

# THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERTEXTUALITY APPROACH TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING IN UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE

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## Abstract

*This paper promotes the teaching technique that can be used as a means of developing learners' critical thinking in understanding literature. The promoted technique is conducted through the implementation of intertextuality approach that may require some supported materials; short stories, drama script, and poems as the exemplification materials in the EFL classroom.*

**Keywords:** *Intertextuality approach, short stories, drama, literary texts.*

## Introduction

Recently, there has been a growing interest on the use of literary genres (short stories, dramas, poems, etc) in EFL classroom by which the expectation is to bring learners into the critical world. This is due to the assumption that literature would be able to stimulate learners' interests and motivation to build their critical thinking in understanding the texts.

Unfortunately, learners seem to have lack of critical response towards these literary texts. However, it is not to say that they do not have any idea, in fact they likely have difficulties in structuring their ideas and their opinions. Therefore, it now becomes the major concern on how to develop learners' critical thinking in understanding literary texts.

Responding to the issues mentioned above, to generate an active classroom, it is recommended to find the strategies to fill the gap between the expectation and the real world. Therefore, in this paper *intertextuality* is used as a means to fill the gap between the expectation and the practical world that is to develop learners' critical thinking. Literally, intertextuality seeks to find the intertext relations. Still and Worton (1990) support this contention as they define "the theory of intertextuality insists that a text (for a moment to be understood in the narrower sense) cannot exist as a hermetic system or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (P 1). Differently, Hlynka and Knupfer (1997) with the deeper sense prefer to say that the intertextuality approach refers to the cognitive process in making such relations between the texts. Hence, it would involve in comparing, predicting, and evaluating process. Thus, this paper would only focus on intertextuality as its literal meaning that is to find the connections or the relations between the texts to

other texts and try to look for the relevance of its methodology to help undergraduate students of EFL develop their critical thinking.

In short, the main focus of this paper would place to answer two problem formulations that are to show the potentials of intertextuality approach in EFL context and to show how intertextuality approach applied in EFL classroom as the strategies to develop students' critical thinking. There are some suggested materials included in this short paper that are presented in the form of short stories.

## Intertextuality and EFL Context

The main focus being addressed in this short paper is the implementation of intertextuality approach in developing learners' critical thinking to understand literary texts. To begin with, there are some discussions presented in this part. The first discussion concerns with the theoretical frameworks or the basic concept of intertextuality approach. The second concerns on the potentials of intertextuality approach as a means of developing students' critical thinking. The third is the implementation of intertextuality approach that begins with some discussions on how to transform intertextuality approach as the strategies to raise the critical response towards the text in EFL classroom. The last but not least is the methodological issue of intertextuality approach.

### 2.1. Theoretical Frameworks

The term *intertextuality* was firstly coined by Julia Kristeva (1980), as cited in Keep and Mc Laughlin (2002) in 'Intertextuality' who claimed that any text is the absorption and transformation of the other text. Therefore, by this standpoint it has been assumed that any text may possibly have relation to the other texts. In addition, Still and Worton (1990) have pointed out that the term

intertextuality goes beyond two concepts; “the writer is the reader of the text and the second the text is only available only through some reading process” (P 1-2). Similarly Kristeva (1980) underlines that it stands for two axes by which the first is called *horizontal axis* assuming that author is as the reader of a text and also *vertical axis* connecting the text which refers to the other texts (P 69). When the writer is positioned as the reader of the text or called *horizontal axis*, the literary text is inevitably put through the references quotations, and influences of every kind. Meanwhile, if the text is assumed as the process of reading or vertical axes, it may go to seek for the relation between a text and the other texts and it perhaps requires the readers’ experience of some practices to the author that may lead to a fresh interpretation. Shortly both axes of intertextuality may come via authors (who are also the readers) and the texts which come via readers (or co-producers).

As for this reason, there has been many research conducted in studying the text by using intertextuality approach. One of the research is by Kehinde (2003) ‘Intertextuality and The Contemporary African Novel’. In his research Kehinde focuses on the relations between written literatures which are traditionally derived from the African oral literary genres. He contends that the contemporary works of African writers mostly depend on the earlier texts for their themes and styles (P 378). The other research is conducted by Mitosinkova in ‘Tracing Intertextuality’ by which she mainly puts attention on explaining Bakhtin’s theories of dialogic and polyphonic character of the novel through the relations among texts (P 64).

## 2.2. The Potentials of Intertextuality

Even though *intertextuality* is mainly used as a means of studying the literature, but the concept of this approach can be flexibly used in many ways and would have some potentials in understanding the texts. For example, it can also be used to study the drama by using its play script. The underlying concepts of *intertextuality* can also be used to understand the movie that is to find the relations between the literary products. Therefore, it is not only limited in the scope of literature. However, the application of the intertextual approach in this paper is contextualized in the narrower meaning that is literary texts. It may involve short stories, drama (play script), and poems. As intertextuality’s focus to make the relation between one text to another or to seek the relation between author and reader, it may serve as the guidelines to facilitate critical thinking for learners. Wallace (1992) also underlines the importance on the use of intertextuality approach:

It is helpful to know something about the circumstances in which a text was produced. It

may also be helpful to know how particular text relates to other texts by the same author and to other contemporary genres. All text contain traces of the other texts, and frequently they cannot be readily interpreted –or at least fully appreciated-without reference to other texts (P 47)

By seeking the relations between the texts, learners would be able to experience the various thinking strategies that would bring them into the deeper comprehension of the texts. This is also pointed out by Lenski (1998) that intertextuality would bring the learners into such critical world such as to visualize, to compare, to predict and to evaluate the texts. And therefore, learners could also make comparative statements between the past texts and the current texts and draw their personal judgments upon the two.

## 2.3. The Implementation of Intertextuality Approach

As noted in the theoretical framework that intertextuality concerns on the relation of a text meaning to other texts. Therefore, it is the concept by which the meaning of the work does not merely reside on its own, but is mediated by explicit and implicit references to other works. These references may be variably presented, it could be explicit; statements, languages, terminologies, quotations, and so on. And it can also be implicit; beliefs, values, ideas, and so forth.

Considerably, by seeing through the theoretical framework and its concept, there are such potentials of intertextuality approach to be used as the strategies to help learners build their critical thinking in understanding the texts, and to identify how the texts might relate one another. Thus, the teachers should be able to guide their learners to make an intertextual relation between different texts that would be very beneficial for learners in facilitating their critical thinking. Teachers might ask their students predict and evaluate the texts. In such a way, it is assumed that it would enable learners to come into critical thinking and unconsciously enhance their reading comprehension. However, there are some discussions addressed in this unit as the methodologies to implement intertextuality approach in classroom.

### 2.3.1 Pre-Reading Activities

During this section, students are asked to pose some questions, statements, and to formulate their hypothesis of the given texts. They are encouraged to find the relation among the texts starting by their questions and problem formulations. Robinson as cited by Wallace mentions five stages of doing so which is commonly called ‘SQ3R’ (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review). In this stage, students concern on the pre-

liminary survey by posing some questions by expectation that they will consider the answer. Alternatively, this activity might help them to focus on particular discourse selection made by the writers. Hence, they might try to identify the existing knowledge in the form of statements. Those statements might be helpful to predict whether the texts may draw on prior texts as a source of meanings because one text might possibly take statements from another source as authoritative and then repeats that authoritative information or statement for the purposes of the new text.

### *2.3.2 While-Reading Activities*

In this stage the role of teachers is to offer students alternative readings of a text. It might devise some tasks which offer students more possibilities of more than one way of reading a text. It might include the discussions of the questions. The activities may consist of brainstorming and focus on the answer of the questions and hypothesis formulated.

### *2.3.3 Post-Reading Activities*

Post reading-activities consist of the evaluation of the previous activities and it may involve the discourse of the texts. To illustrate, one activity can be presented upon the discussion where two texts could be interrelated one another through the shared beliefs, and values. The task of these post-reading activities may focus on through such relations a text evokes a representation of the discourse situation, the textual resources that bear on the situation, and how the current text positions itself and draws on other texts.

## *2.4. Methodological Issues of Intertextual Relation*

There are also some methodological representations as the guidelines to implement intertextual approach in EFL classroom. The first and foremost important task for teachers is to figure out how intertextual analysis serves as the guidelines to help the students come into critical world. To make it up, let the students begin with posing some questions. For instance, they may concern on how an author tries to ensure the readers see the subject through a certain set of texts, or how an author tries to position himself in relation to others who have made statements. By starting with such broad questions, the students will be able to determine what they are looking for.

After they post some questions and know what they look for, the following task is to identify the specific texts they want to examine. To do so, teachers may ask the students to provide sub-

stantial evidence in making claims, but those claims should not be too broad, otherwise they become unmanageable. One thing to consider, in intertextual analysis students may limit their study to a single short text in order to be more focus. Thus, after doing so, they may have identified a small set of easily identifiable features that are relevant to their questions that they want to focus on, therefore they may possibly focus on the other things. When finished identifying the text, the next task for the students is to identify the traces of other given texts to consider. The teachers may give the guidelines that probably students have to pay attention in examining explicit overt references to other authors as revealed in direct quotation or formal scholarly references or works cited lists.

Some activities to give, students have to underline or to highlight particular references in the text and create a list of those references. For instance, they might create two columns. In the first column they may list how a reference is expressed whether through a direct quotation, indirect quotation or just paraphrase or description. Whereas in another column, they should begin interpreting the intertextuality, making comments on how or for what purpose the intertextual element is being used in the new text.

Based on elaborated activities mentioned above, students may start making observations and interpretations by considering the reference in relation to the context of what the author is saying. They might also begin by asking why the writer is bringing in the reference, how the person referred to relates to the issue or story at hand, whether the writer is expressing any evaluation or attitude toward the intertextual resource, how the original may have been excerpted or transformed to fit in with the author's current concerns, and whether the reference is linked to other statements in the text or other intertextual references. Finally, they should start looking for a pattern from which they start developing conclusions which has to refer back on the purpose of their examination. For instance, if their aim is to examine how the author coordinates intertextual elements into a single coherent statement, their focus should be on the techniques the author uses to draw the voices of others into the central argument and relate them to each other through the overall perspective being developed.

## *2.5 Text Selection*

There should be an attempt to take a closer look at the cultural values in the process of selecting the texts by the teachers which aims to encourage more critical responses to written texts in

EFL classroom. As noted by Wallace (1992) that it is not because learners have difficulties to interact with the texts in foreign language, not so much because they experience 'inadequate linguistic' but it is because of an 'over-deferential' stance towards the texts. Therefore, there is the need to overcome this issue that the teachers should contextualize the materials with the learners need as well as the expectation that they put on it. A growing concern of using literary texts is because it can possibly make the interaction with the text at more equal for EFL learners by drawing attention to the range of different possible way of approaching, interpreting, and evaluating the texts.

In addition, according to Wallace (1992) there are at least three approaches in the process of selecting the text; 1) problem posing, 2) cross cultural material, and 3) texts which offers alternative discourses. The first method is problem posing method; it is an attempt to select texts for their potential to raise issues. It means that the texts should be able to encode issues which then pose problems for a particular group of learners. After all, the students role is to identify particular problems which may exist within the genre and topic embedded in the text. The second method is choosing the text based on the cultural material, in this stage texts are assumed as 'culturally loaded.' What does it mean? To take it into account, when students read any authentic texts, it means that they are reading the culture of the original writer and readers of that text. However, it must be difficult for learners to concern on culture-specific content. The third is texts which offer alternative discourse. It means that teachers should be aware of offering the students with the texts which show how different writers might draw different or the same genres and discourses. There are some suggested materials listed below to be used in the classroom which might be possible of using intertextuality approach as a means of developing students' critical thinking upon the materials.

### 2.5.1 Suggested materials

Since the use of intertextuality mainly focuses on the intertext relations, therefore as what mentioned earlier, it requires some texts as the exemplifications of materials to be used in EFL classroom. The suggested materials for this paper are mainly in the form of literary texts. The literary text should not be too complex, nor too long. Thus, it will not get the students feel bored or tired while trying to understand the texts. The writer proposes short stories, drama scripts, and poems as the materials to be used as to support the implementation of intertextuality approach as the means of developing learners' critical think-

ing. By using short stories, learners will easily understand the way of the story and therefore to respond critically.

To propose, the writer has two short stories and one play script that may be used as exemplifications materials in EFL classroom; they are *The Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (play script) by David Mamet, and *Winter Dreams* by Scott Fitzgerald. Those materials actually have the same theme and mainly emphasize how American dreams have extremely become the deal for a certain individual and how it goes wrong in the end. By using those exemplifications, teacher might try to apply the intertextuality approach as the teaching strategies. It can be viewed both from the *horizontal axis*, connecting the author and the readers and *vertical axis*, reminding the experience of a reader that may lead to a fresh interpretation of the previous works.

### 3. Conclusion

In short, although the use of literary works in EFL classroom creates the great number of interests but still it should be balanced with the strategies of teaching to fill the gap between the expectation and the real world practicality. The application of *intertextuality approach* in the reading class especially in literary criticism class may meet the requirement that is to bring the learners into the critical world by finding out the intertext relations.

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