



The Influence of the principles of intertextuality on the literacy skills of Iraqi EFL students

M.M.Muthanna Mohammed Bada Saleh

Abstract

The main thrust of the study was to design an innovative model for improving the literacy skills of the Iraqi ELT students as well as to compare the extent each literacy skill is affected. Intertextuality is not just a matter of which other texts refer to, but how you use them, what you use them for, and ultimately how you position yourself as a writer to them to make your own statement. To this end, 120 Iraqi ELT students were selected as the subjects of the study who took the Solution Placement test (SPT) out of them the students whose score were one standard deviation above and below the mean score were included who were 70 ones and were randomly divided into two groups of writing-based instruction and reading-based instruction, in the second step, each group was divided into two sub-groups of experimental and control. It means that the study included two experimental and two control groups—reading-experimental group (REG), reading-control group (RCG), writing experimental group (WEG), and writing control group (WCG). The two experimental groups were instructed using a mixture of the principles of intertextuality awareness and reading or writing traditional teaching model and the two control groups through the traditional model for teaching reading or writing. The data of the tests were put into SPSS19 which was analyzed using t-test and ANOVA statistics. The results of the study reveals significant differences among the groups, between experimental groups and control groups as well as significance differences between the two experimental groups. Likewise, the study concludes that intertextuality improves the literacy skills of the students. Some pedagogical implications were also suggested.

The concept of intertextuality is explored following two main perspectives, namely, semiotics which is mainly utilized in literary works and explore the complex and heterogeneous nature of literary works and discourse analysis deals heavily with the non-literary works including education and teaching language. Fairclough (1992:270) argued that intertextuality "points to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones".

1. Theoretical Background

Intertextuality refers to a field of language-related studies which plays a crucial role in the literacy skills due to the fact that different texts and passages are interrelated and produced in relation to each other. In other words, any text is written and comprehended in relation to other texts in one way or another. Considering Grabe's (1991:337) perspective regarding reading comprehension as the "active process of comprehending where students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently, for example, guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc." clarifies the role played by intertextuality in the process of reading comprehension.

Intertextuality, in effect, is a notion in the domain of discourse analysis which was emerged in the 1960's by Kristeva which is mainly rooted in Bakhtin's (1984) concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism. Kristeva (1980:36) argues that any text—written or spoken—is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in a space of a given text", in which "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, 1980:36) which are "lacking in any kind of independent meaning" (Allen, 2000: 1).

The significance of the notion of intertextuality in the passages is due to the fact that this notion can associate the cultural context and the linguistic context in terms of the genre rules (i.e. the use of discourse patterns in a culture), as well as text production (i.e. the use of lexicogrammatical resources). Accordingly, analyzing the passages in terms of intertextuality reveals more details and information in terms of genre, register, style as well as cultural, linguistic and social contexts in which the texts are produced which in its turn lead to better comprehension.

Fairclough (1992) argues about five different types of intertextuality, i.e. "Manifest intertextuality", "interdiscursivity or "constitutive intertextuality", "sequential intertextuality", "embedded intertextuality", and mixed intertextuality". Manifest intertextuality highlights the passages "where specific other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text", and "interdiscursivity is a matter of how a discourse type constituted through a combination of elements of orders of discourse" (Fairclough,1992: 117-18). Sequential' intertextuality refers to texts where "different texts or discourse types alternate within a text" (Fairclough,1992: 118); embedded intertextuality to the texts "where one text or discourse type is clearly contained within the matrix of another, i.e. the relationship between the 'styles' and therapeutic discourse" (Fairclough, 1992: 118); and,



mixed intertextuality refers to the texts "where texts or discourse types are merged in a more complex and less easily separable way" (Fairclough, 1992: 118).

Meanwhile, for Fairclough (1992:270), intertextuality "points to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones". Halliday (2003: 359), on the other hand, emphasizes that "the thematic system is an intertextual construct, and once it is recognized that any discursive formation must depend on complex multi-accented intertextual relations, such as are implied by notions of register and genre, then the historical principle is established". Halliday (2003) adds that "there is always a context in which any act of meaning comes into being. But the intertextual thematic system, or the genre in Martin's work (Martin 1989:360), is in principle timeless. It is a network of semiotic relationships within which given text, or a given act of meaning, is positioned and displays its proportionalities — shared features, resonances, dissonances, polysemies and the like" (Ibid).

Likewise, for Halliday and Martin (2003), Writing science: Literacy and discursive power. In dealing with intertextuality, three variables of the field, tenor and mode are crucial. Fairclough (2003) points to four strategies for implementing intertextuality in the passages, i.e. direct reporting, indirect reporting, free indirect reporting and narrative reporting of Speech act. Direct reporting refers to the "quotation, purportedly the actual words used, in quotation marks, with a reporting clause (e.g. She said: 'He'll be there by now')" (Fairclough, 2003:49); indirect reporting to the "summary, the content of what was said or written, not the actual words used, no quotation marks, with a reporting clause (e.g. She said he'd be there by then). Shifts in the tense becomes 'he'd') and deixis ('now' becomes 'then') of direct reports" (Fairclough, 2003: 49); free indirect reporting is "intermediate between direct and indirect — it has some of the tense and deixis shifts typical of indirect speech, but without a reporting clause. It is mainly significant in literary language (e.g. Mary gazed out of the window. He would be there by now. She smiled to herself.)" (Fairclough, 2003: 50) and narrative report of speech act "reports the sort of speech act without reporting its content (e.g. She made a prediction)" (Fairclough, 2003: 50).

The aforementioned issues clarifies the concept of intertextuality and its relation to the literacy skills. Considering the context of Iraq where English is considered a foreign language



and significance of literacy skills; this study endeavored to implement the principles of intertextuality in order to improve the level of the both reading comprehension and writing performance among Iraqi ELT students. To this end, the following questions were posed:

1. Does teaching reading comprehension mixed with the intertextuality instruction improve the reading comprehension of Iraqi ELT students?
2. Does teaching writing performance mixed with the intertextuality instruction improve the writing performance of Iraqi ELT students?
3. Is there any significant differences between the results of the two above questions? If so? How?

2. Methodology

2.1.Participants

The population of the study were the ELT students who were studying English as a foreign language—teaching, translation or literature in the University of Samarra. Hence, there were about 120 ELT students out of them the most homogenous ones whose scores were one standard deviation above the mean score were included that were 70 ones of the study using the Solution Placement test (SPT) during the academic year 2016-2017.

2.2.Instruments

The study utilizes several instruments in gathering the data, namely, reading comprehension pre-test, reading comprehension post-test, writing performance pre-test, writing performance post-test, Solution Placement test (SPT), and the holistic writing scoring checklist. The reading test which was administered once before treatment and once after the treatment was High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) which was released in 2005 by Nevada Department of Education. Furthermore, the writing test was a composition which was administered once before the treatment and once after the treatment—the students were asked to write on a topic (the role of technology on our life). The writings were scored using the holistic rubric scoring procedure by a graduate out of 5 in terms of overall quality, proficiency and understanding of the posed topic.



2.3.Data Gathering & Data Analysis Procedures

First the 120 Iraqi ELT students took the Solution Placement test (SPT) which was scored out of 70 according to the key then the students whose score were one standard deviation above and below the mean score were included. Then the 70 ELT students were randomly divided into two groups of writing-based instruction and reading-based instruction, in the second step, each group was divided into two sub-groups of experimental and control. It means that the study includes two experimental and two control groups—reading-experimental group (REG), reading-control group (RCG), writing experimental group (WEG), and writing control group (WCG). The two experimental groups were instructed using a mixture of the principles of intertextuality awareness and reading or writing traditional teaching model and the two control groups through the traditional model for teaching reading or writing. It is worth mentioning that the reading-based groups took the reading test, i.e. HSPE once before instruction and once after the instruction which was scored out of 40 according to the key; the writing-based groups, on the other hand, took the writing test (had to write on the topic a composition) once before instruction and once after the instruction which was scored out of 5 through the holistic scoring procedures. The data of the tests were put into SPSS19 which was analyzed using t-test and ANOVA statistics. The result illustrates that descriptive statistics regarding the proficiency test.

3. Findings

The results of the study are discussed in order to provide some rationale for answering the raised questions. As table (1) shows the included participants were 70 with the minimum score of 36 and maximum of 45 with the mean of 40.78.

Table -1-
Descriptive Statistics of the Solution Placement Test (SPT)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SPT	70	36.00	45.00	40.7857	1.84071
Valid N (listwise)	70				



In order to have a larger picture of each group, the one Way ANOVA was run in order to compare the four groups, i.e. reading-experimental group (REG), reading-control group (RCG), writing experimental group (WEG), and writing control group (WCG) as Table (2) shows:

Table -2-
One-way ANOVA & SPT

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.763	3	2.254	0.655	0.582
Within Groups	227.023	66	3.440		
Total	233.786	69			

As Table (2) shows the T value is 0.582 which is quite above the cut score (0.05) which means the differences among the groups are non-significant. Table (3) shows the descriptive statistics of each group in terms of the groups and pre- as well as post-tests.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics & pre-post tests

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading	=experimental	17	23.4375	1.74607	0.42348
	=control	18	20.8946	1.69197	0.39880
Writing	=experimental	17	1.9618	0.23893	0.05795
	=control	18	2.5937	0.34116	0.08041

As table 3 shows, the means of the experimental and control groups in the reading-based instruction are 23.43 and 20.89, respectively. Furthermore, the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the writing-based instruction are 1.96 and 2.59, respectively. Table (4) illustrates the descriptive statistics of each group in terms of post-test:



Table -4-
Descriptive Statistics & post-tests

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading	=experimental	17	33.4623	1.19470	0.28976
	=control	18	28.4175	1.11751	0.26340
Writing	=experimental	17	3.7781	0.28838	0.06994
	=control	18	3.3530	0.40178	0.09470

As Table(4)shows, the means of the experimental and control groups in the reading-based instruction are 33.46 and 28.41, respectively. Furthermore, the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the writing-based instruction are 3.77 and 3.35, respectively.

In order to compare the performances of the groups of experimental and control, the gain score which the subtracting of the pre-test from the posttest was computed followed by the T-test. Table(5) illustrates the descriptive statistics of the gain score of each group.

Table -5-
Descriptive Statistics of the Groups Gain Score—Experimental vs. Control

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading gain score	=experimental	17	10.0248	2.23774	0.54273
	=control	18	7.5229	1.59773	0.37659
Writing gain score	=experimental	17	1.8164	0.37862	0.09183
	=control	18	0.7593	0.51494	0.12137

As Table (5) shows, that the gain scores' means of the experimental and control groups in the reading-based instruction are 10.02 and 7.52, respectively. Furthermore, the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the writing-based instruction are 1.81 and 0.75, respectively. Table (6) reveals the results of the t-test between the two groups of experimental and control.



Table- 6-
T-test & Groups Gain Score—Experimental vs. Control

		Level's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Reading group	Equal variances assumed	1.817	0.187	3.824	33	0.001	2.50185	0.65430	1.17066	3.83304
	Equal variances not assumed			3.787	28.827	0.001	2.50185	0.66059	1.15044	3.85326
Writing group	Equal variances assumed	1.812	0.187	6.885	33	0.000	1.05707	0.15354	0.74469	1.36945
	Equal variances not assumed			6.945	31.178	0.000	1.05707	0.15220	0.74673	1.36741

Table 6 shows that the T- value in the reading-based groups is 0.01 and quite below the cut value of 0.05 which means that the two reading-based groups of experimental and control performed significantly. Moreover, the p value in the writing-based groups is 0.00 which is quite below the cut value of 0.05 which revealed that the differences between the two writing-based groups of experimental and control are significant, too. Considering the higher mean scores for the experimental groups shows that the experimental groups outperformed the control groups due to the teaching mythology they enjoyed.



The four groups were also compared in terms of one-way ANOVA as Table (7) shows. According to Table (7), the differences among the groups are also significant. It means that the influence of the teaching methodology was not similar for the all groups.

Table - 7-
ANOVA & Gain Scores

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.448	3	.149	28.205	0.000
Within Groups	.349	66	.005		
Total	.797	69			

Finally, the two experimental groups were compared through the T-test statistic as Table (8) shows. The Table shows that the p value is 0.00 which is quite below the cut value of 0.05 which demonstrates that the differences between the two experimental groups are significant, too. Hence, the influence of the intertextuality-based instruction was not the same for the two literacy skills.

Table 8
T-test & Groups Gain Score—Reading-Experimental Group vs. Writing-Experimental Group

	Level's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
rg1 Equal variances assumed	2.684	0.111	-4.934	32	0.000	0.11265	0.02283	-0.15916	-0.06614
Equal variances not assumed			-4.934	29.457	0.000	0.11265	0.02283	0.15932	0.06598



Considering the descriptive statistics of the Table (9) in which the standardized score and means are presented demonstrated that the intertextual-based instruction is more influential for writing instruction.

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics of the Groups Gain Score—Reading-Experimental Group vs. Writing-Experimental Group

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gain	=reading. experimental	17	0.2506	0.05594	0.01357
score	=writing. Experimental	17	0.3633	0.07572	0.01837

4. Conclusions & Pedagogical Implications

Intertextuality is mainly focused on language uses in the social communities. In fact, making meanings along with producing meaning are fundamental for intertextuality, which demands a bundle of the related texts with specific relationship (Lemke, 1985, 1993, 1998). In other words, intertextuality demonstrates the ways different passages are related along with their social contexts and practices which influence the process of producing and comprehending different types of discourse (Fairclough, 1992, 1995).

The present study using the principles of intertextuality tried to design a new perspective and model in teaching the both literacy skills with purpose to provide some bases for pedagogical implications. Effectively, different types of intertextuality presented by Fairclough (1992) was instructed to the students which in its turn lead to their raised awareness. It was shown that the intertextuality-based literacy instruction improves the performance of Iraqi ELT students on the literacy skills. Intertextuality, in Fairclough's (2003:47) perspective, refers to the "texts and voices which are included, or excluded in a



text". Hence, Fairclough in dealing with intertextuality emphasizes that "hegemonies change and this process can be witnessed in discursive change when the latter is viewed from the angle of intertextuality.

The way in which discourse is being represented, re-spoken, or re-written sheds light on the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power" (cited in Blommaert, 2005: 30). The study also concludes that intertextuality improves the literacy skills of the students especially their writing due to its potential for pointing, "To how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones" (Ibid).

Generally, the results of the study provided some pedagogical implications for all who are concerning to teaching or learning a foreign language including English. It means that the results of the study are of interest for Iraqi ELT instructors, teachers or even teacher trainers to implement intertextuality' principles in their teaching or learning strategies for writing or reading comprehension.

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