

Bringing Intertextuality Into The Higher Education Classroom: Advancing Reading Comprehension And Motivation To Read

Joderic C. Navarrete¹

¹College of Education, Leyte Normal University, Philippines

Corresponding Author : Joderic C. Navarrete, joenavsatlnu@gmail.com



Abstract: Understanding the concept of intertextuality and how it could be applied in the classroom is of profound significance, especially in higher education. However, the utilization of intertextual texts that fully reflect the breadth and scope of the curriculum and, at the same time, motivate students to read and improve their reading comprehension is one of the biggest challenges to most educators. Research shows that many students are struggling to comprehend texts assigned in school, especially at the tertiary levels, which demand reading multiple texts. Most of these assigned reading materials are lengthy and not student-friendly, especially for students with limited or no background knowledge about the topic. Learners who possess sufficient background knowledge and relevant experiences related to the subject, and who recognize its life-long implications, tend to demonstrate higher levels of reading motivation and deeper comprehension. The purpose of this paper is to present a brief review of the concept of intertextuality, its different definitions, types, models, and the selection of intertextual texts when conducting an intertextual lesson requiring students to read multiple texts. Significantly, this paper discusses several ways or methods to promote intertextual connections during classroom instruction with the aim of improving students' reading comprehension and motivation to read.

Keywords: background knowledge, curriculum, intertextual arrangements, multiple texts, schemata

1. Introduction

Intertextuality is often used in today's literature, even in some scholarly journals and articles [1]. This extends to movies, animes, paintings, and music [2], [3], [4]; and it even includes virtual texts, mediated technologies, and online platforms particularly utilized inside the classroom [5], [6]. Julia Kristeva, a French linguist, first used the term *intertextuality* and has written much on this subject [7]. However, her idea was not novel and innovative, for it was anchored on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin's *dialogism*, which postulates that there is a continual dialogue among texts [8]. Further, Worton and Still [9] emphasized that intertextuality is as old as the history of human civilization, as distinctly manifested in most of the works of ancient scholars, e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Horace, etc., to the twentieth-century theorists such as Genette, Barthes, Derrida, and others [10]. Duranti [11] inferred that the primary goal of Kristeva is "to capture the dialogic quality of texts" (p. 403).

In today's digital age, students are exposed to different types of texts, and how to comprehend these materials is of critical importance. Research shows that many students are struggling to comprehend texts assigned in school, especially at higher levels, in which multiple texts (including multiple digital texts) are required [12], and most of the time, the concepts are complex. Learners who have no background or relevant knowledge about the topic find it difficult to comprehend [13], [14]. These texts also require a deeper understanding, which usually demands critical reading skills like comparing and contrasting, integrating current texts with past texts [15], and evaluating by drawing personal judgments, values, conclusions, generalizations, and scientific and creative thinking [16], [17]. Conversely, this problem, as some scholars believe, could be attributed to the insufficiency of mentors in terms of knowledge of instructional pedagogies. Scott [18] emphasized that many significant studies (e.g., National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) and Reasonable and Nondiscriminatory (RAND) repeatedly demonstrated that learners are not taught how to comprehend texts and that educators felt unprepared to teach reading skills and strategies.

Moreover, it is significant to note that motivation is an indispensable aspect of the reading process [19], [20], [21]. Several researchers assert (e.g., McLaughlin [22], Rettig & Shiefele [20]) that reading comprehension does not depend solely on cognitive ability but also on one's level of motivation to read.

The purpose of this paper is to present a brief review of the concept of intertextuality, particularly its different definitions, types, models, and the selection of intertextual texts when delivering instruction in higher education classrooms. Importantly, this paper further explores several approaches and strategies on how to promote intertextual connections, advancing students' reading comprehension and motivation to read.

2. The concept of intertextuality

Text or any literary art form is not created out of thin air. Authors or artists based it on some previous texts, utterances, or ideas of others. Consequently, there will always be residue, snippets of thoughts, cultural underpinnings and ideologies, inspirations, and ambitions of a person or a group of people present in one text, and reflected in another text and another – the list is unprecedented, creating interconnected texts [23], [24], [25]. Essentially, Kristeva underlined how a text is constructed, in which she emphasized that it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, and that several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another [2].

Building on the idea laid by Kristeva, some scholars try to describe and expound the concept of intertextuality and its implications vis-à-vis the concept of text. For instance, Alfaro [10] claimed that a text cannot be an autonomous and self-governing entity but is dependent on previous texts. While Harris, Trezise, and Winsor [26] emphasized that intertextuality is a “multiplicity of intersecting meanings” (p. 10), and when specifically applied to a classroom setting, it could refer to a situation where learners attached different meanings to a particular text or topic – sometimes conflicting meanings, which create tensions, and this somehow heightened students' reading motivation and comprehension. Other scholars highlighted its importance; for example, Allen [2] pointed out that intertextuality “foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence in modern cultural life” (p. 5), particularly to non-literary art forms in which originality and autonomy seem to fade and are replaced with convergence from shards and fragments of already existing art. An example of this might be a book turned into a movie, like *The Twilight Saga* by Stephanie Meyer. Significantly, this work resonates with Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* and Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*. Further, it is a mixture of myths, legends, and local colors.

Anchored on the theory of intertextuality, the concept of text does not only confine to traditional texts but includes non-literary art forms like paintings, sculptures, and Internet resources: blogs, social media posts, e-books, videos on YouTube, etc. Netz [27] stressed that intertextuality is at the heart of writing itself. This is particularly true in the World Wide Web, where most of the texts are a mixture of different texts, creating a “hybrid text” which refers to mixing one genre with another. Most of these are considered conversational platforms (like Twitter), utilizing interactivity and hyperlinking [11], [28]. Anything that a person could use to gain knowledge and information can be considered text. It might be a conversation with a friend or a teacher, attending a Christmas party, traveling to a new place, watching movies, etc. [2], [29]. Significantly, Newman [14] defined intertextuality as the process of linking various texts, as well as “making relevant text-to-text connections among those texts being read” (p. 12).

Based on these multiple views about intertextuality, one could conclude that writers are pulled away from the limelight and lose their authoritative power over the singularity of the meaning of a certain text, and when engaging in reading material, a reader produces various meanings, as reflected in the work of Barthes. Barthes used intertextuality to argue that meaning can never be singled out in a literary piece, for readers always find an intertextual connection/s, and therefore, authors are not held accountable [2], [30].

However, most scholars still disagree with the formulation and definition of intertextuality as applied in interdisciplinary and comparative investigations of various sorts [1]. For example, Allen [2] cited the French literary critics Genette and Riffartere who both used intertextuality to contend “for critical certainty, or at least for the possibility of saying definite, stable and incontrovertible

things about literary texts” (p. 4) and non-literary materials. This led to the creation or development of an interpretive community whose job is to set standards in identifying and stabilizing the meaning of a particular text – that is, what is accepted and what is not [31].

3. Types of intertextuality

Some researchers and scholars have tried to expound the theory of intertextuality by identifying its types and categories, for instance, Awung [32] and Miola [24].

3.1 Awung's type of intertextuality

Awung identified two types of intertextuality: *Ekphrasis* and *Iconotext*.

3.1.1 Ekphrasis

This is a result of combining the ideas of Tom Mitchell, Grant Scott, James Heffernan, and David Carrier. Awung characterized this type of intertextuality as “when an author describes a visual object such as painting or sculpture with a verbal media like in a novel, poem, short story, and other forms of literature” (p. 1), for example, the description of Achilles' shield in Homer's *Iliad*, or the description of Leonardo Da Vinci's painting *The Last Supper* in Dan Brown's novel *Da Vinci Code*. These examples are pieces of literature that describe visual artworks, and this type of intertextuality aims to give voice, either explicitly or implicitly or both, to a silent image.

3.1.2 Iconotext

Iconotext refers to the use of pictures, images, or illustrations in a text or vice versa, forming an indissoluble union with verbal symbols. Examples are pictures or illustrations in children's books, textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and other articles. Moreover, it can also be seen in novels, in which pictures are used in various parts, commonly before the opening of every chapter, to give some concreteness to the work (e.g., Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*, JK Rowling's *Harry Potter Series*).

3.2 Miola's types of intertextuality

Miola distinguished seven types of intertextuality and divided them into three categories. Constantly present among these types and categories are the three variables: (a) the degree to which the trace of an earlier text is tagged by a verbal echo; (b) the degree to which its effects rely on audience recognition; and (c) the degree to which the appropriation is eristic or argumentative. It is important to note that the division among these types and categories is not ultimate, but they seem to overlap one another. *Category one* consists of reading materials directly reiterated or echoed in the work of a certain author. There are four types of intertextuality under this category: *revision*, *translation*, *quotation*, and *sources*. *Category two* denotes an original text containing seminal ideas, theories, and innovations. There are two types under this category: *conventions and configurations*, and *genres*. Lastly, *category three* reflects the very essence of intertextuality, and it particularly connotes what a specific audience or reader brings to a text rather than what the author brought. *Paralogues* are the only type under this category. The following discussion centers on these types of intertextuality from categories one to three.

3.2.1 Revision

This highlights a close relationship between an earlier text and, after revision, its new version. The revision might be influenced by external factors, for example, a specific number of words or pages, censorship, its target readers, etc. Another factor is the wishes and goals of the author. On the other hand, it is a different scenario if the reviser is not the author. Nonetheless, it all boils down to preference and intentionality, which, consequently, and most of the time, present a conflict or dilemma.

3.2.2 Translation

This transforms a specific material into a different language and reinvents it. Translations are primarily grouped according to their original language and evaluated by “fidelity,” like the closeness of the translation to the original work and the success of the translator vis-à-vis the genuine literary quality and effects. However, the problem lies in the “unbridgeable linguistic and cultural

spaces between languages and cultures”, for example, translation from Greek to Latin, then Latin to English. Specifically, some words in Latin or Greek are difficult, if not impossible to translate, and have caused thousands of years of intense scholarly arguments [24]. This is particularly true in the translation of the Bible from Greek to the King James Version or standard or present English and then to another language, sometimes spawning heated debates and creating factions among individuals or groups of people, especially among religious groups and organizations.

3.2.3 Quotation

This type of intertextuality reproduces an original text (whole or in part) in a later text. Miola emphasized different devices writers use to mark quotations for readers: (a) topographical signals; (b) a switch in language, e.g., using archaic language to further a point or thesis like “thou art more lovely and more temperate”; (c) or actual identification of the original author or text, like the line quoted previously is taken from William Shakespeare’s famous sonnet 18; (d) series of quotations used into the new context, like two or more quotations aimed to develop a paragraph, a composition or a speech; and (e) fragments of well-known texts (commonly myth and ancient plays).

3.2.4 Sources

It specifically refers to source texts which, fundamentally, provide the plot, character, idea, or style of the future text. Here, the author’s reading, remembering, and complicated strategies (including imitation of style) all play critical roles in shaping the later text. Miola identified three possible subdivisions for this to occur: (a) the source incident in which the previous text exists to create dynamic tension and affect the identity of the later text. In other words, the new text simply responds to an earlier text (e.g., Raleigh’s famous reply to Marlowe’s *Passionate Shepherd*); (b) the source proximate is the most well-known and frequently studied kind of intertextuality, specifically, sources and texts. Authors honor them, reshape, steal, ransack, and plunder. Usually, the common practices are copying, paraphrasing, compression, expansion, omission, innovation, and contradiction; (c) and finally, the source remote, which refers to the sources that can only be recalled or rearticulated in the subconscious mind of the author.

3.2.5 Conventions and configurations

It states that there are conventional rules and structures, implicitly and explicitly, followed and put into effect by authors in their works. Some poets, for example, might copy and employ conventions or styles in writing from classical and medieval literature. Others might imitate Pablo Neruda’s style or Nick Joaquin’s technique in writing poetry. While writing a novel, one might emulate the famous formula of Ernest Hemingway’s “iceberg” – only thirty percent is directly stated, and the other seventy percent is submerged or implied. And of course, there is that use of simple and unadorned words and sentences. In terms of writing scholarly works, publishing journals also dictates conventions, patterns, styles, and rules. Each of these would vary depending on the subject, target readers, intentions, and others.

3.2.6 Genres

This creates a link, directly or indirectly, to a wide range of genres. Sometimes, because of the smoothness and sophistication of the adaptation and its linkages, it is difficult to identify the origin. Miola mentioned Spencer’s *Faerie Queene* as an example of this type, in which it absorbs classical, medieval, and contemporary works into a new creation. Another example and a bit more recent, though the origin can be easily traced, is Paulo Coelho’s novel *Fifth Mountain*, which is based on the story of Elija and echoes its account in the Bible. Some writers make use of mythology as a central element in developing a story that has a contemporary setting, like that of *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*. Apparently, the most famous and celebrated is JK Rowling’s *Harry Potter*, which is also anchored on myth.

3.2.7 Paralogues

These are texts that reflect the intellectual, social, theological, or political meanings in other texts. Miola described it as moving “horizontally and analogically in discourses rather than in vertical lineation through the author’s mind and intention” (p. 23). He generalized that this carries greater freedom; however, it brings dangers like rampant and irresponsible association, shallow or

sometimes artificial cultural generalization, stereotyping, racial and religious discrimination, etc. This also includes plagiarism and forgery, as stated previously.

In summary, Awung mentioned only two types of intertextuality and is silent on categories. His types emphasized visual and verbal symbols. Works of art like paintings, sculptures, pictures (e.g., pictures/illustrations in children's books), movies, or videos (like based on a book) are examples of these types of intertextuality. On the other hand, Miola identified seven types of intertextuality and segregated these into three categories.

4. Intertextual models

It is important to point out that there are only a few intertextual models that have been proposed in the field. Some of these are *Documents Model* and *MD-TRACE Model*; they both focus on multiple texts comprehension.

4.1 Documents Model

Originally proposed by Perfetti and colleagues [33]. It evaluates how good readers comprehend multiple texts by evaluating "the respective contribution of each document to a global representation of situation" (p. 50). Especially if it deals with the same issue from different points of view or angles. They emphasized that readers build an integrated mental representation while taking note of the similarities and differences of the various documents or sources, which include information about the author (e.g., name, credentials, etc.), information about each document (e.g., date of publication, publisher, etc.), and others. Particularly, there are four major components of this model: situation model, document node information, source-content links, and source-source links (see Table 1). Each component has strategic processes. Specifically, readers identify relationships and try to understand the dispute among these documents and settle their differences. Thus, skimming off some parts of a text or reading a specific portion (e.g., a chapter of a book, a page or two) may suffice.

Table 1 Strategic Processes that Support the Representation of Different Documents Model Components

Strategic Processes	
Situation Model	Corroboration to compare text or passages within texts and look for consistencies or discrepancies among texts or passages
Document node information	Sourcing to locate source information before reading Monitor evaluation of document and author characteristics Sourcing facilitated by inconsistencies, agreement on important or previously uncertain information
Source-content links	Sourcing to connect source information and to use that information to interpret the content

Source-source links

Corroboration to compare perspectives and look for consistencies or discrepancies among them

4.2 MD-TRACE Model

Rouet and Britt introduced the Multiple-Document Task-based Relevance Assessment and Content Extraction (MD-TRACE) model [34]. It highlights a reader's cognitive skills, such as comparing, contrasting, corroborating, etc. It also claims the value of prior knowledge, both general world and knowledge of specific disciplinary domains (e.g., history or natural science). A reader's principal aim is to identify consistencies and discrepancies among various sources. Rouet and Britt identified five steps that unfold cyclically:

1. *Create and update a task model.* A task model is an illustration of the perceived output. This steers the search, evaluation, and integration of information. Based on this task model, a reader is expected to do the following: set reading goals and procedures, set criteria in assessing if texts/documents are relevant and if only a chapter or some specific passages are to be read and evaluated, know how many documents/texts need to be located and read, and identify the nature or type of output needed (e.g., a research paper, an essay, master's thesis, etc).
2. *Assess information needs.* In this stage, a reader has to decide what data are required to realize the output. A reader needs to evaluate his/her prior knowledge vis-à-vis the demands of the tasks.
3. *Interaction with documents.* This step involves the following three sub-steps: (a) *Assess item relevance*, in which a reader evaluates how much a certain text/document helps in achieving his/her goals. In addition, reliability (e.g., expertise or bias of the author, date of publication, publishing organization, etc.), the merit of content, and access to information are also considered; (b) *Process text contents* which refer to the processing of information; a reader may use rapid scanning and skipping information that is not related, or employ deeper reading especially if a portion of a text helps in reaching his/her goals; and (c) *Create/Update a document model* which means that after accessing data from a certain text, the reader's task then is to integrate this to other texts. This process may come in one of the following forms: documents may add to each other, reinforce each other, or dispute each other.
4. *Create /Update a task product.* The information gathered from different documents is now geared towards shaping the target or final product.
5. *Assess whether the product meets the task goals.* If, after assessing, the product satisfies the goals, then that would be the end of the process. If not, the reader is expected to go back, identify where the fault lies, and do the necessary revisions.

Significantly, there are many similarities between the two models (see Table 2). It is not surprising because the MD-TRACE model is anchored on the Documents model. However, in comparing the two models, Bråten et al. [33] emphasized that the Document model is intended to advance the following situations: (a) set task instructions or goals like writing an essay, term paper, etc., (b) establish a set of texts that are connected to accomplishing the task/s, and (c) provide a set of tools to find and locate these texts (e.g., table of contents, search engines, etc.). On the other hand, the MD-TRACE model was conceived to explain the steps in comprehending and using multiple texts to accomplish the said instructional task/output in the Documents model.

Table 2 *Comparison of Documents & MD-TRACE Models*

Similarities	Differences
Aim for multiple texts comprehension	MD-TRACE is anchored on the Documents model
Activate students' schemata	Documents model emphasizes locating & evaluating multiple texts, while MD-TRACE
Use comprehension skills	deals with using multiple texts to achieve an output
Identify consistencies & discrepancies among texts	
Assess the author's credibility & text content	

5. Text Selection

Text selection is an important aspect of an intertextual lesson. For instance, Armstrong and Newman developed intertextual lessons anchored on schema theory known as “blocks” or supplemental texts, which aimed to connect core material to supplementary texts [25]. The said intertextual lessons were applied in two different settings. First was in the community college, where those who failed the placement exam (Reading Placement Test) were required to take developmental reading coursework, which lasted for one semester. The intertextual lessons were specifically used in the third and fourth weeks of the semester. These lessons revolve around one topic or unit (e.g., Vietnam Unit) and make use of expository and more academic texts like college-level textbooks, scholarly journal articles, college-level world history textbooks, primary sources, and pop culture media texts such as songs, video clips, etc. The primary goal was to provide a variety of text genres. In addition, students were encouraged (e.g., during class discussion) to talk about other texts they have read, like cultural texts (e.g., movies, music, and art), events, etc.

The second context was in the university setting, and the program was known as a decentralized alternative-admission development program. Students in this program were ineligible for standard admission to the university because of their high school Grade Point Average (GPA) and Compass Reading Placement Test scores. The program consisted of four components: Literacy, English, Communications, and Math. The Literacy component was in two parts: College Reading, and Reading and Study Strategies. The intertextual lessons were applied in the *College Reading* part. Novels were mostly used in this course and served to scaffold students into academic reading practices. Supplemental texts, mostly expository and more academic texts like college-level textbook chapters, scholarly journal articles, historical chronologies, and pop culture media texts, were also used to support the core text or novel. The course also aimed to welcome discussion on other texts students read, which were related to the topic at hand, e.g., movies, music, art, etc. The study concluded that intertextual lessons or intertextual-based courses refocused reading into a conversation and transformed students into active participants.

6. Promoting Intertextual Connections

Lenski pointed out that reading comprehension depends on the reader's ability to see relationships between past texts and the current text [16]. This creation of connections or "intertextual links" makes it possible for a deeper comprehension, which is needed especially in the tertiary levels. In promoting connections, one can ask questions, organize multiple texts in various arrangements, and apply complex thinking strategies. Thus, text selection is a critical factor [25].

6.1 Intertextual Questions

There are several ways to promote intertextual connections. One of these is to ask intertextual questions that help students recall texts they have read and studied in the past [16]. Importantly, these questions can also draw themes and underlying patterns [35]. Like "How is the theme in this book similar to themes in other books you have read?" "How does your culture and background support or refute the claims made in this text?" "What texts support the conclusions of this text?" (p. 80).

6.2 Complex thinking strategies

Educators could also teach their students to use complex thinking strategies to create intertextual links [16], [14]. Lenski identified specific strategies students could use to link current texts to past texts. One of these is comparing or associating, especially if students have "no prior knowledge and experience" of the current topic, and they just draw their association through TV shows, films, books, and social media [36]. Second is integrating, in which readers could apply their background knowledge or schemata of their native culture to interpret the current text, and they could also use their knowledge of the second culture to interpret texts. Lenski provided an example in which a Chinese student integrated Chinese culture into new texts or other cultures. In addition, Armstrong and Newman argued that there is always a missing piece in a learner's schemata vis-à-vis the present topic/subject; therefore, students could use supplemental resources to fill in this gap [25]. The third is evaluation, in which students drew their personal judgments, values, conclusions, and generalizations by comparing the present texts with the past texts. Further, it was observed that competent students integrate information from multiple sources into a logical and meaningful representation of a topic, issue, or situation [33].

6.3 Intertextual texts arrangements

Another method is to arrange texts in different ways. Specifically, there are five ways educators could arrange texts to promote intertextual connections [25], [16]. Lenski described each of these types of text organization. The first is a *complementary texts arrangement*. These are texts arranged around a central topic or theme. Lenski pointed out that when teachers organize texts in a complementary fashion, students are provided with many opportunities to learn various aspects of a single theme.

The second is *conflicting texts arrangements*. These are texts arranged in such a way that present another perspective on a given central idea or topic. This is useful when the purpose of instruction is to develop the critical thinking habit of the learners.

The third is *controlling texts arrangement*, in which a controlling text serves as a point of reference for other texts that are arranged. Lenski stressed that this arrangement provides students with the opportunity to use one text as the base from which other texts are interpreted.

The fourth is a *dialogic texts arrangement*. This arrangement of texts presents a dialogue about a topic, e.g., books in a series, and these materials contain some of the same characters, issues, and events that reappear in a variety of books. This is considered the easiest way to introduce learners to intertextual links or make connections across texts.

Lastly, *the arrangement of synoptic texts* refers to texts that are variations of a single text or theme. Lenski emphasized that when students read stories written from different points of view, they make connections to similarities and differences between the authors' perspectives. Studies show that intertextual strategies might seem a better fit for comprehending multiple texts and improve students' motivation to read [25], [33], [16], [34].

7. Evidence of intertextuality

Armstrong and Newman stressed that the best way to measure evidence of intertextuality is through students' essays and responses in classroom discussions [25]. Specifically, in evaluating students' essays, Newman developed a rubric that was utilized to evaluate students' essays as an output of intertextual lesson/s as mentioned earlier [14]. This rubric is part of one of the two scoring guides, which is a holistic scoring guide. The student essays are graded using a 5-point Likert scale. Specifically, essays that receive 5 points are the best essays showing evidence of intertextuality which integrates all the appropriate texts used; essays that get 4 points also integrate all appropriate texts but may not fully integrate one text into the discussion; 3 points means that essays show evidence of engaging in intertextuality with only three of the source documents; 2 points connote that essays demonstrate evidence of intertextuality with only two of the source documents; essays that obtain 1 point exhibit little evidence of intertextuality with only one of the source documents; and essays that get 0 points indicate no evidence of engaging in intertextuality. Every essay obtained two scores: one for content and one for evidence of intertextuality. Further, Armstrong and Newman advocated discourse analysis in analyzing the data.

8. Conclusion

Intertextuality, as anchored on the concept of text, implies the instructional value of utilizing connected, interrelated, or intertextual texts vis-à-vis a particular topic or subject. However, these materials do not only refer to traditional texts but to modern texts (e.g., paintings and sculptures, Internet resources). The definite and obvious challenge, therefore, is how to bring these materials into the classroom that are sensitive to instructional curriculum and which could, at the same time, motivate students to read and enhance their reading comprehension. One of the things educators could do is to utilize intertextual texts relative to students' schemata and interests. Learners are motivated to read if they can connect it to their background knowledge and experiences and have a lifelong implication. Another is the use of intertextual questions, complex thinking strategies, and intertextual arrangements. Educators could also use intertextual models like MD-TRACE and the Documents model to improve their students' reading comprehension, particularly when reading intertextual texts. Assessment and evaluation could be done through students' analytical essays as well as their responses during classroom discussion. Importantly, a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum and learners' educational needs is crucial when applying intertextuality in the classroom.

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