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## **Error Analysis in the Argumentative Essays of Georgian Learners of English**

The present study is part of a larger-scale research project investigating cross-linguistic influence on figurative language production in second language acquisition. The purpose of the current study is to identify and categorize various kinds of metaphorical errors made during the written production of English, with a special emphasis on the errors influenced by the native language. Through the analysis of argumentative essays written by 35 Georgian learners of English, gaps in previous research on the metaphor production of L2 learners in natural texts will be addressed. The findings indicate that metaphorical errors significantly challenge written language production, with a notable increase in L1-influenced metaphorical errors from B1 to B2 proficiency levels. By extending the data pool, the results contribute to research initiated by Nacey (2013) and Littlemore et al. (2014) that focuses on the frequency and types of L1-influenced metaphorically used words.

Keywords: error analysis, L2 production, metaphor, argumentative essay, L1 influence

### **1. Introduction**

Error analysis is a comprehensive procedure which involves identifying and categorizing errors made by second language learners and requires clear methodological guidelines to ensure the analyst's objectivity. James (1998) provides the most comprehensive in-depth classification of L2 errors and highlights the usefulness of contrastive error analysis in pre-identifying potential areas of difficulty for learners who speak a particular first language and want to learn a given target language. Corder (1967), as cited by James (1998: 12), lists various compelling reasons for the importance of identifying and categorizing L2 errors. Firstly, errors provide valuable insights into learners' in-built syllabus and the cognitive processes involved in language acquisition. Secondly, error analysis can help teachers plan effective instruction by identifying patterns of errors and targeting specific areas of difficulty. Thirdly, errors provide researchers with valuable insights into the process of language acquisition and the nature of language itself. For example, researchers can gain insights into how learners develop their linguistic knowledge and skills over time and identify patterns of errors which suggest that learners are struggling with a particular aspect of the language.

The present study focuses on error analysis from the perspective of metaphorical errors and cross-linguistic influence in L2 learners' natural texts. More specifically, it investigates errors made by Georgian B1-B2 learners of English. The emphasis on metaphorical errors, particularly indirect metaphors, enables a distinct investigation into how Georgian learners comprehend and produce figurative language in English. Analyzing these error patterns can reveal how learners map and transfer unfamiliar concepts to familiar ones from their native language, influencing the structure and usage of their language output. Additionally, the study's findings have practical implications for language instruction, as they address learners' conceptual challenges and recognize recurring instances of metaphorical errors.

The current investigation is based on the methodology developed by Nacey (2010, 2011), who adapted James's (1998) error typology. The writing errors analyzed in Nacey's (2010, 2013) studies are produced by Norwegian learners of English. Other relevant studies such as those by Littlemore et al. (2014), Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska (2017), and Utkina (2016) focus solely on an L1-influenced error typology. These studies analyze essays written by German, Spanish, and Russian speakers of English, respectively.

The article is structured to offer a clear and comprehensive understanding of the process of L2 error analysis. Section 2 provides detailed explanations of the criteria used to identify errors in the writing of L2 learners and highlights the importance of consistency and objectivity in error identification to ensure the validity of the analysis. Section 3 gives a detailed overview of the compilation and analysis of the Georgian EFL argumentative essay corpus. Special emphasis is placed on presenting the problematic cases encountered during the categorization process, and discussing the challenges faced and the strategies employed to resolve them. Section 4 presents the results of the analysis and provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Methodology of error identification**

As mentioned above, several researchers have conducted error analysis research on L2 learners' natural texts and employed various methods to support analysts' knowledge or intuition in determining L2 errors. Nacey (2010, 2013) analyzed texts written by Norwegian B2-C1 learners of English to identify the types of errors which lead to non-deliberate metaphor production. In the first step of error analysis, which is error identification, Nacey (2013: 133) used the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS) as a reference corpus, while she (Nacey, 2010: 71) listed the following resources as a valuable help in clarifying problematic error cases: The British National Corpus (BNC); WebCorp and the World Wide Web as a corpus; online language forums, e.g. WordReference. However, the author did not describe the error criteria and corpus-based methods used for error identification and did not

provide more specific details, such as how many concordance entries should be found in the corpus to mark the expression as grammatically correct or native-like.<sup>1</sup>

Littlemore et al. (2014) implemented a different method to examine the rates of distinct types of metaphoric errors made by German A2-C2 learners of English and the extent of L1 influence on them. They applied a German native-speaker's knowledge to identify and categorize errors according to two criteria: a strict criterion, where “non-native-like phraseology” is marked as an error, e.g. *all the world* instead of *the whole world*, and a generous criterion, where non-native expressions are not considered to be errors (Littlemore et al., 2014: 124).<sup>2</sup>

Another relevant study was conducted by Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska (2017), who investigated the influence of L1 on metaphorical errors in essays written by Spanish B2-C1 learners of English and, similar to Nacey (2010), used the BNC as a reference corpus. They employed a strict criterion for error identification, marking lexical units which did not have corresponding concordances in the BNC corpus as erroneous non-native-like phraseology (for further details see Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska, 2017: 54).

## **2.2 Methodology of error categorization**

In the process of error analysis, the second and most comprehensive step is error categorization, where errors are classified into different types. The previous studies on L2 learners' natural texts have proposed general and L1-influenced error typologies. Nacey's (2010, 2013) work encompasses both general and L1-influenced error typologies, while Littlemore et al. (2014), Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska (2017), and Utkina (2016) provide only L1-influenced error typologies. For this study, I follow Nacey's (2010: 170–175, 2013: 192–202) error classification, which adapts James's (1998) typology.

### **2.2.1 Substance level errors**

James (1998: 129) distinguishes three basic levels of linguistic errors: the substance, text, and discourse levels. The latter level refers to errors with coherence and cohesion of paragraphs or entire texts, and as such, falls beyond the scope of the current research questions and design. The substance level errors, as shown in Table 1, are the results of misspelling or mispronunciation, and the former are divided into two subgroups: mechanical misspellings and misspellings proper (James, 1998: 130–139; Nacey 2010: 170–172, 2013: 196). Mechanical misspellings arise from oversight or carelessness and have the following subtypes: punctuation errors, e.g.,

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<sup>1</sup> Native-like phraseology refers to linguistic expressions that align with the standard or typical patterns observed among native English speakers.

<sup>2</sup> The frequency of the collocation *all the world* in the BNC corpus is lower than that of *the whole world*: 249 and 373, respectively, out of 100 million words.

errors made when using exclamation marks, commas, colons, apostrophes, and capital letters, and typographic errors which are created by pressing the improper key on the keyboard (James, 1998: 131). However, Nacey (2010: 71, 171) prefers to use the term “oversight” to refer to mechanical misspellings which do not involve punctuation, e.g., *binder* for *bidder*, since her study is based on a handwritten corpus. In my Georgian essay corpus this type of error is exemplified by *rememmbers* instead of *remembers*.

**Table 1.** Substance level errors

|                 | James (1998)                   |                      | Nacey (2010, 2013)             |                                    |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Type 1</b>   | <b>Mechanical misspellings</b> |                      | <b>Mechanical misspellings</b> |                                    |
| Type 1 subtypes | Punctuation errors             | Typographic errors   | Punctuation                    | Oversight                          |
|                 | Dyslexic errors                | Confusibles          |                                |                                    |
| <b>Type 2</b>   | <b>Misspellings proper</b>     |                      | <b>Misspellings proper</b>     |                                    |
| Type 2 subtypes | Mispronunciation errors        | Written misencodings | Mispronunciation               | Written misencodings (confusibles) |

James (1998: 133) lists two additional subtypes of mechanical misspellings: dyslexic errors and confusibles. Dyslexic errors are made by people with dyslexia because of a disorder of linguistic systems in the brain, e.g., *parc* instead of *park*, *tow* instead of *two* (James, 1998: 133). Confusibles are the result of confusion between morphemes and words which sound similar, e.g., *course/coarse*; *discriminate/discriminate* (James, 1998: 133). Nacey (2010) discards dyslexic errors and puts confusibles into the other major misspelling category (misspelling proper) as the synonym of “written misencodings”. Nacey (2010: 172) ignores subtypes of mechanical misspellings which have no consequences for linguistic metaphor identification and makes the error identification procedure more straightforward.

Misspellings proper have two subtypes: mispronunciation and written misencodings, i.e., confusibles. Mispronunciation errors are caused by L2 learners’ mispronunciation of English sounds (James, 1998: 137; Nacey, 2010: 172, 2013: 197). For example, Welsh speakers often mispronounce the phoneme /z/ as /s/ and consequently misspell the word *zoo* as *soo* (James, 1998: 137). In my Georgian essay corpus this type is exemplified by *exident* instead of *accident*.

James (1998: 137–139) lists two major subtypes of written misencodings: interlingual and intralingual. The first type includes cases in which bilinguals mistakenly apply L1 spelling rules to L2, e.g., in Welsh the phoneme /ʃ/ is written as <si>; therefore, Welsh speakers tend to apply this rule to English and write *sit* instead of *sheet*. Intralingual misencodings occur when incorrect spelling rules are applied to L2, e.g., *pictiour* instead of *picture* (James, 1998: 138-139). He lists four subtypes

of intralingual written misencodings: overgeneralizations of L2 spelling rules, e.g. the rule [jə] = <iour> applies to *saviour* and *behaviour* but not to *picture*; homophones, e.g. *through* instead of *threw*; misspellings, e.g. *meens* instead of *means*; and letter naming, e.g. <mt> instead of *empty* (James, 1998: 138–139).

There is some overlap and difference between James's (1998) and Nacey's (2010, 2013) categorization of written misencodings. Nacey (2010: 175) simply divides them into two subtypes: phonetic near-misses, e.g., *dear/dare*, and homophone confusions, e.g., *break/brake*. James (1998: 138) also puts homophones in the same category; however, he points out that it is a subcategory of intralingual written misencodings. Unlike Nacey (2010), James (1998: 133–134) assigns phonetic near-misses to formal mis-selections since they are text-level lexical errors. In my Georgian essay corpus, the following example illustrates confusibles: *they meet visitors with worms and respect* instead of *warmth*. I adopt Nacey's (2010) categorization, because James's typology is too detailed for a practical analysis of the written data, and besides, his taxonomy has fuzzy boundaries between the subcategories; for example, there is no clear distinction between synforms and confusibles, which will be explained below.

### 2.2.2 Text level errors

Text-level errors, as shown in Table 2, are also divided into two subgroups: formal errors of lexis and semantic errors of lexis. The first type of formal errors is formal misselections which consist of three subtypes: totally deceptive cognates, partially deceptive cognates, and synforms (James, 1998: 145–148; Nacey, 2010: 174). According to James (1998: 148), totally deceptive cognates are historically synonymous words in two languages whose modern meanings have completely changed, e.g., French *fabrique* ('factory') and English *fabric* ('cloth'). However, Nacey (2010: 174) generalizes this definition to the category of false friends and discards the etymological perspective, e.g., *spectre* instead of *range* (influenced by Norwegian *spekter*) (Nacey, 2010: 190, 2013: 194).

**Table 2.** Text level errors

|                 | James (1998)                    |                      | Nacey (2010, 2013)              |              |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Type 1</b>   | <b>Formal errors of lexis</b>   |                      | <b>Formal errors of lexis</b>   |              |
| Type 1 subtypes | Formal mis-selection            | Misformation         | Formal mis-selection            | Calques      |
|                 | Distortions                     |                      |                                 |              |
| <b>Type 2</b>   | <b>Semantic errors in lexis</b> |                      | <b>Semantic errors in lexis</b> |              |
| Type 2 subtypes | Confusion of sense relations    | Collocational errors | Confusion of sense relations    | Collocations |

Partially deceptive cognates are errors where a single L1 word corresponds to two or more L2 words, e.g. the French word *fatal* is more polysemous than the English word *fatal* (James, 1998: 148–149); *the message will stand* (in Norwegian *stående=stand*) instead of *the message will endure* (Nacey, 2010: 190–191, 2013: 194–195). Nacey (2010: 192, 2013: 195–196) introduces an additional error category – semantic divergence, which is related to partially deceptive cognates because it also involves L1 terms which could be translated by two or more L2 terms; however, the difference is that partially deceptive cognates look or sound similar, while this condition does not apply to the semantic divergence category, e.g. “...to liberate time, so that we have more time...” (in Norwegian *frigjøre = to liberate, to emancipate, to release*) instead of *free time*.

Synforms are phonetic near-misses which have similar semantic features and are existing words from the contextually appropriate word class (Nacey, 2010: 174, 2013: 197). James (1998: 145) illustrates the four basic types of synforms as follows: the suffix type (e.g., *considerable/considerate*), prefixing type (e.g., *compress/suppress*); vowel type (e.g., *seat/set*); and consonant type (e.g., *prize/price*). Nacey (2010: 174) argues that in James’s (1998: 133–134) typology there is no clear dividing line between confusibles (a substance-level error) and synforms (a lexical, text-level error). She points out that confusibles are phonetic near-misses or homophones whose meanings differ significantly and are not prone to widespread confusion, e.g., *dear/dare*, *break/brake* (Nacey, 2010: 174–175). Synforms, on the contrary, tend to be confused by most writers because there is always semantic, as well as formal similarity, e.g., *noticeable/notable*, *loose/lose* (Nacey, 2010: 174–175, 2013: 197). In my Georgian essay corpus this type is exemplified by *will be profitable again for their own forming* instead of *formation*; *not all kids are able to have a happy childhood perhaps for economical problems* instead of *economic problems*.

The second subtype of formal errors of lexis is calques, i.e., a word-for-word translation of an L1 term into English, e.g., *life-pattern* for *lifestyle* (Nacey, 2010: 188, 2013: 192–193). A similar subtype in James’s (1998: 149–150) typology is called misformation, i.e., words which do not exist in L2. However, misformation is a broader subtype because together with calques it also includes borrowings from L1, e.g., writing the German word *kopf* instead of *head*, and coinage i.e., tailoring an L1 word to the L2 structure, e.g., *smoking can be very nocive to health* (in Portuguese *nocivo = ‘harmful’*).

James (1998: 150–151) adds a third subtype to formal errors of lexis called distortions and defines them as intralingual errors of form. They are usually produced during omission (*int(e)resting*), overinclusion (*fresh(er)men*), mis-selection (*\*delitouse/delicious*), misordering (*\*littel/little*), and blending, e.g., *the \*depths of the ocean* where *depth* is blended with *deep*. This subtype overlaps with the

substance level misspelling errors because it is hard to determine what caused such an error – insufficient lexical knowledge of L2 or a simple misspelling.

Semantic errors of lexis have two major subtypes: confusion of sense relations and collocation errors. Confusion of sense relations occur when L2 learners use an inappropriate member from near-synonyms, usually regardless of their L1, e.g., *abandon/desert* (James, 1998: 151–152; Nacey, 2010: 196, 2013: 197). In my Georgian essay corpus this type is exemplified by *durable* instead of *strong* or *tough* (“*Women should be saved next because they are less durable, and finally men.*”). Collocation errors include semantically determined word choice (*crooked stick*, *\*crooked year*), statistically measured preferences (*big losses* is acceptable, *heavy losses* is preferred), and arbitrary combinations (*make an attempt*, *have a try* - *\*have an attempt*, *\*make a try*) (James, 1998: 152; Nacey, 2010: 198). In my Georgian essay corpus this type is exemplified by *under bars* instead of *behind bars* (“...*a prisoner who was put under bars mistakenly*”), which represents the subtype of semantically determined word selections.

### 2.2.3 Grammatical errors

Finally, James (1998: 154–160) introduces grammatical error typology; however, Nacey (2010: 173) decides to focus more on lexical system errors and omits grammatical errors from the analysis. James (1998: 154–158) defines morphological errors as deviations from the correct form of lexical word types; namely, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, and preposition. He further notes that the most frequent morphology errors happen due to the omission or misplacement of third-person singular [-s], plural [-s], past tense [-ed], and progressive [-ing] (James, 1998: 155). It should be noted that, unlike syntactic errors, morphological errors can have an impact on the metaphor identification procedure, since MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit) restricts sense comparison to the same word class and the same grammatical subcategory, such as transitivity and countability (Steen et al., 2010: 35–36). The reason behind such restriction is that words belonging to different grammatical subcategories may have different metaphorical mappings and MIPVU ensures that the metaphorical mappings being compared are as similar as possible: one compares entities with entities, processes with processes, attributes with attributes (Steen et al., 2010: 16–17). In the present research, the morphological errors are classified according to their word class and, if relevant, their corresponding properties, such as noun (number: *\*persons/people*, case: *students lifestyle/students’ lifestyle*), verb (person: *\*keeping pets have lots of benefits/keeping pets has lots of benefits*, number: *\*pets feels danger/pets feel danger*, tense: *\*nowadays it became harder/nowadays it becomes harder*), adjectives (comparative: *more harder/harder*, superlative: *\*the most easiest/the easiest*), articles (definite: *compared to past/compared to the past*, indefinite: *\*important*

*person/an important person*), adverbs (*\*irregardless/regardless*), etc. Identifying word class subtypes is essential to find out which class is the most affected by general errors and metaphorical errors. As regards syntactical errors, they represent mistakes in phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs (James, 1998: 156). James (1998: 156–160) lists four major subtypes of syntactical errors: phrase structure errors, clause errors, sentence errors, and inter-sentence errors of cohesion. In the present research, I categorize them as word order errors (*\*they never are late / they are never late*), reference errors (*\*...it's better to celebrate a birthday in a café, restaurant or club, there everybody can feel free / where everybody can feel free*), omission (*\*to stare prison walls / to stare at prison walls*), or addition (*\*nowadays most of school children lack physical activity / nowadays most school children lack physical activity*) of a word.

#### **2.2.4 Crosslinguistic L1 influence**

The second phase of error categorization is concerned with the errors made due to crosslinguistic L1 influence. As Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008: 27) note, crosslinguistic influence has often been treated subjectively without having clearly defined parameters, and it is obvious that we need a more unbiased approach to identify and measure it. The authors believe that it is possible to make compelling arguments for transfer if we apply the necessary types of supporting evidence which are either already known to the study's audience, or have been recognized in earlier research, or can be extracted from an L2 corpus (Jarvis and Pavlenko, 2008: 36). The researchers who have conducted production studies examining natural texts have employed various methods to prove that cross-linguistic transfer exists. Nacey (2013: 192, 221–228) used the evidence from a number of bilingual English-Norwegian dictionaries, a corpus of Norwegian L1 writing, and in addition, the method of reversed translation by two Norwegian linguists. Littlemore et al. (2014: 124), on the other hand, used their own native-speaker knowledge, whereas Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska (2017) do not give data about this matter. In the present study, I gathered evidence for L1 influence from various sources, including bilingual English-Georgian dictionaries, Georgian monolingual and bilingual corpora and the method of reversed translation.

However, the evidence for L1 influence was traceable only in the categories of confusion of sense relations, phrasal errors, and collocation errors (for details see Table 5). This is because the category of synforms includes phonetically similar words with shared meanings in the L2, making them unaffected by the learners' L1. Similarly, substance level errors, which are caused by misspellings or mispronunciations of L2 words, are not attributable to L1 influence. Identifying L1 influence on grammatical mistakes was outside the scope of this study. This is because the L1 and L2 addressed in this study belong to different linguistic

typologies, making it difficult to draw parallels between their syntax, use of tense, pluralization, articles, and suffixation, and therefore, establish objective evidence of L1 influence. Additionally, the fact that synforms, grammatical, and substance level errors did not show any prominent evidence of L1 influence suggests that these types of errors are more likely to be influenced by other factors, such as language proficiency level or attention problems, rather than transfer from L1.

### **3. Research Methods**

#### **3.1 The Georgian EFL argumentative essay corpus**

The essays analyzed in the current study were written by 35 Georgian learners of English who obtained B1 and B2 proficiency levels in English based on *The Oxford Placement Test* results.<sup>3</sup> Both male (17) and female (18) participants were 18 years old and were in their final year of high school. The argumentative essays had an average length of 150-200 words, and the essay corpus consisted of a total of 5773 lexical units. The students were asked to express their opinions on a range of social and moral issues, including topics such as "*Should animals be kept in zoos?*" and "*Can money buy happiness?*", and support their arguments with reasons and examples. To avoid any bias or influence on the frequency of figurative language use, previous studies on L2 learners' natural texts have also included essays covering various social topics rather than focusing on a single topic; for instance, Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska's (2017) study analyzed essays written on "college", "parents' role", "public transport", etc.

The essays for this study were stored in electronic spreadsheets to include information about each lexical unit, such as part-of-speech tags, error types, and metaphoricity. Lexical units in the essays were labeled using an automated annotation procedure for part-of-speech tagging. This compilation resulted in a learner academic corpus, where each essay represents the individual work of a different student. The corpus was intentionally maintained in its original, raw form, without any lemmatization or alterations to its grammatical and structural linguistic elements. A sample essay is presented in its authentic form in Appendix 1.

#### **3.2 Procedures and criteria for corpus analysis**

The error correction procedure was carried out by an English native speaker analyst, ensuring authentic proofreading practice, as native proficiency enhances error correction reliability. The analyst is from London, UK, and has extensive experience in professional proofreading and editing. I provided her with the essays in MS Word

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<sup>3</sup> *The Oxford Placement Test* is a reliable computer-adaptive English language test for non-native speakers. It consists of two sections - Use of English and Listening - and measures CEFR (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) levels from Pre-A1 to C2. The test was taken under the supervision of a teacher in a school setting.

format for ease of proofreading, commenting, and reviewing.<sup>4</sup> As a follow-up step, I discussed the corrected essays with her and provided her with constructive written feedback on the lexical items which were problematic or needed further clarification. The feedback focused on avoiding any substantial rewriting where possible, and it did not influence the native speaker's decision-making overall.

Furthermore, the correction procedure was based on the generous criterion under which non-native-like expressions are not considered to be errors. The strict criterion would generate numerous erroneous items which may be non-native or not natural but are otherwise grammatically and semantically correct. As for the corpus-based correction, it would make the process more complicated, since it is challenging to determine how many corpus concordances are necessary to decide whether a certain collocation belongs to native-like or non-native-like phraseology and subsequently whether it is an error or not. The reason a corpus does not contain any instances of a word or phrase could be either that it is an error or the fact that all corpora are limited to a certain number of words, and they are not all-encompassing.

The generous criterion used in this study also considers the role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). According to Seidlhofer (2009), as cited by Nacey (2013: 166), ELF speakers prefer to use easily comprehensible expressions to ensure effective communication; as a result, their wording differs from authentic and conventional native English. Therefore, to ensure successful communication between different L1 speakers in the international environment, it is more appropriate to use ELF rather than native British or American English, which involve numerous confusing culture-specific idioms and collocations. Consequently, non-native-like expressions in the Georgian essay corpus are marked as errors only if they are grammatically or semantically incorrect, while other minor deviations from standard English norms are not marked as erroneous.

### **3.3 Error categories**

The error typology used in this study is presented in Table 3. This typology consists of six major categories and is suitable for both general and L1-influenced error classification. Type 6 errors will be discussed in the next section, where some problematic cases are discussed.

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<sup>4</sup> The essays were handwritten to prevent the participants from using spelling and grammar correction functions of a word processing software programme. Subsequently, the essays were carefully transcribed into MS Word format, preserving the original mistakes, and preventing the introduction of any additional errors.

**Table 3.** Error categories

| Type | Name                         | Definition   | Example   |
|------|------------------------------|--|---|
| 1    | Synforms                     | Phonetic near-misses which share semantic features.  | * <i>economical/economic</i>  |
| 2    | Confusion of sense relations | The selection of an inappropriate member from a set of near-synonyms.                                    | * <i>detect/notice</i>  |
| 3    | Collocation errors           | Semantically determined word selections, statistically weighted preferences, and arbitrary combinations. | * <i>to <u>do</u> capital punishment/to <u>carry out</u> capital punishment</i> |
| 4    | Grammatical errors           | Errors in syntax, use of tense, pluralization, articles, and suffixation.                                | * <i>persons/people</i>   |
| 5    | Substance level errors       | Misspelling errors resulting from punctuation, oversight, mispronunciation, or confusibles.              | * <i><u>joint</u> forces/<u>joined</u> forces</i>                               |
| 6    | Phrasal errors               | The whole phrase/word sequence is incorrect and requires multiple corrections or total replacement.      | * <i>are not less in crime percentages/do not have lower crime rates</i>        |

### 3.4 Some problematic cases

The Georgian essay corpus contains several errors which are not easy to classify since they do not fit easily into Nacey's (2010, 2013) or James's (1998) error taxonomy. Some errors involve the substitution of a phrase by a native speaker with another phrase, resulting in a change in the original wording. For example, *from the recent cases* in (1) was replaced by the native speaker with another phrase *just in recent times alone*. The difficulty arises while deciding between word-for-word correspondences in the correction process. There can be two solutions: to match a word with a word within the phrase or to introduce an additional error category. If we apply the word-to-word approach we will have the following matching pairs: “from” - “in”, “the” - article addition, “recent” - “recent”, “cases” - “times”. The pairs end up being misleading because in the original phrase “from” or “the” collocate with “cases”, but they become errors when “cases” is replaced with “times”. The second solution, which I use in the present study, is to introduce a new type of error, called phrasal error or word sequence error, which shows that the whole phrase is incorrect.

(1) From the recent cases, I can remember Coronavirus and war situation.

In sentence (1), *can remember* was replaced by *have seen*, which is also hard to fit into any error category, since the words are not closely related. We cannot put it in the category of synforms because they are not semantically similar phonetic near-misses. It does not fit in the category of confusion of sense relations, either, because

they are not near-synonyms. It would be more appropriate to refer to it as a sequence/phrasal error, as one verb phrase was replaced by another.

The following are further instances of correcting whole phrases or word sequences: in (2), *had home office* was corrected as *worked from home*. In (3), *to continue with* was replaced by *moving on to*. In (4), *are not less in* was replaced with *do not have lower*. All of these are classified as Type 6 errors.

- (2) Another hard moment was that, everybody had home office or had salary without working, so-called beneficiary help.
- (3) To continue with cons, in online classes there was not any physical interaction with classmates and group-works were not possible.
- (4) [...] countries which still have capital punishment are not less in crime percentages compared to other countries.

With the introduction of the phrasal error, another difficulty arises in the metaphor identification process, according to the MIPVU protocol. Nacey (2013: 119) takes the view that the principal approach of MIPVU focuses on word-to-word matches and sense comparison of the intended word with the produced single lexical unit. However, the problematic cases illustrated above clearly require the introduction of type 6 phrasal errors since word-to-word matching cannot be applied. Several approaches could be proposed to deal with the metaphoricality of phrasal errors, each with its positive and negative features. The most straightforward, but certainly unproductive, solution is to simply exclude phrasal errors from metaphorical categorization. On the other hand, such phrases from metaphorical categorization containing both metaphorically used and non-metaphorically used words could be excluded. A further option worth considering is to mark a phrase as metaphorical if most of the words in it are metaphorical. The most reliable and productive approach seems to be to mark the whole phrase as metaphorical if at least one content word (i.e., noun, verb, adjective, or adverb) in the phrase is considered metaphorical according to the MIPVU protocol. In (2) above, *had home office* is labelled as metaphorical phrasal error because the verb *had* is an indirect metaphor.

#### **4. Results and discussion**

To explore differences between general writing errors and metaphorical errors, I analyzed 35 essays containing a total of 5773 lexical units, of which 691 (12%) units were erroneous. The essays were written by B1 and B2 level Georgian learners of English. Table 4 shows error category distribution between metaphorical and non-metaphorical errors.

Out of 691 erroneous items 88 (12.7 %) were metaphorical errors and these were divided into six subcategories, with grammatical errors being the most frequently occurring, followed by confusion of sense relations, phrasal errors, substance level errors, collocation errors, and synforms. The remaining 603 (87.3 %) erroneous items were non-metaphorical errors, and they were also divided into subcategories according to their type and frequency.

**Table 4.** Error category distribution

| Type | Error Category               | Metaphorical Errors (%) | Non-metaphorical Errors (%) | Total      |
|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| 4    | Grammatical Errors           | 38 (43.2%)              | 327 (54.2%)                 | 365        |
| 5    | Substance Level Errors       | 9 (10.2%)               | 170 (28.2%)                 | 179        |
| 2    | Confusion of Sense Relations | 20 (22.7%)              | 74 (12.3%)                  | 94         |
| 6    | Phrasal Errors               | 13 (14.8%)              | 18 (3%)                     | 31         |
| 3    | Collocation Errors           | 7 (8%)                  | 7 (1.2%)                    | 14         |
| 1    | Synforms                     | 1 (1.1%)                | 7 (1.2%)                    | 8          |
|      | <b>Total</b>                 | <b>88</b>               | <b>603</b>                  | <b>691</b> |

Upon closer examination of the specific types of errors, it becomes evident that metaphorical errors are a significant issue, despite being less frequent than non-metaphorical errors. The proportions of confusion of sense relations (22.7%), phrasal errors (14.8%), and collocation errors (8%) are higher for metaphorical errors than for non-metaphorical errors (12.3%, 3%, and 1.2%, respectively). Non-metaphorical errors, which primarily consist of grammatical errors or substance level errors caused by misspellings, can be more easily identified and corrected through straightforward rules of grammar and vocabulary. Metaphorical errors, in contrast, are more likely to involve issues with semantic and lexical processing of L2 words and multi-word expressions. Consequently, metaphorical errors present a greater challenge to written language production, since they can hinder effective communication and the delivery of the intended message. Therefore, identifying and addressing metaphorical errors in second language acquisition is crucial for improving language proficiency and promoting effective communication.

As a next step, an analysis of L1 influence on metaphorical and non-metaphorical errors was conducted, revealing interesting patterns in the types of errors made by L2 writers. The results in Table 5 show that L1 influence is more prevalent in metaphorical errors than non-metaphorical errors. Specifically, out of a total of 40 metaphorical errors found in the categories of confusion of sense relations, phrasal, and collocation errors, 18 (45%) were influenced by L1. In contrast, only 10 (10.1%) out of 99 non-metaphorical errors in these same categories were influenced by L1.

Confusion of sense relations was a predominant category in both metaphorical and non-metaphorical errors, followed by phrasal and collocation errors.

**Table 5.** L1-influenced error distribution

| Type | Error Category               | L1-influenced Metaphorical Errors (%) | L1-influenced non-metaphorical Errors (%) |
|------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 2    | Confusion of Sense Relations | 12 (66.7%)                            | 5 (50%)                                   |
| 6    | Phrasal Errors               | 4 (22.2%)                             | 3 (30%)                                   |
| 3    | Collocation Errors           | 2 (11.1%)                             | 2 (20%)                                   |
|      | <b>Total</b>                 | <b>18</b>                             | <b>10</b>                                 |

These results suggest that L1 influence is more likely to affect the processing of metaphorical language, as it involves more complex and abstract meanings which may not have direct translations in the L2. On the other hand, non-metaphorical language may involve more concrete and tangible concepts which are easier to translate directly from L1 to L2. Overall, the findings have important implications for language teaching and learning, as they suggest that targeting the processing of metaphorical language may be a useful strategy for improving L2 proficiency and reducing errors.

It is also worth comparing the errors made by B1 and B2 level learners. As shown in Table 6, the analysis of the data revealed interesting insights regarding the occurrence of metaphorical errors and L1 influence at different proficiency levels. Out of a total of 378 erroneous items in B1 level essays, 39 (10.3%) were metaphorical, and 4 (10.3%) of these were influenced by the writer's L1. In contrast, out of 313 erroneous items in B2 level essays, 49 (15.7%) were metaphorical, and 14 (28.6%) of these were L1-influenced. The data suggests that as proficiency level increases from B1 to B2, the likelihood of making metaphorical errors also increases. This observation aligns with the finding that B2 level essays had a higher percentage of metaphorical errors (15.7%) compared to B1 level essays (10.3%). Furthermore, the percentage of metaphorical errors influenced by the writer's L1 was higher in B2 level essays (28.6%) compared to B1 level essays (10.3%).

**Table 6.** Error statistics by proficiency level

| Level | Total Errors | Metaphorical Errors (%) | L1-influenced Metaphorical Errors (%) |
|-------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| B1    | 378          | 39 (10.3%)              | 4 (10.3%)                             |
| B2    | 313          | 49 (15.7%)              | 14 (28.6%)                            |

These results align with previous studies by Littlemore et al. (2014: 138–140), as well as Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska (2017: 56), which also found higher rates of metaphorical errors and L1 influence in writing at the B2 level. One explanation for the remarkable increase in metaphors containing error between B1 and B2 levels may be attributed to an experimental stage around B2 where learners use metaphors more creatively, resulting in a higher number of errors (Littlemore et al., 2014: 139).

## **5. Conclusion**

The present study has provided a comprehensive error analysis of argumentative essays written by Georgian learners of English at B1-B2 levels, consisting of 5773 lexical units. The findings indicate that metaphorical errors present a significant challenge to language learners, as they are more likely to involve issues with semantic and lexical processing of L2 words and multi-word expressions. Furthermore, the study has revealed that L1 influence is more likely to affect the processing of metaphorical language, as it involves more complex and abstract meanings which may not have direct translations in the L2. The data has shown a notable rise in L1-influenced metaphorical errors from B1 to B2 proficiency levels, potentially due to an experimental phase where learners use more creative metaphors. These results are consistent with previous studies carried out by Littlemore et al. (2014) and Iaroslavtseva and Skorczynska (2017), which have also found higher rates of metaphorical errors and L1 influence in writing at the B2 level.

Additionally, the current work encountered some challenges in categorizing errors which do not fit into existing error taxonomies, such as Nacey's (2010, 2013) or James's (1998); therefore, a new category of error, that of phrasal error, was proposed, and the challenges of applying metaphor identification procedure to such errors were addressed.

Overall, the present study provides insights into the nature of metaphorical errors in second language acquisition and emphasizes the importance of targeting the processing of metaphorical language. By improving the understanding of metaphors and their differences in L1 and L2, learners can improve their proficiency in writing and mitigate the negative effects of L1 influence. These findings contribute to the field of applied linguistics by providing practical implications for various areas, including language acquisition, error analysis, metaphor analysis, cross-linguistic influence, and language instruction. Moreover, this study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature as no prior investigations have specifically explored cross-linguistic influence between Georgian and English concerning metaphorical errors.

Finally, it should be noted that this study focused on B1 and B2 proficiency levels of English, and further research is needed to extend this error analysis to pre-intermediate and advanced levels. The scope of the research needs to be expanded to encompass a broader range of genres and modes of language production. Thus,

conducting investigations into various writing tasks, text types, and spoken language production, while also expanding the size of the corpus, will contribute to a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of learners' use of figurative language.

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## Appendix

Appendix 1. Essay written by a student at the B1 language proficiency level.

**Some people say that teenagers should work part-time and earn money. Others argue that teenagers shouldn't sacrifice their rest and after-school activities to work. Discuss both views and give your opinion**

In many countries teenagers work part-time and study simultaneously. Many people think that this can damage the quality of their school activities and another teenage activities after school.

It is very important for teenagers to realize how hard it is to learn money. For this reason, they can try having a part-time job and feel the harsh reality of adult life. After this they will be more motivated to study hard and later have satisfying and respectfull job.

Also, with a part-time job a teenager can help parents and make some contribution to family expences. This way, they will learn sharing responsibility and also feel like important person. However, a part-time job shold not be too demanting and make it possible for a teenager to manage time well between working, studying and resting.

To sum up, part-time jobs are great opportunities to develop some adult skills and also earn enough money to be satisfied.