received target language, the received target language should be criteria to identify errors (Selinker, 1974). Whether the received written or spoken target language ought to be criteria is a problem (Corder, 1967). Typically, the received written target language is regarded as the kind of criteria (Corder, 1971). In case the received spoken target language is considered as the benchmark, it is actually challenging and nearly impossible (Ellis, 2013).

In addition, there is another tough problem. That is, the angles of judging errors are manifold: judging from the language form (e.g., *He telled me a lot.*), from the semantic perspective (*lover*; a person who is loved), also from the pragmatic perspective (e.g., *I want you to shut the door.* It is applicable to those you are familiar with) (Ellis, 2012).

Establishing a uniform benchmark is certainly somewhat difficult to some degree (Ellis, 1990). Corder (1967) has established a set of criteria for identifying errors, which distinguishes three different types of errors from the perspective of explanations of language forms, subjectivity, and appropriateness. Undoubtedly, mastering the basic features of errors and understanding the difference between mistakes and errors can contribute to identifying errors (Corder, 1967).

### C. Describing Errors

Errors can be described and classified after being confirmed (Corder, 1967). Describing errors is to bring out the surface characteristics of learners' language errors with reference to the received target language (Celce-Murcia & Hawkins, 1985). A set of systems concerning the description of errors has to be established for the sake of describing the surface features of learners' language errors, which tends to focus on the visible surface features of language errors and provide the base to interpret errors (Selinker, 1974). Language errors vary from learner to learner, which brings about a variety of reasons for errors concerned (Corder, 1971). Only categorizing error stuff can we know what kind of learner errors would appear at whatever learning stages or in whatever situations so that we can analyze and explain the causes of errors (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). As such, to classify language errors is a key link to error description (Corder, 1967).

Ellis (2013) divides errors into different grammatical categories, such as subordinate clauses, passive voice sentences, and active voice sentences, which are then broken down into a number of sub-categories (Ellis, 2013). For example, verb errors pertain to a general category, subdivided into a large class of verbs as predicates, and then subdivided into classes like tenses, voices, and tones (Ellis, 2013).

Another kind is Krashen's (1982, p. 38) "classification of surface policy", which focuses on learners' strategies of language use and categorizes errors from the perspective of objective analysis of the cognitive process of learners' language learning. As such, errors can be categorized into "omission" (learners omitting some words necessary in their discourse, e.g., She sleeping.), "misinformation" (replacing one form of grammar with another one, e.g., She ated.), mis-ordering (e.g., learner's wrongly-set word sequences, e.g., What she is eating?) and so on.

Starting from the learners' language learning processes, Corder (1971) brings out another kind of error taxonomies, which falls into three broad categories. The first category pertains to the pre-systematic error appearing while learners have no idea of related rules of the target language (Corder, 1971); the second is the systematic error caused due to the fact that learners have formed some rule systems which are not completely correct (Corder, 1971); the third is the post-systematic error generated when learners have understood and formed the related rule systems but been unable to apply them systematically (Corder, 1967). This kind of classification can reflect the process of learner language acquisition more objectively (Ellis, 2012).

### D. Explaining Errors

Error analysis is aimed at identifying the causes of errors (Krashen, 1982). Accordingly, the interpretation of "error" causes is actually an extremely important point and the issue of the most concern as well in the course of second language acquisition research (Ellis, 1990). Causes of errors can be interpreted from various angles depending on different linguistic theories, which, of course, are primarily analyzed and interpreted from a psycholinguistic perspective (Jiang, 1999).

Richards and Rodgers' (2013) interpretative approach counts as the most influential in a variety of error cause interpretations, in which error causes are clarified into two broad categories according to the different processes of errors caused: One is associated with interlingual errors caused by mother language transfer. The other is related to intralingual errors happening due to language learners' overgeneralization of the rules of the target language since they excessively apply or do not fully understand the target language rules (Richards & Rodgers, 2013).

### E. Evaluating Errors

The last step of error analysis is the evaluation of errors. Errors are not isolated phenomena, but exist in specific contexts (Corder, 1971). The severe and unnatural degrees of errors will vary from context to context (Corder, 1967). Some errors have no great impact on the understanding of the target language; some errors affect understanding; some lead to misunderstanding or even serious loss of comprehension (Corder, 1967). Local errors (usually occurring in the secondary structure of a sentence) have little effect on understanding, while global errors (occurring in the important structure of a sentence) have a great impact on understanding or even cause the misunderstanding of the target language (Corder, 1967, 1971).

In addition, there should exist evaluation criteria for the evaluation of errors. As Jiang (1999) puts it, "generally speaking, the guidelines of error evaluation are threefold: intelligibility, acceptability, and irritation; intelligibility means that the meaning of the sentence containing errors can be understood; acceptability refers to the judgment of the severity of errors of listeners or readers; irritation tends to signify listeners' or readers' emotional stimuli caused by errors" (pp. 32-33). It should be noted that these three criteria themselves are acceptable (Jiang, 1999). Nevertheless, since error evaluation often involves multiple factors, such as the relationship between speaker and hearer, the status of education of interlocutors, the time and location of communication, and the specific context, depending entirely on the above three rules in assessing errors tends to be less likely (Selinker & Douglas, 1985). Therefore, these three rules can be only a reference system for error evaluation (Jiang, 1999).

### VIII. HIGHER VOCATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL COLLEGE EFL INSTRUCTIONAL STATUS QUO

Current higher vocational and technological college students' EFL learning and teaching situations are not optimistic in China (Ministry of Education of China [MOE], 2013). Quite a number of higher vocational and technological college students come from secondary technical schools, vocational high schools, and technical schools where students' EFL proficiency is generally weak due to their knowledge gap in EFL (MOE, 2013). The latest statistical results of simulation tests in the past three years (2011-2013) have showed that the average pass rate of the College English Test-4 (CET-4) throughout the country for non-English majors is 5.8% and that the rate of low scores less than 40 account for nearly 50% with the average score 37.6 (100-point system) (MOE, 2011, 2013).

Furthermore, the author selected at random 132 freshman participants from higher vocational and technological colleges throughout the country who sat for Practical English Test for Colleges (PRETCO) in 2013. PRETCO is a specified testing form for the sake of testifying higher vocational and technological college students regarding their school achievements in English a year after entering higher vocational schools (MOE, 2011). The participants were cultivated under the identical English learning environment by means of the same syllabus and teaching books. PRETCO falls into grades A and B, where grade A is the norm with grade B as a transition. The participating subjects could choose grade A or B pursuant to their individual actual situation, in which there were 64 participants in the arts sitting for grade A with the passing rate 71.88% ( $n = 46$ ). There were 14 for grade B with the passing rate 14.29% ( $n = 2$ ). As such, the total passing rate of grades A and B of the 78 arts students was 61.54%. Among the 132 participating subjects, there were 35 engineering students sitting for grade A with the passing rate 80% ( $n = 28$ ), and 19 sat for grade B with the passing rate 84.21% ( $n = 16$ ). The total passing rate of grades A and B of the 54 participating engineering students was 81.48%.

Additionally, there exist many problems in students' psychological state as well (MOE, 2013). Higher vocational and technological college EFL teaching materials aim to foster students' abilities of using indiscriminately appropriate sentences to communicate in different contexts and situations (MOE, 2013; Nunan, 2003). Such a cultivation objective fits in with higher vocational and technological college students who, however, claim that they should have acquired more in-depth EFL knowledge rather than practical English only (Black & William, 1998). As such, students often feel repulsion towards the language learning without enthusiasm (Hu, 2005).

### IX. IMPLICATIONS

#### A. *Teachers Changing the Traditional Concept of Treating Errors*

The EFL teachers of higher vocational and technological colleges should transform the traditional notion of coping with errors (MOE, 2013; White, 1987). Language errors can be viewed as a symbol for the learner to master an L2 in that interlanguage runs through the whole process of L2 learning (Hu, 2002, 2005). Students should be allowed to make mistakes in EFL language learning, and teachers should know how to grasp the evolution procedures of students' errors, prompting interlanguage to gradually move closer to the target language (Jiang, 1999). Studies on errors have found that the language learner is constantly making mistakes in the process of learning and mastery of the target language. These errors are logical and self-contained in the limited language system of L2 learners (Ellis, 2012). L2 learners gradually learn to use words that conform to the syntax specification by handling outside feedback on these errors (Jiang, 1999). As such, in the teaching of foreign languages, teachers should hold a scientific attitude towards errors which are neither corrected immediately nor overlooked without any interference since immediate error corrections will dampen learners' enthusiasm (Hu, 2005). Only by carefully analyzing errors regarding different characteristics and categories and making distinctions can we find the best ways to correct errors to enhance teaching quality (Tarone, 2012).

#### B. *Teachers Grasping Correct Error-correcting Methods and Techniques*

Equally importantly, teachers should possess right and scientific approaches and techniques (Krashen, 1982). Inappropriate remedies would dissuade students' confidence and enthusiasm, especially for those students who are poorer in English and relatively introverted in character (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; MOE, 2013). Under different circumstances, the teacher can adopt two ways -- direct and indirect remedies (Tarone & Liu, 1995). In the first place, the direct remedy is frequently applied in the mechanical drilling phase (Wedell & Liu, 2012). The teacher can point out global and systemic errors that students make in terms of pronunciation, syntax, and pragmatics and further analyze the causes of the errors while providing the correct form of comparison and relevant material to consolidate knowledge concerned (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In the second place, the teacher may indirectly correct students' errors in language application in a variety of flexible ways (Tarone, 1979). The vast majority of the students in higher vocational and technological colleges frequently make simple errors respecting articles, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, for example (MOE, 2011). At this point, teachers can draw mainly on students' self-correction or student-student correction strategies (Ting, 1987). Universal errors concerning verb tenses and agreements between the subject and predicate can be corrected via discussion and comments in order to protect students' learning enthusiasm and thereby guide students to constantly undertake self-correction to interlanguage (Wedell & Liu, 2012). Furthermore, teachers can likewise hint out the correct forms of their errors by extending the sentences for the sake of deliberate correction of students' errors (Widdowson, 2013). Sometimes, the errors concerned may be stressed on purpose if possible to draw the students'

attention (Harvey, 1985). For example,

Teacher (Correct): What did you do in the main library this morning?

Student (Wrong): I borrowed book.

Teacher (Correct): Oh, I see. You borrowed **a** (*stressed*) book this morning.

In short, regardless of whatever method, its fundamental purpose is to correct students' errors and to protect students' self-esteem and confidence in that there are no rules that never vary (Leng, 1997; Ting, 1987). As a result, a proper method should change at all times with occasions, situations, teaching and learning materials, course types, and purposes (Richards & Rodgers, 2013).

### C. Making Distinctions between Errors

Firstly, the language performance mistake and competence error should be distinguished. As mentioned previously in the current paper, the former refers to the occasional mistake from students due to carelessness who can recognize and correct it by themselves, while the latter refers to learners being guilty of systematic errors which are generally difficult for the learners to find and thus have to be properly guided by teachers (Tarone et al., 2013). Secondly, localized errors such as the plural form of a noun and misuse of a certain article which can be realized and rectified by students and global errors affecting the overall organizational structure even causing interference to communication which should be addressed, emphasized, analyzed, and corrected are to be differentiated (Burt & Kiparsky, 1972). Finally, oral errors and written errors ought to be distinguished. Due to the immediacy and unpredictability of oral communication, it is more likely for oral errors to arise more frequently, and much of this type of error is caused by the unskilled application of principles or inadequacy of time spent using the knowledge acquired to monitor linguistic output as a result (Widdowson, 2013). For such errors, teachers should adopt a tolerant attitude towards errors that students, in particular, higher vocational and technological students, make since too much correction would dampen their confidence and motivation, thus causing fear or avoiding using language for communication due to the poverty of their oral ability (Wedell & Liu, 2012). As far as written errors are concerned, teachers should start with the basic training of the students, emphasizing the accurate use of language (Ellis, 2012).

## X. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, interlanguage theory is the base of error analysis, which is likewise the direct product of error analysis in research breakthrough. Lots of error analysis practices provide a solid material foundation and establishment of the theory of interlanguage and provide scientific theoretical guidance for error analysis in turn. The direct object of theoretical research of interlanguage is learners' interlanguage during the course of their interlingual communication process. Interlanguage is a self-contained, independent learners' linguistic system between the mother tongue and target language and has their own rules which are also created by the learners themselves. Learners apply this rule system consciously rather than arbitrarily. Interlanguage takes shape in the process of communication and is an ever-changing dynamic language system. The rule system of interlanguage is open and constantly introduces new rules by means of adjustment, and improvement, and replacement, and expansion of ready-made transitional rule system, and this system reflects learner language acquisition proficiency and capacity. With the development of learner language acquisition proficiency and capacity, their interlanguage would gradually approach the target language from simplicity to complexity. As the causes of errors and interlanguage are complex and inextricably linked, research on error analysis and interlanguage is bound to be closely interdependent. Interlanguage theory tends to analyze learner language from the macro-perspective of language learners' acquisition of language, while error analysis prefers learner language analysis through micro and specific language focuses.

With the expansion of higher vocational and technological education in China in recent years, the number of higher vocational and technological college students has therefore increased swiftly, and more and more emphasis has been placed on EFL teaching in higher vocational and technological education. Research into error analysis has been a cutting-edge science in contemporary linguistics studies and played a vitally important role in foreign language instruction. The teachers can be more aware of students' mastery of language knowledge with the help of the analysis of students' errors based on interlanguage and identify weaknesses in instruction. Through the analysis of causes and types of errors, the teachers take timely and effective remedial measures, identify the inadequacy of their own teaching methods and plans, and make adjustments and modifications in a prompt manner so as to improve the quality of EFL teaching.

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