categorization of IE and its use in tutoring

Linguistic distinction based on mother tongue and its influence on non-native speaker writing in English

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01. Introduction

This research focuses on exploring further categorizations of non-native writers based on linguistic characteristics of a non-native speaker's mother tongue. More specifically, how close their native language is to English in terms of linguistic family through a broad genetic classification.

02. Definition

Non-native speakers will be specified into smaller groups, including those who come from an Indo-European (abbreviated as **IE**) background versus those non-Indo-European (abbreviated as **non-IE**), based on the degree of diachronic relatedness.
The Indo-European languages are a language family native to the overwhelming majority of Europe, the Iranian plateau, and the northern Indian subcontinent.

Attention to Rhetorical Features

Mean of Rhetorical Feature Averages: 2.69

Figure shows how much writing center Users say the worked on Rhetorical (Top) and Linguistic (Bottom) features in writing center (1. never - 4.very often)

Attention to Linguistic Features

Mean of Linguistic Feature Averages: 2.69

Severino et al. 2020

03. the process of language learning

This research analyzes the process through the following three aspects:

- **Linguistic**
- **Social and Socioeconomic**
- **Psychological**

non-native speakers apply their existing knowledge to various situations and look back to how their native language is structured and how their culture relates for guidance, but these backgrounds may differ largely from English standard usage and expectations.

04. performance of English writing

Students' English writing abilities will be examined through two levels:

- **Linguistic level**
  - **using varied sentence structures and varied and precise vocabulary of an appropriate register**
- **Rhetorical level**
  - **knowledge of different genres, ability to fulfill assignment requirements and to write a strong thesis statement.**

In examining the listed aspects, we find that IE students usually has a **smaller knowledge gap** than the non-IE students when they try to establish English language abilities based on their knowledge from mother tongue.
Moreover, we may find that non-IE students generally have **weaker** linguistic abilities than rhetorical abilities.

05. Comparison between IE students and non-IE students

in analyzing the differences we assess:
- how well these backgrounds prepare students to be ready for the challenge of learning a new language
- how close the three aspects are in comparison to English native speaker.

IE student

Closer connection in linguistics.

better education to language development; closer social and socioeconomic background

a better familiarity with American academic discourse and easier to adapt.

Stronger abilities in both linguistic and rhetorical aspect; more intuitive to work with

non-IE student

farther connection in linguistics.

less resources and opportunities in second language development; more different social and socioeconomic background

less familiar with American academic discourse and harder to adapt.

weaker linguistic abilities than rhetorical abilities; needs more methods to work with

Case Study

Brendel (2012) reports tutoring a Portuguese student:
their inaccurate word choice and awkward syntactic construction prevent the reader from understanding her life experience and cultural perspective, where the "lower level" concerns distorted the development of "higher level concepts".
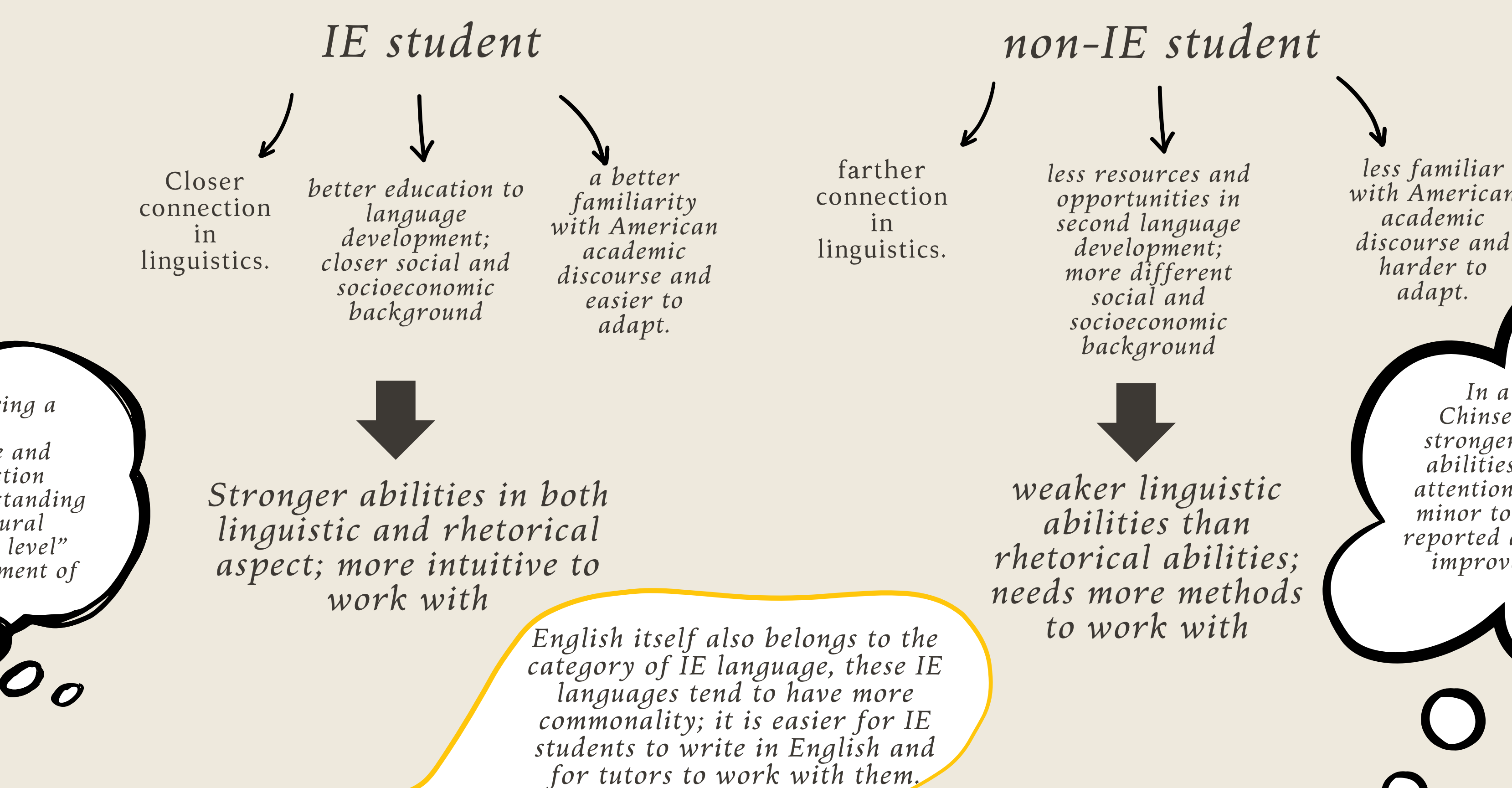
English itself also belongs to the category of IE language, these IE languages tend to have more commonality; it is easier for IE students to write in English and for tutors to work with them.

Survey

In a survey performed by Severino, Chinse and Korean students seem to have stronger rhetorical abilities than linguistic abilities, whereas tutors generally pay less attention to many linguistic issues that seems minor to them. these linguistic features were reported as needed the most work on and least improved by non-native speaker students.

06. Application of the IE distinction for tutors

- be aware of the nature of non-native literacy
  - This described process may be **easier** when tutoring IE students than non-IE students: Similar linguistic structures are often found in IE languages
  - When approaching a non-IE student, tutors may have difficulties explaining similar grammatical structures, simply because of lack of similar structures in the target language or tutors' lack of familiarity: be careful of the **trap of translation** when trying to apply concepts in one language to another due to lack of proper knowledge.
- apply descriptive linguistic knowledge does not require the tutor to be fluent in that target languages
- pay more attention to **grammatical aspects** that may seem of less importance to them when tutoring non-native students, such as accurate sentence structures and precise vocabulary.
  - linguistic understanding is needed for rhetorical development

Example of Application

In the case study, Brendel chose to "draw comparisons between English and Spanish. Since Spanish and Portuguese, both being West Iberian languages, were closely related, much of what they would identify in Spanish would have close correlation in Portuguese.
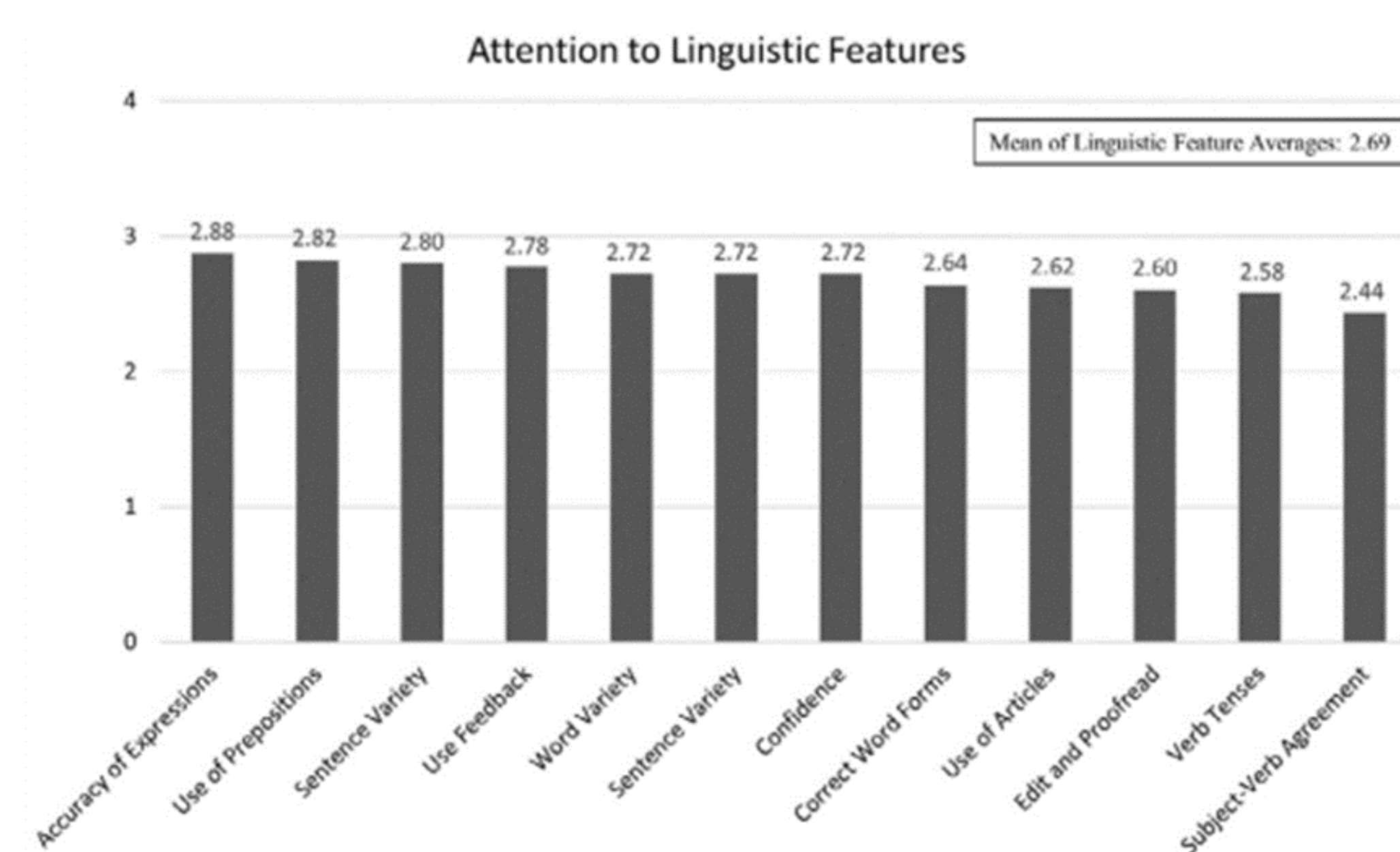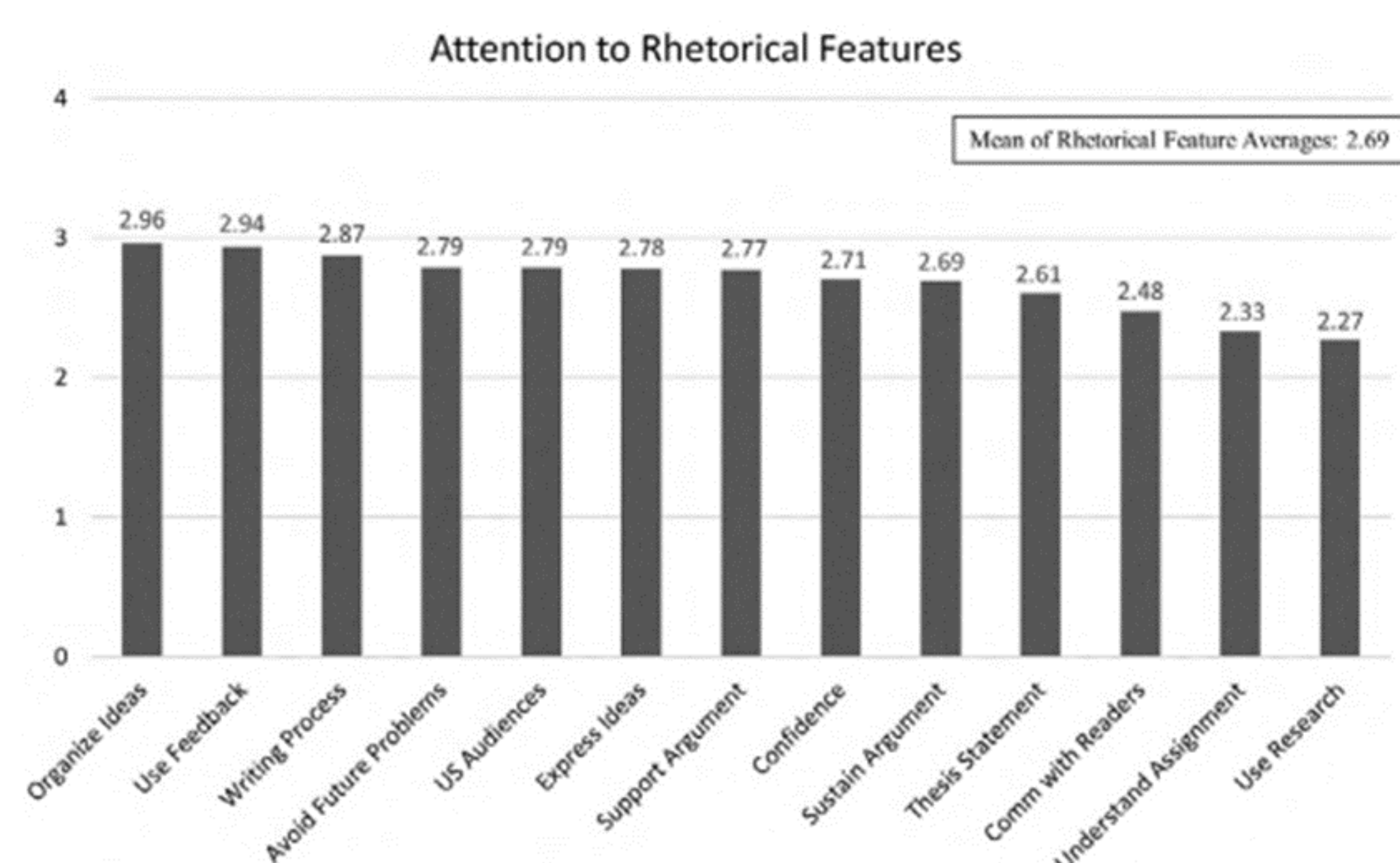This prior knowledge of language helps the tutor understand writer's thought process better and link English patterns to native language patterns.

07. Reference

The works cited are listed in a separated handout.