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Full paper

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**Paper title:** Error versus creativity: The metaphorical language of Norwegian L2 English learners

**Category:** Application (the use of corpora in language teaching and learning)

### **Abstract:**

This paper explores the dividing line between ‘difference’ and ‘deficiency’ in the written language of Norwegian EFL learners by focusing on the complex concept of metaphorical creativity and its identification (see e.g. Nacey 2013: 157-203). Creativity merges the known with the familiar; metaphor —according to cognitive theorists— links disparate semantic domains to illuminate a less familiar (often abstract) concept in terms of a more familiar (more concrete and/or embodied) concept (see e.g. Steen 2011). The products of the creative process are new, and in some sense extraordinary. The prototypical metaphor —according to the traditional view— is vibrant and novel, provoking new insight (see e.g. Black 1981). Metaphor and creativity would thus seem to go hand in hand. Indeed, L2 language users, who per definition have access to two or more languages, may also produce manifestations of ‘bilinguals’ creativity’ resulting from the ‘mixing’ of languages (Kachru 1985; Kumaravadivelu 1988, p. 313 and 316).

This corpus-based study examines all occurrences of metaphorical language in roughly 20,000 words of argumentative texts written by advanced Norwegian students of English that meet (at least) one of three oft-mentioned criteria of creativity: novelty, significance (i.e. the deliberate ‘crafting’ of language), and appropriateness (i.e. intelligibility) (Boden 2004: 43; Cameron 2011; Kövecses 2010: 664; Pitzl 2009, 2012; Semino 2011; Steen 2008); the potential role of the L1 is also investigated. The overarching goal is an evaluation of these criteria as valid measures of creativity, in an attempt to tease apart “what looks like a mistake but is in fact poetry” (McArthur, cited in Rubdy & Saraceni 2006: 23) in L2 learner language.

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