Novel metaphors and Learner English

Susan Nacey

The Stockholm 2009 Metaphor Festival

Hedmark University College

Outline of presentation

- Material and procedure

- Identification of novel metaphors and related issues

- Frequency of novel metaphors

- Comparison of Norwegian L2 English with British English

- Taxonomy for the motivation of novel metaphors

- Summary and consequences

Learner English

- **20,000 words of Norwegian L2 English**
    - Norwegian component of the International Corpus of Learner English (NICLE)
    - Argumentative essays
    - *Some people say that in our modern world, dominated by science, technology and industrialisation, there is no longer a place for dreaming and imagination.*
    - University and college students
    - Advanced level of English

- **20,000 words of British English**
    - Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS)
    - Argumentative essays
    - *Computer and the human brain* (4653 words)
    - *In vitro fertilization – genetic manipulation* (14909 words)
    - *Transport* (4798 words)
    - *Problems facing the monarchy* (451 words)
    - British A-level students

Procedure

- Identify metaphors using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP)
  - Centers on individual lexical units (words)
  - Linguistic metaphors, not their underlying conceptual metaphors
  - Identifies indirectly expressed metaphors (not similes, analogies, etc.)

- Categorize metaphors according to degree of conventionality
  - Dead
  - Conventional
  - Novel

- Classify the novel metaphors according to their motivation

Novel metaphors

- "Corpus frequencies can be used as a rough guide: any sense of a word that is found less than once in every thousand citations of the word can be considered either innovative or rare…"
(Deignan 2005: 40)

- One characteristic of a creative metaphor is that it is "not inferable from the standard lexicon" (Black 1993: 23)

- "Dictionaries use certain cut-off points for including specific patterns of usage as conventionalized enough…[so that] less conventionalized usage by definition falls outside [their] scope" (Steen 2007: 100)

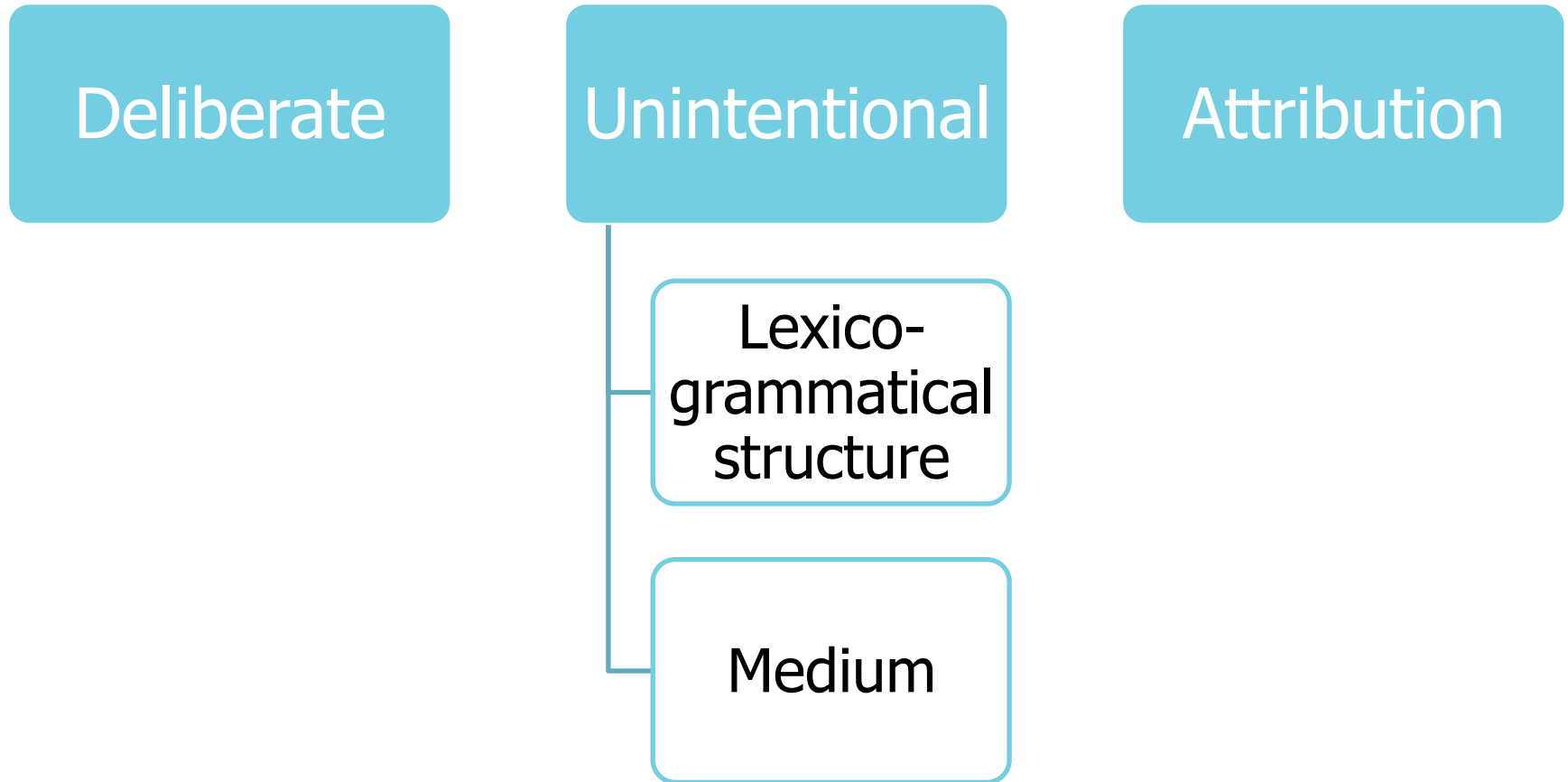susan.nacey@hihm.no

Hedmark University College

Frequency of novel metaphors

- "In metaphor studies, strong, active poetic metaphors have commonly been placed at the centre of the category as prototypes." (Cameron 2003: 61)

- "99% of all metaphor in discourse appears to be conventional as opposed to novel…" (Steen 2008a: 227)

- "[I]nnovative metaphors are infrequent…and therefore, for the purpose of describing typical language use, unimportant." (Deignan 2005:40)

Novel metaphors in NICLE & LOCNESS

	NICLE	LOCNESS
Word count	20466	20013
Total number of metaphors	3613 17.7% of word count	3358 16.8% of word count
Novel metaphors alone	175 ⟶ 89 lexical 86 function 0.9% of word count 4.8% of metaphor total	87 49 lexical 38 function 0.4% of word count 2.6% of metaphor total

susan.nacey@hihm.no

Hedmark University College

Motivation for the production of novel metaphors

Deliberate

Unintentional

Attribution

Lexico-grammatical structure

Medium

Attribution
(2N)

I love the world and all its problems. There are lots of small and <u>*dusty*</u> *reasons for this…* ICLE-NO-AG-0006.1

I love the world and all it's (sic) problems

The pipes run from north to south

Lots of small and dusty reasons

Rehearse my part and venture out

1993 Buffalo Tom lyrics "Suppose"

susan.nacey@hihm.no

Hedmark University College

Deliberate metaphors

- Those metaphors which have an intentional communicative function allowing for a shift in perspective from the topic domain to a seemingly unrelated domain which somehow sets the topic in a different light (Steen 2008b)

- How to recognize in indirectly expressed metaphor?
  - Multiple, serial, and/or extended metaphors
  - Defective A=B comparison
  - Explicitly marked metaphor
  - Mixed metaphor

susan.nacey@hihm.no

Multiple, serial, and/or extended metaphors (17N)
Distilling a Dream

The thoughts of a romantic scientist.

All my instruments are ready. The test tubes, the gas burner, my nets and my microscope. I am looking for a dream. Is it possible to retrieve it in this <u>sea</u> of <u>contamination</u>? Is it possible to extract its pure and golden <u>drops</u> from all that mucky <u>grey</u>? Is it even there, this sense of mystery and imagination? Has too much knowledge perchance dissolved it and left but the dull and naked facts, <u>crumpled</u> and <u>shivering</u> in the chill <u>gust</u> of science? Is ignorance truly bliss? Does too much knowledge lead to disillusion and cynicism? Can one be an educated person and still retain within oneself the sacred <u>seed</u> of mystery?

ICLE-NO-AG-0017.1

Defective A=B metaphors
(3N, 2LOC)

- *Human-beings are <u>creativity</u> themselves.* ICLE-NO-AG-0011.1

- *The back <u>bone</u> to a computor is its program,...* ICLE-ALEV-0009.6

Explicit signals
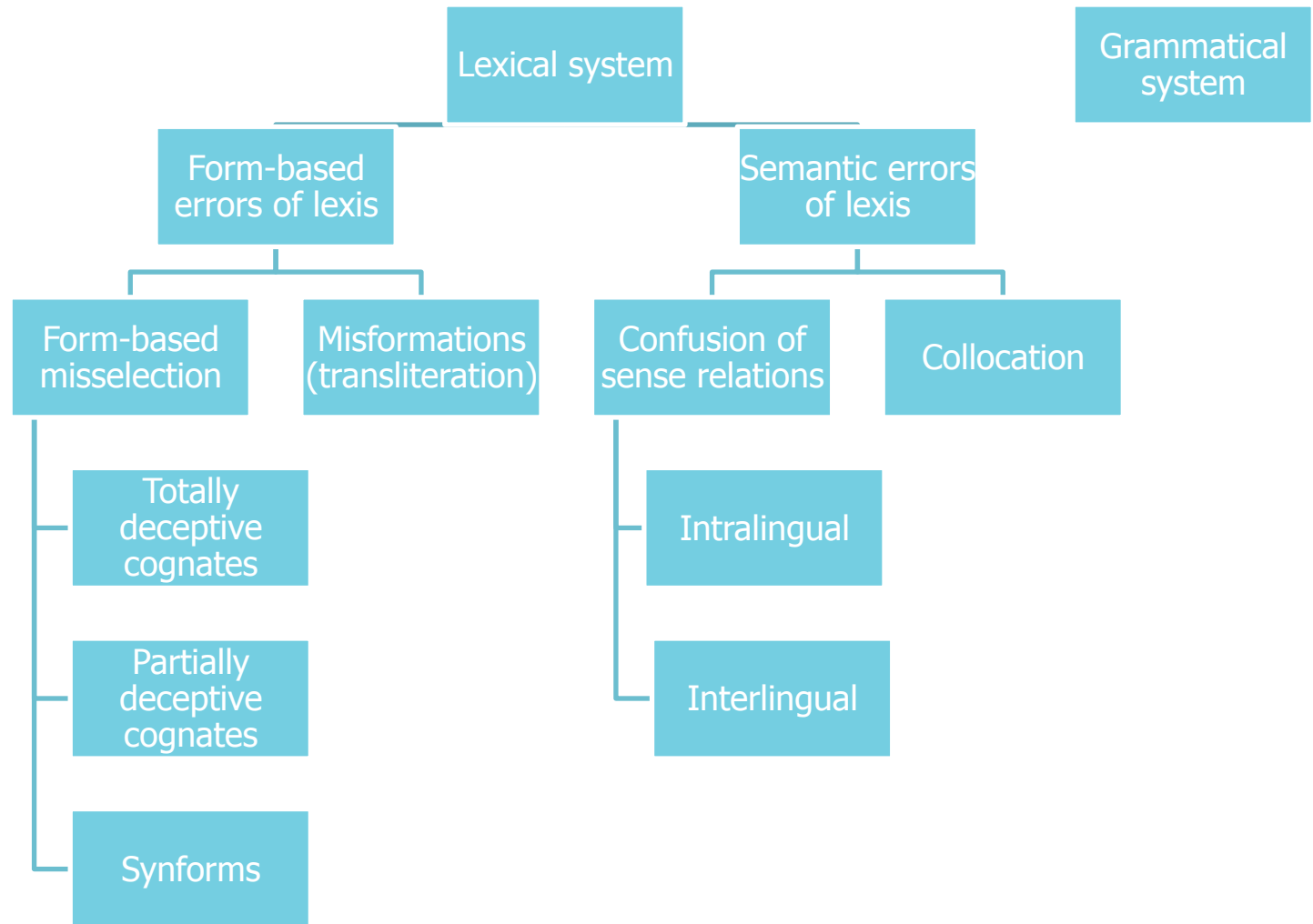## (3N, 3LOC)

- *In other words we make our own* *"film"* *of the book, and we imagine how each character is suppose to look like.*
  ICLE-NO-HO-0023.1

- *And he found that it was because of all the* *"busy"* *things he had to do.*
  ICLE-NO-BU-0003.1

Lexico-grammatical system

Grammatical system
(4N, 1LOC)

Our modern world is becoming a place where stress, health problems caused by over working, and little time are the main <u style="color:red">essences</u> of our lives. ICLE-NO-AC-0001.1

L1 influence
(27N)

Form-based:

- **Totally deceptive cognates (2N)**

spekter

It is in this huge spectre of merchandise and inventions we find ourselves stuck with things that are not as important as the people that surround us. ICLE-NO-AC-0001.1

- **Partially deceptive cognates (7N)**

levere

When we were to deliver this essay, we were asked to please send it as an attachment to the teacher. ICLE-NO-HO-0029.1

- **Transliteration (10N)**

livsmønster

I mentioned earlier that I don't think that the life-pattern of people today gives less room for dreams and imaginations. ICLE-NO-BU-0002.1

Semantic:

- **Confusion of sense relations (8N)**

frigjøre
free / liberate

They [technology and industrialisation] are supposed to liberate time, so that we have more time to do what we wish to do. ICLE-NO-HO-0029.1

susan.nacey@hihm.no

Intralingual
(14N, 13LOC)

Form-based:

- Synforms (4N, 2LOC):

It is __noticeable__ to underline that we might have different interpretation of what dreaming and imagination is, and how it is expressed or made use of. ICLE-NO-BE-0019.1   notable

Semantic:

- Confusion of sense relations

NNS (6N):

The reasons for and contents of these reveries have been changed throughout history, but they have always been with us, and are highly unlikely to ever __abandon__ us. ICLE-NO-BE-0010.1   desert

NNS & NS (4N, 6LOC):

All the way back to when the electricity, telephone, TV and of other different things were __discovered__. ICLE-NO-AC-0009.1   invented
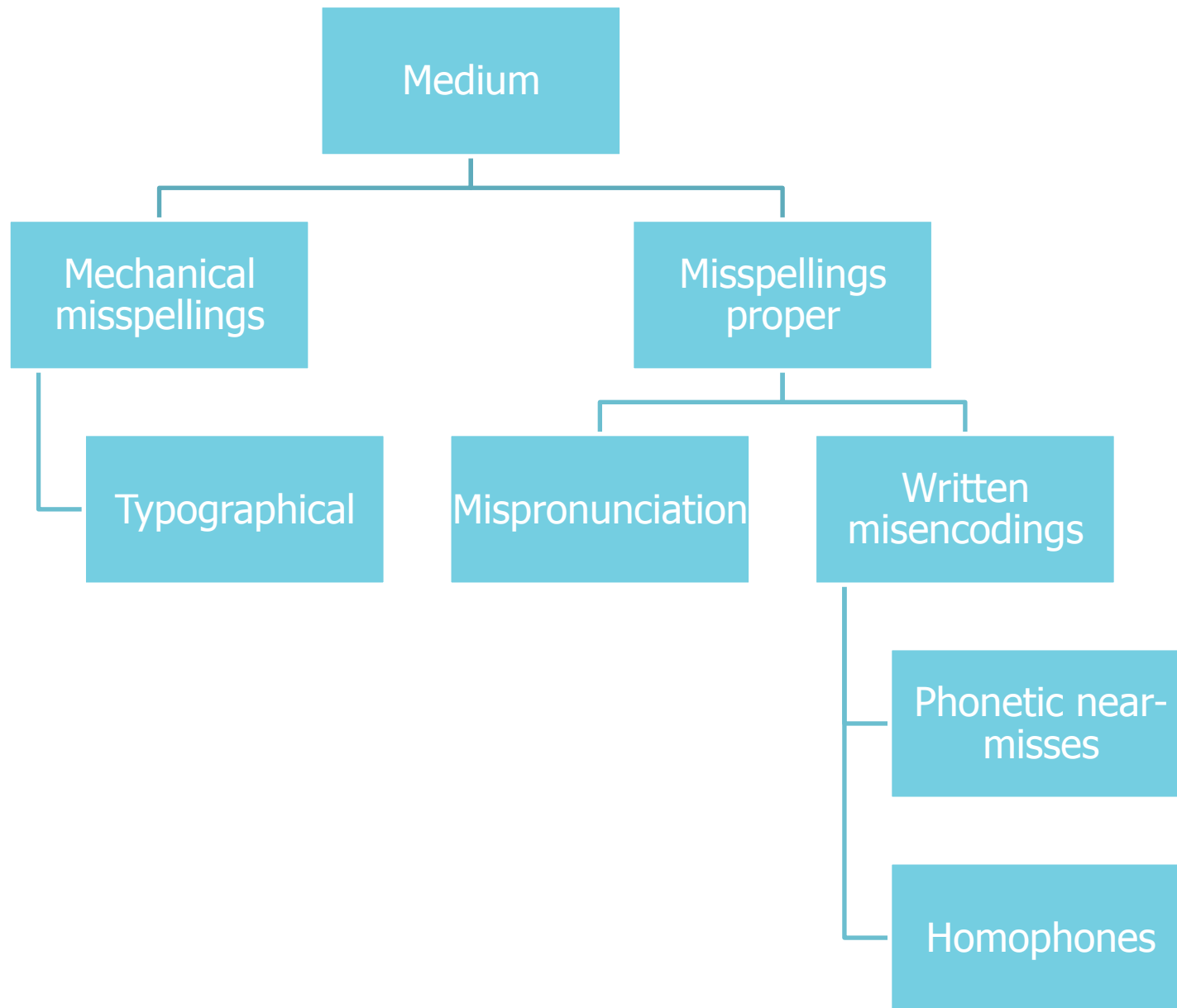
susan.nacey@hihm.no

Collocation
(8N, 1LOC)

- *The author Jules Verne already wrote about travelling under water long before the first submarine <u>saw</u> the day*.
  ICLE-NO-AG-0011.1

to see the light of day

- *One invention has made it possible for another to have <u>seen the light</u>*. ICLE-NO-AC-0013.1

susan.nacey@hihm.no

Hedmark University College

Hedmark University College

Mechanical misspellings
(1N, 6LOC)

310 registered misspellings in LOCNESS

115 registered misspellings in NICLE

*And of course television was **exiting** and quite sensational*.

ICLE-NO-BE-0009.1

Misspellings proper

- Mispronunciation (1N):

  We are able to <u>literary</u> walk into an imaginary one and stay here as long as we want to. ICLE-NO-HO-0023.1

- Phonetic near-misses (4N, 2LOC):

  Letting the mind <u>wonder off</u> on it's own can work as therapy. ICLE-NO-AG-0011.1

- Homophones (1N):

  This world is moving to fast, I need a <u>brake.</u> Stop the world; I want to get of it! ICLE-NO-BU-0003.1

NICLE versus LOCNESS

	Deliberate	Unintentional	Attribution
NICLE	25	60	2
LOCNESS	7	23	0
Total	32	83	2

Unintentional novel metaphors

		NICLE	LOCNESS	Total
Lexico-grammatical structure				63
	L1 transfer	27	-	27
	Intralingual	14	13	27
	Collocation	8	1	9
	Grammatical	4	1	5
Medium				15
	Mechanical misspellings	1	6	7
	Misspellings proper	6	2	8

susan.nacey@hihm.no

Summary

- Novel metaphors are rare

- Deliberate metaphors are more common in NICLE

- Majority of novel metaphors are unintentional in both NICLE and LOCNESS

  - Lexico-grammatical structure
    - NICLE:
      - Totally and partially deceptive cognates
      - Transliterations
      - Divergence

  - Medium
    - LOCNESS writers make more mechanical errors
    - NICLE writers more susceptible to mistaking phonetic near-misses / homophones

Hedmark University College

Consequences

English = ESL or second L1

Overconfident yet incompetent students of English
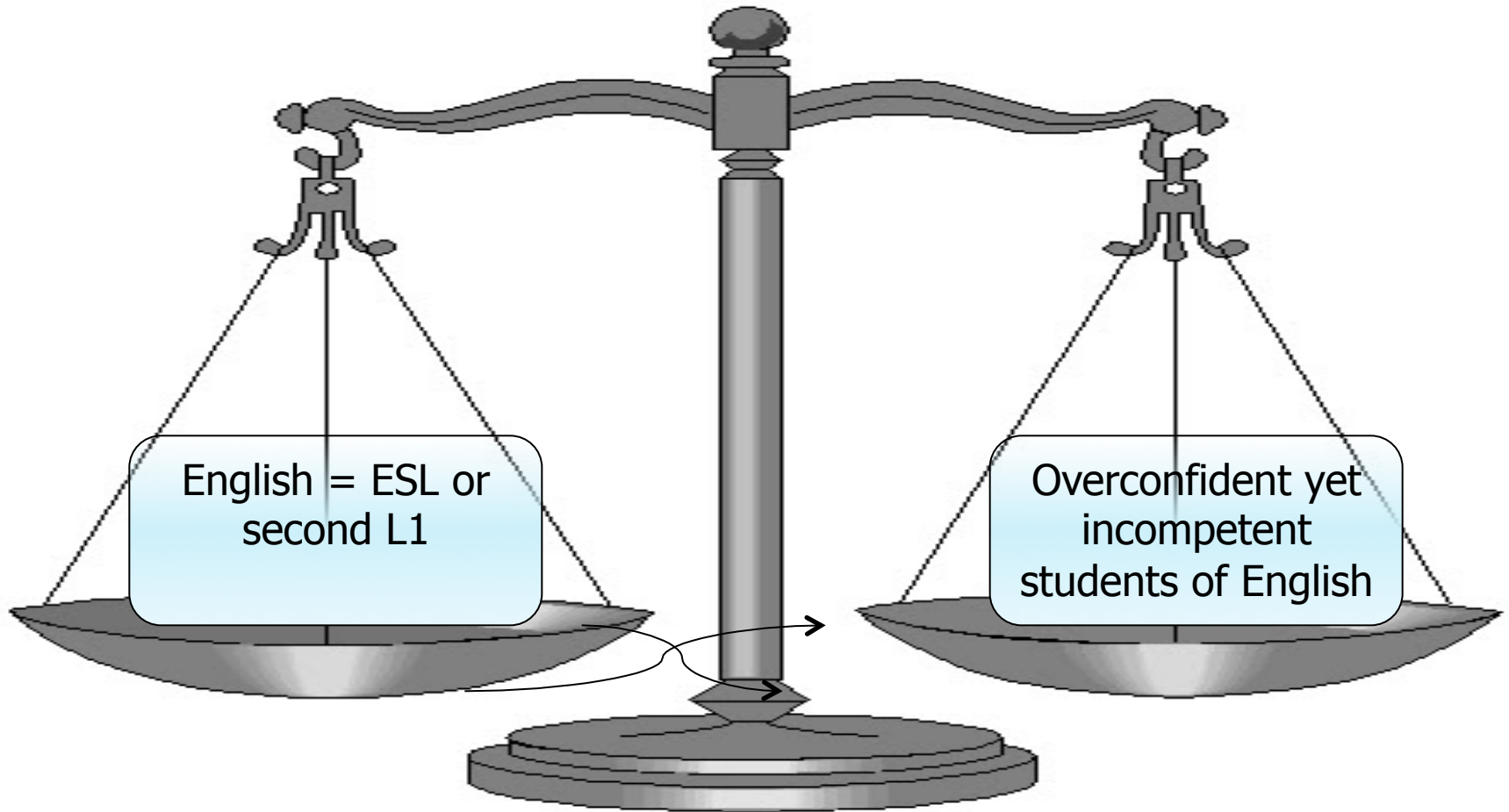
References

Black, Max (1993): "More about Metaphor" In *Metaphor and Thought, Second Edition.* A. Ortony (ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19-41.

Cameron, Lynne (2003): *Metaphor in educational discourse.* London: Continuum*.*

Deignan, Alice (2005): *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

James, Carl (1998): *Errors in language learning and use: exploring error analysis.* London: Longman.

Steen, Gerard (2008a): "The Paradox of Metaphor: Why We Need a Three-Dimensional Model of Metaphor." In *Metaphor & Symbol,* vol. 23 (4), 213-241*.*

Steen, Gerard (2008b): "When is metaphor deliberate? From metaphor in language and thought to metaphor in communication." Paper read at The 2008 Metaphor Festival, September 18, 2008, Stockholm, Sweden.

susan.nacey@hihm.no

Hedmark University College