



International Journal of  
**MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION**

**ISSN: (Print)** ISSN 1987-9601

**(Online)** E ISSN 1512-3146

**Journal homepage:** <http://multilingualeducation.org/>

---

## **Translanguaging as a Tool for Correcting EFL Learners' Errors in Writing**

**Khatuna Buskivadze**

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State

University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Email: [khatuna.buskivadze@tsu.ge](mailto:khatuna.buskivadze@tsu.ge)

**Zurab Baratashvili**

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State

University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Email: [zurab.baratashvili@tsu.ge](mailto:zurab.baratashvili@tsu.ge)

To cite this article: Khatuna Buskivadzei & Zurab Baratashvili  
(2023): Translanguaging as a Tool for Correcting EFL  
Learners' Errors in Writing.  
International Journal of Multilingual Education, #22;  
DOI: [10.22333/ijme.2023.22000](https://doi.org/10.22333/ijme.2023.22000); pp. 71-79.

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.22333/ijme.2023.22008>

**Khatuna Buskivadze, Zurab Baratashvili**

*Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia*

## **Translanguaging as a Tool for Correcting EFL Learners' Errors in Writing**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores Georgian students' errors influenced by their L1 and their perceptions on integrating translanguaging into error correction in the writing task. Implementing translanguaging (simultaneous use of Georgian and English languages as a unitary meaning-making system) as a tool of correcting Georgian students' errors in writing seems to be the novelty of our research. The given case study deals with 21 Georgian students, aged 16-17, learning English as a foreign language. Both, qualitative (online questionnaire for students) and quantitative methods were used. Students' general errors were classified accordingly: grammar (e.g., tense and aspect (17), agreement (15), number (24), infinitive and gerund (5), article (19)) (Overall – 80); Vocabulary (missing word, extra word, wrong word) (Overall – 49); Spelling (Overall – 54); Punctuation (Overall – 31); Out of which errors stipulated by L1 were distinguished. The survey found that the most students ( $\approx 52\%$ ) supported replacing the monolingually-focused way of giving feedback on writing tasks. However, some students ( $\approx 33\%$ ) were skeptical of the translanguaging approach and found it unexpected and unnecessary. The study suggests that implementing translanguaging as a tool of correcting students' errors, i.e., emphasizing the role of L1 can enhance learners' understanding of grammar and vocabulary in both languages.

**Keywords:** *Translanguaging, Errors, Writing discourse, EFL, Georgian learners.*

### **1. Introduction**

One of the things that puzzles many teachers is why students go on making the same mistakes even when those mistakes have been repeatedly pointed out to them. However, not all mistakes are the same; sometimes they seem to be deeply ingrained, yet at other times students correct themselves with apparent ease. There are couple of reasons why students make mistakes, which are the part of a natural acquisition process. Besides, tiredness, anxiety, psychological state of students can have an effect. Moreover, students are not the ones who should be blamed, but teachers also are accountable of providing proper feedback.

Feedback on students' work probably has more effect on achievement than any other single factor (Black and William 1998). Teachers provide formative assessment for correcting students' errors. At the same time, do teachers always emphasize the origins of the students' errors in their feedback? Apprehending the rationale of making the same mistakes can make a difference for students. This paper aims to study Georgian students' errors influenced by their L1 and their perceptions on integrating translanguaging into error correction in the writing task.

Translanguaging is using language as a unitary meaning-making system of the speakers (García et al 2017). It is a characteristic of bilingual speakers. Languages are not perceived separately in translanguaging, rather they are seen from speakers' perspective as a language repertoire, from which they select features that are appropriate to communicate. In Pedagogy, translanguaging is used as an approach to make the context better understandable with the help of using bilingual speakers' (students') repertoire.

Besides, there are two views of teaching languages in the classroom. The conventional view represents the process when two languages are generally taught as two isolated systems. But most people, who live in bilingual and multilingual parts of the world tend to uphold the contemporary view of teaching a foreign language.

Thus, the given study aims to answer the following research questions: 1. What are the types of errors the Georgian students have in EFL writing; 2. What are the common L1 errors the Georgian students have in EFL writing. 3. What are the perceptions Georgian students have on integrating translanguaging into error correction of the writing task.

### **1.1 Theoretical background of the research**

Translanguaging has a great impact on policy and practice in many fields, such as language learning and bilingual/multilingual education, in the last two decades (Li & Shen, 2021). According to Li (2018), translanguaging has rethink many language-related notions, such as linguistic competence and bilingual education, and practically offered new approaches to language teaching, as well as language learning, in the fields of second language education and bilingual or multilingual education.

Heretofore some researchers have argued for the integrated use of two or more languages in the foreign language (FL) learning and teaching process to help learners either acquire the content or develop their language competence by using the stronger language to develop the weaker one (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Li, 2014; Sano, 2018; Turnbull, 2019). To date, while translanguaging as bilingual pedagogies has been widely applied in bi-/multilingual classes of various kinds, there are

only a few studies on translanguaging in writing classes, and most research has focused on learners' writing identity and teachers' or students' written feedback (Barbour & Lickorish, 2020; Canagarajah, 2011; Turnbull, 2019; Velasco & García, 2014), while little attention has been given to teachers' oral corrective feedback on students' written errors. Considering this, the present study investigates the Georgian students' perceptions on integrating translanguaging into error correction in the writing task.

## **1.2 Error correction procedure**

Julian Edge, in his book on mistakes and correction, suggested that we can divide mistakes into three broad categories: 'slips' (that is, mistakes which students can correct themselves once mistake has been pointed out to them), 'errors' (Mistakes which they cannot correct themselves. And which therefore need explanation) and 'attempts' (That is, when a student tries to say something but does not yet know the correct way of saying it) (Edge, 1989). From this broad category, errors are the ones we are interested in.

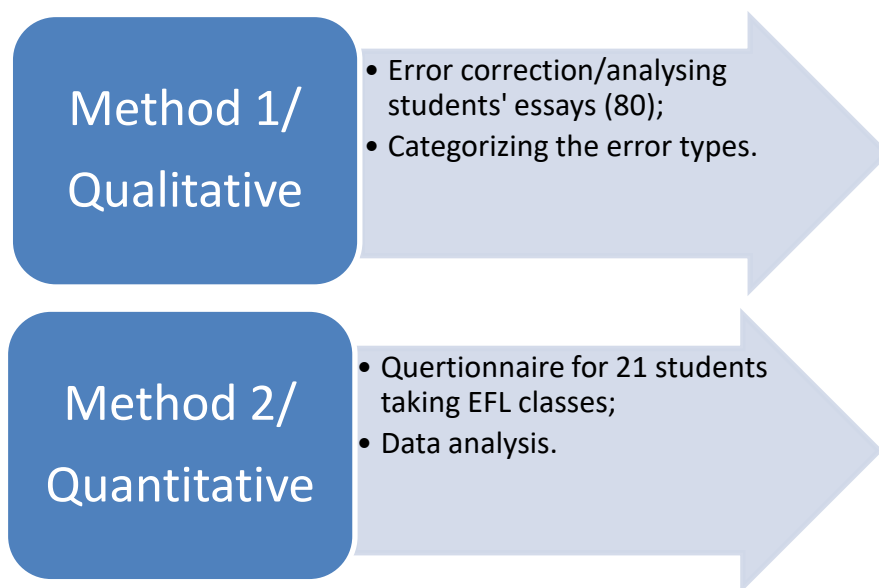
It is widely accepted that there are two distinct sources for the errors which most students display: *L1 interference* and *developmental errors* (Harmer, 2007). L1 interference – students who learn English as a second language already have a deep knowledge of at least one other language. Where that L1 and English encounter each other, there are often confusions which provoke errors in learners' use of English. This can be seen at the level of sounds, grammar, and word usage. Developmental errors are part of the students' interlanguage, that is the version of the language which a learner has at any one stage of development, and which is continually reshaped as he or she aims to towards full mastery.

Ellis (1997) points out that an error is an outcome of lacking knowledge. The researchers conceptualise L1 interference in L2 production in several ways that are mostly caused by learners' lack of grammatical knowledge (Al-Khresheh, 2010; Subandowo, 2017). The errors that emerge as a result of interference are caused by two linguistic backgrounds (Nunan, 2001).

## **2. Research data and methodology**

The aim of our research was to show the need of implementing translanguaging as a transformative assessment facet for teachers to genuinely and meaningfully correct EFL learners' errors in writing. Both, qualitative (online questionnaire for students) and quantitative methods were used.

Figure 1. Research Methodology



## 2.1 Research Participants

The given case study deals with 21 Georgian students, aged 16-17, learning English as a foreign language. And their female, 30-year-old teacher, who has 8 years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language. The teacher has collected her students' essays for 4-5 months and at the end of the semester she categorized the students' errors and singled out the ones stipulated by the Georgian language, students' L1. The students' competence was B1-B2 in English.

## 3. Results and Discussions

Students' general errors were classified accordingly: Overall – 130 sentences with several mistakes; For instance: grammar (e.g., tense and aspect (17), agreement (15), number (24), infinitive and gerund (5), article (19)) (Overall – 80); Vocabulary (missing word, extra word, wrong word) (Overall - 49); Spelling (Overall – 54); Punctuation (Overall – 31).

### 3.1 Qualitative Research:

Out of which errors stipulated by L1 were distinguished. Some examples are given as follows.

#### Example 1.

*“Our food, wich we are using to do different meals, have incredible quality.”*

1. *wich* (spelling)
2. *we are using (use)* (grammar – tense/L1) (present simple and present continuous tenses are not separately presented in the Georgian language)
3. *to do (cook/make) different meals* (vocabulary – WW/L1) (word by word translation of the collocation used in the Georgian language).

### **Example 2.**

***“On the internet is so many information about vast things.”***

1. Structure of the sentence is Georgian (adverbial modifier of place should be at the end of the English sentence);
2. Uncountable/countable (there is no difference in Georgian; in formal writing better to use a lot of instead of many or much (not relevant for Georgian)).

### **Example 3.**

***“In the past, there was books, but there still was lack of knowledge”.***

1. Inanimate subjects agree verbs in singular in the Georgian language (წიგნები არის/წიგნები იყო) *ts'ignebi aris/ts'ignebi iq'o* “books are/books were” *have incredible quality.*”

1. *wich* (spelling)
2. *we are using (use)* (grammar – tense/L1) (present simple and present continuous tenses are not separately presented in the Georgian language)
3. *to do (cook/make) different meals* (vocabulary – WW/L1) (word by word translation of the collocation used in the Georgian language).

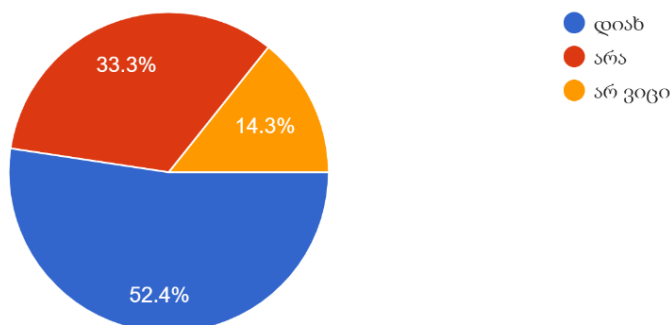
## **3.2 The Quantitative Research**

Within a framework of the quantitative research, several questions were sent to those 21 students, some of the questions are given below. The questions were based on the errors students made in their essays.

1. While correcting my errors in my English essay I want my English teacher to draw a comparison/distinction between the English and my state (Georgian) languages.

**Table 1.**

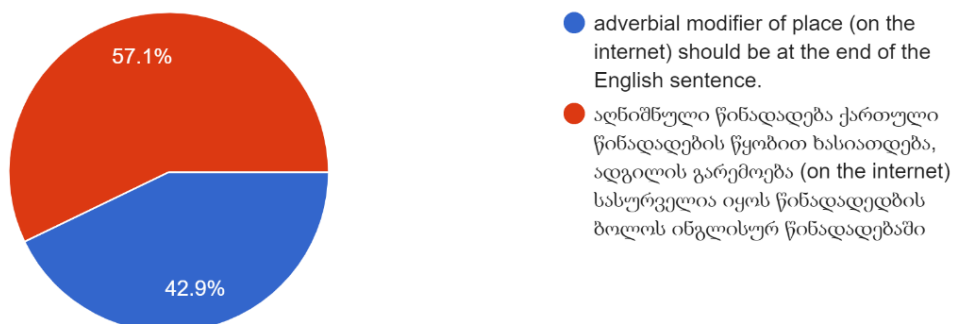
1. მსურს, რომ მასწავლებელმა ინგლისურ ესეში ჩემი შეცდომების გასწორებისას პარალელი გაავლოს ჩემს მშობლიურ (ქართულ) ენასთან  
21 responses



Most students (52,4%) responded ‘yes’ to this question, however there were those (33,3%) who don’t fancy her/his English teacher drawing a comparison/distinction between the English and her/his state (Georgian) languages.

5. Which of these answers of correcting your written errors is satisfactory for you?

5. აღნიშნულ წინადადებაში მასწავლებლის მიერ შეცდომების გასწორების რომელი პასუხია თქვენთვის დამაკმაყოფილებელი? “On the internet is so many information about vast things.”  
21 responses



As the chart shows, most students (57,1%) find the Georgian explanation more satisfactory than the English one. The students want to know why they make the same mistakes, the reason is the influence of their native language, the unconscious or conscious awareness of the structure of the Georgian sentence has a great influence over the students acquiring the foreign language.

2. Explain why do/don't you agree the following statement: "while correcting my errors in my English Essay I want my English teacher to draw a comparison/distinction between the English and my state (Georgian) languages."

### Positive

- „ჩემი აზრით რაც არ უნდა კარგად იცოდე ინგლისური ან სხვა უცხო ენა, მშობლიური ენით მიღებული შენიშვნა ან წინადადება ყოველთვის უფრო მნიშვნელოვანი, და ადვილად აღსაქმელი იქნება“. (“In my opinion, no matter how well you know English or another foreign language, a remark or feedback received in your native language will always be more important, and easier to understand.”)
- „მოსწავლეს გასწორებული შეცდომები დაეხმარება როგორც ინგლისური ესეს უკეთესად დაწერაში ასევე ქართულის. ასევე ზოგი მოსწავლე ესეს წერის დროს ფიქრობს ქართულად და შემდეგ თარგმნის ინგლისურად ამიტომაც მისთვის სასარგებლო იქნება ქართულ ენასთან პარალელის გავლება“. (“Corrected mistakes will help the student to write both English and Georgian essays better. Also, some students think in Georgian while writing an essay and then translate it into English, so it will be useful for them to draw a parallel with the Georgian language.”)
- „უფრო მარტივად აღსაქმელი და დასამახსოვრებელია“. (“It’s easier to understand and remember”)
- „უფრო გამიადვილდება შეცდომის გაანალიზება და ამ ორ ენას შორის განსხვავების დანახვა“. (“It will make it easier for me to analyze the error and see the difference between the two languages”).

### Negative

- „ვეფიქრობ რომ ინგლისური ენას იმ დონეზე ვფლობ რომ ეს საჭირო არ იქნება. უმჯობესია მასწავლებელმა ჩემი შეცდომა ინგლისურად ამიხსნას“. (“I think that I possess the English language at such a level that it will not be necessary. It is better for the teacher to explain my mistake to me in English.”)
- „პარალელის გავლება არარის აუცილებლობა რადგან ინგლისური და ქართული წინადადებების წყობა განსხვავდება, განსაკუთრებით კი მაშინ როდესაც საქმე ეხება საკუთარი აზრის გამოხატვას, ინგლისურად გადმოცემული აზრი ქართულად



შეიძლება დაიკარგოს და პირიქით.“ (“It is not necessary to draw a parallel, because the order of English and Georgian sentences is different, especially when it comes to expressing one’s own opinion, the genuine ideal of the opinion expressed in English can be lost in Georgian and vice versa.”)

Overall, the results given with the help of the research demonstrate the effectiveness of using translanguaging by the English language teacher in the process of giving individual or open-class feedback on students’ essays. The students’ attitude towards drawing the parallel or comparison between the English and Georgian languages is positive, which results in teachers’ productive and effective feedback.

### **Conclusions**

Even the initial research suggests that translanguaging is a useful tool for teaching students a foreign language. The advantage over monolingual teaching is that students can compare their mother tongue with the foreign language and thus identify similarities and differences which help them to reduce the number of errors and learn the foreign language better. This is also confirmed by the students' attitudes towards bilingual education. Most students ( $\approx 52\%$ ) in our study were in favour of replacing the monolingual-oriented type of feedback on writing tasks. Thus, the teacher was positively encouraged to use translanguaging in the error correction phase. However, some students ( $\approx 33\%$ ) were sceptical about the translanguaging approach, finding it unexpected and unnecessary. However, this can be explained by the background of the students' learning tradition or their attitude and expectations, which are much more subjective than a small experiment or observation on language acquisition in different environments and teaching methods. This case study also suggests that using translanguaging as a tool to correct students’ errors, i.e. emphasising the role of the L1, can enhance learners’ understanding of grammar and vocabulary in both languages.

The results are preliminary and corpus-based studies and a larger and more rigorous questionnaire should be conducted for further research.

## References

- Al-khresheh, M. (2010). Interlingual Interference in the English Language Word Order Structure of Jordanian EFL Learners. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 16, 105-116.
- Barbour, C., & Lickorish, K. Q. (2020). Los pájaros are feliz and are dreaming about gwiazdy: Facilitating translingual creative writing in the primary classroom. *English in Education*, 54(1), 6–26.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80, 139-148.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011). Translanguaging in the classroom: Emerging issues for research and pedagogy. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 2(1), 1–28.
- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge
- Edge, J. (1989) *Mistakes and Correction*. London: Longman.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- García, O., Flores, N. & Spotti, M. (eds.) (2017). *Handbook of Language and Society*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- García, O., & Li, W. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. University of London.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman.
- Li, W. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30.
- Li, W., & Shen, Q. (2021). Translanguaging: Origins, developments, and future directions. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, 44(4), 2–14
- Nunan, D. (2001). *Second language teaching and learning*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Turnbull, B. (2019). Translanguaging in the planning of academic and creative writing: A case of adult Japanese EFL learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 42(2), 1–20.
- Sano, A. (2018). The effects of translanguaging in discussion as a prewriting activity for writing in a second language. *ARELE: Annual Review of English Language Education in Japan*, 29, 193–208.
- Subandowo, D. (2017). *The Language Interference in English Speaking Skill for EFL Learners*. 10.2991/iselt-17.2017.36.
- Velasco, P., & García, O. (2014). Translanguaging and the writing of bilingual learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 37(1), 6–23.