The Role of Intertextuality in the Argumentative Writings of Advanced Iranian EFL Learners: A Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Intertextuality is related to the ways whereby new meanings are created from the old ones and deals with how newly-constructed discourse can incorporate previous texts by adapting and transforming them into new ones (Johnstone, 2008). The present study, using a (critical) discourse analytic framework and some systematic procedures, attempted to identify, qualitatively analyze and reflect upon the instances of intertextuality elements in the argumentative essays written by a group of advanced proficiency level M.A students of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and English Literature in a State university in Iran. Some representative instances of macro- and micro-level intertextuality (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013) are cited, compared and further discussed based on the structural conventions of the argumentative essay writing subgenre, the general knowledge and personal, academic and world experiences of the individuals and the social and ideological context in which the study was conducted.

Keywords: *Intertextuality, Argumentative Essay, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), English Literature, Iran*

1. Introduction

It is generally believed that the texts writers produce are the results of ideas encountered in the previous discourse plus their creative engagement in the act of writing. In fact, writers use the resources provided by the previous discourse and create their own original texts. This influence and presence of previous texts in the creation of new ones is generally defined as intertextuality which shows the internal relations of texts with the previous ones (Halliday, 2003; Johnstone, 2008). In fact, it can be claimed that any texts produced – academic, scientific, historical, literary, journalistic, etc. - have traces of the previous texts and is a mixture of intertextual cycles of the chain of texts which make the history of that text (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2003).

As it is commented by Holmes (2004), academic reading and writing are highly intertextual practices and "the discourse community demands that academic writing should not simply follow the moves typical of the genre but that the student should incorporate other writers through the students' previous reading in that area" (p. 80). Harman (2013) also maintains that a particular text is never a unique entity but resonates with collective echoes of past and present texts. In academic writing, learners, based on their knowledge and expertise in a domain, make use of ideas offered by others and the resources provided by language to create their own texts. In fact, their experience with the previous texts and, hence, the accumulated knowledge through the years of contact with print or even audio materials and, more generally, their world experience enable them to construct their
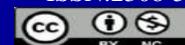
own original texts. Based on their objectives and the specific genres or academic endeavors in which they are engaged, learners can make use of some intertextual elements like direct/indirect quotations, allusions, etc. (Bloor & Bloor, 2007; Halliday, 2003) to present their ideas and justify their points. Since using such resources can possibly enhance the quality and credibility of the ideas provided, the learners' awareness of the legitimacy of using such resources in the written texts and their possible impact on the content and the readers' desire to read the produced texts is highly important.

Academic literacy includes learning how and when to linguistically and rhetorically weave intertexts into a text within a specific genre that signals affiliation or disaffiliation with a specific discourse community (Macken-Horarik, 1998; Shuart-Faris & Bloome, 2004). Bremner (2008) believes that while the notion of intertextuality is rather well-established among the analysts and as Swales (2004, p.21) claims that "we are all admitted intertextualists now, both in theory and in practice," there is very few discussions about the relationship between intertextuality and academic writing and its teaching. Bremner (2008) further argues that "students need to see that writing is context-bound: a text cannot be structured without reference to previous documents, community expectations, organizational styles and so on" (p. 310). In the same regard, Hyland (2004), who considers intertextuality as an essential feature of genre knowledge, maintains that "teachers can help students to see that their texts do not stand alone but must be understood against a background of other opinions, viewpoints and experiences on the same theme" (p. 81).

Pecorari and Shaw (2013) assert that intertextuality is a prominent feature of academic writing, and the ability to use sources effectively and appropriately is an essential skill which novice writers must acquire. However, in most EFL contexts, the texts produced by the learners, lack the essential authenticity, are detached from the real life issues and purposes and are only written to fulfill the requirements of the course of studies. The leaners are mostly concerned with the mechanical and structural aspects of the language and there is little chance for the instances of intertextuality to appear in the texts

produced. Accordingly, the present study attempted to give a rather challenging and everyday-debated topic, based on the sociocultural and ideological context of Iran, to a group of advanced proficiency level M.A students of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and English Literature and required them to write an argumentative essay and justify their points using a variety of resources to defend their perspectives. In fact, a systematic procedure is adopted to explore the instances of intertextuality elements in the texts produced and their implications for the learners' academic/world experience, the extent of their familiarity with the previous discourse and the overall social and ideological context of the country in which they are living.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Theoretical Framework

Intertextuality is related to the ways whereby new meanings are created from the old ones and deals with "how new writing incorporates previous texts by transforming them into new text" (Holmes, 2004, p. 80). The origin of the term can be traced to the idea of 'dialogic interaction' introduced and elaborated by the Russian philosopher and linguist Mlkhail Bakhtin. However, the term intertextuality has been coined by Kristeva (1980) who reiterated and introduced Bakhtin's ideas to the western scholars and believed that any text is in the intersection of other texts and has some traces of previous discourse. In her appropriation of Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogicality, Kristeva stated, ''any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another'' (1980, p. 66). Practically, the interweaving of intertextual resource which is conducted for communicative or aesthetic effects can occur via direct or indirect quotation, borrowing of patterns of meaning, or appropriation of genre structure (Lemke, 1995).

In fact, it is maintained that a text is influenced by other texts and possibly contains some elements borrowed or taken from the previous text which are given a new form and manifestation through the writers' creative power and appropriation (Fairclough, 1999; Johnstone, 2008; Widdowson, 2004). In other words, the author, in his/her creation of the text, "(un)consciously appeals to the network of codes, references, structures, and other features of other relating texts existing before through intrusions, quotations,

allusions, hybridizations, implications, etc." (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013, p. 157).

Widdowson (2004) believes that identifying the elements of intertextuality and commenting on the presence of previous discourse in a text is a rather difficult task and suggests that for such a purpose we need some clear and practical means and measures. In the same regard, it must be endorsed that engaging in such a practice and examining the effects of previous discourse on a text should be conducted systematically and informatively. For this purpose, some researchers have introduced and explicated on some models or inventory of intertextuality elements and they have suggested some systematic approaches to identifying such elements in the created texts. For example, Fairclough (1992, 2003) asserts that in analyzing a text or discourse, the relations between functional, lexical, grammatical and textual structure of any texts must be taken into consideration. In his view, there are three important elements involved in the creation of text and discourse: *force of the utterance*, which is the intention of utterance; *coherence of the text*, which makes the internal components of the text inherently connected and, finally, *intertextuality of the text*, which connects the present text to the texts already produced in the domain of concern. In this model, intertextuality is considered as the reconstruction of chain/network of texts in the new text (Fairclough, 2003); however, no practical framework is suggested to tap more deeply into this element.

Furthermore, Halliday (2002, 2003) thinks of intertextuality as a historical account of the text affected by a chain of previously produced texts. He refers to the idea of allusion in his model and maintains that the history of any text produced has four main strands or dimensions: intertextual, developmental, systemic and intratextual. In a more practical model, Genette (1992, 1997) considers intertextuality and four other related components as a part of larger model termed as 'transtextuality'. This researcher sees intertextuality in three types: explicit and formal intertextuality which refers to the use of forms such as direct quotations; non-explicit or hidden intertextuality which shows the use of plagiarism in constructing a text; and implicit intertextuality which indicates the presence of clues, references and allusions to the preciously created texts and expressed notions and ideas. In a more realistic model, Bloor and Bloor (2007) consider intertextuality as intrusion or adaptation of elements such as direct/indirect quotation from the previous texts into the new one or hybridization and mixing of genres into each other. Therefore, in the analysis of a text both internal structure and linguistic development and stylistic features of the text must be taken into consideration.

In a new and more comprehensive and practical model of intertextuality in the literary texts, Ahmadian and Yazdani (2013), drawing on the shortcomings and assets of the previous models, presented and elaborated on two levels of intertextuality: horizontal level and vertical/hierarchical level. The idea of horizontal intertextuality refers to the total structure of the text and the effects of previous texts on it and is generally termed as macro-intertextuality. The vertical/hierarchical level points to the internal structure of the text and the explicit/implicit presence of the elements of previous texts. This level is called micro-intertextuality and includes the use of features like allusion, adaptation, indication and quotation. Since this model is used as a theoretical framework for identifying the instances of intertextuality in the present study, it requires more elaboration.

As was stated the macro-intertextuality refers to the overall structure of the text which "may be adaptation, imitation of, or references to, related existing texts or textual components of them" (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013, p. 160). Micro-intertextuality, as another dimension, refers to the elements used which influence the internal structure of the text. In fact, "they are hidden in different layers of the text and constitute a part of its meaning" (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013, p. 160). This category is further subdivided into four main intertextual elements: (i) allusion which is considered as a reference to persons, places, events or other literary practices/texts which are not explicitly mentioned and the readers must identify them in a text based on their prior knowledge and engagement with the literary (or maybe oral) materials and experiences; (ii) adaptation which refers to the use of facts, ideas, notions, etc. of a work and use them in a rather original way for making another thing; (iii) indication which is suggesting an idea, concept, meaning, etc. by presenting something relevant to it in an explicit or implicit way; and (iv) quotation, as the name clearly indicates, refers to the idea of directly/indirectly quoting others' ideas and expressions in the text.
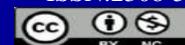
2.2 Related Studies on Intertextuality in Writing

Having a history of less than half a century, the idea and practice of intertextuality in the educational domains, compared to the domains of philosophy of text production and linguistic tradition, has received fewer attention and the investigation of literature could provide us with few studies in this regard. In one of the studies, Holmes (2004) focused on the idea of how intertextuality can be useful in developing EAP methodology in an African context. Holmes commented that the concept of intertextuality, which shows how new meaning is created form previous text/discourse, can complement genre theory in offering a powerful basis for a coherent methodology that deals with the teaching of EAP reading and writing skills. The practical work of this researcher and his colleagues, especially by offering a range of reading and writing encounters from their own classroom experiences, led to the development of a stepwise procedure for introducing an intertextual view of reading and writing to the students that could help them move from appreciating messages to creating the new ones and included the following stages: "interpreting metaphor, traditional sayings, explaining advertisements, rewriting stories, writing a research repost and writing a study summary" (Holmes, 2004, p. 82). In fact, this framework could provide learners with an opportunity to respond to and re-create the reading texts and in the act of writing draw on their previous reading and use their purposes and gained experience to create their own original and new texts.

Bremner (2008), after commenting on the importance of intertextuality and emphasizing its explanatory potential for the student writers, examined the use of intertextuality in business communication textbooks and how could the provision of such intertextual support can be helpful for the learners. More specifically, with such an examination, the researcher aimed to shed some lights on the intertextual nature of workplace writing and its relationship to the features like the planning process, the collaborative nature of writing, reference and response to the previous discourse and other documents, plagiarism, intertextuality situated tasks and templates, layout and organizational conventions of the textbooks. In fact, this study argues that lack of intertextual context can lead to inappropriate models and texts and by providing the students with more complex sets of intertextuality linked texts and a richer discursive environment, students can have a better "opportunity to make more authentic rhetorical responses to different situations" (Bremner, 2008, p. 307).

In a study conducted to identify the instances of intertextuality in the written genres, Ho (2011) explored such practices in the request-email exchanges of a group of professional English language teachers in a public education institution in Hong Kong. As for the reasons of using such elements, it was discussed that intertextuality elements were incorporated in the email discourse for four main pragmatic functions: "distancing themselves from the discourse and thus diverting the possible forthcoming resentment to others; convincing others to comply with the requests they made; emphasizing selectively and strategically the various roles they were playing; and managing rapport with the e-mail recipients" (Ho, 2011, p. 2534). The researcher further argued that the appropriate and effective use of intertextual elements and interdiscursive practices can enhance the persons' repertoire of communicative strategies and thus can lead to more professional effectiveness. It was also suggested that due to the importance of intertextuality in workplace writing and teaching of writing (as commented by Bremner, 2008; Holmes, 2004; Hyland, 2004), they must be considered and incorporated in any teaching practice which attempts to train the required and effective workforce.

Furthermore, Harman (2013) investigated how an explicit instructional focus on the language in literary narrative genre supported language minority students in developing advanced academic literacy by using systemic functional linguistics and ethnographic analytic framework. In the intended intervention the instructor with an explicit focus on literature as an intertextual resource in teaching writing attempted to provide a meta-linguistic awareness of how to use an expanded repertoire of linguistic choices. The results of the study provided some insights regarding how the participants availed themselves of different linguistic resources to build the lexical relations in their narratives and other academic essays. In fact, the instructional focus on literary intertextuality served as a mediating tool for students in noticing and learning about language and other semiotic resources.

In a paradigm of viewing writing as a meaning-making process, Bunch and Willett (2013) examined the writings of 40 students on an essay assignment and documented how they could use their linguistic and conceptual resources to respond to a rather challenging and unanticipated prompt. Their analyses have revealed the dialogic and multimodal process of meaning-making in the students' essays can shed some lights on how second language writers negotiate textually-rich content-area instruction which is rather in line with the idea of intertextuality as a natural and inherent characteristics of writing. In fact, it was found that in their production the students have, either implicitly or explicitly, referred to a variety of written, oral, or visual interdisciplinary texts used in the curriculum. More specifically, they have incorporated target materials from the content, curriculum and disciplinary texts; they have used metaphors, similes, stock phrases and have invoked some generally circulating beliefs. In fact, in order to signal different social worlds associated with the purpose of their essays, the students have used "recognizable kinds of language, phrasing and genres" (Bunch & Willett, 2013, p. 154) and their choices with regard to linguistic, organizational and rhetorical aspects were relevant to other textual and discursive practices.

In a more recent attempt, Warren (2016) studied the contribution of intertextuality to a text's coherence by examining the ways in which writers make use of recurrent words and phrases to signal instances of intertextuality in business emails. The researcher concluded that the key words and phrases employed in the email exchanges by the participants are associated with intertextuality and its directionality and are influenced by the power relationships existing between the writer and reader.

Furthermore, Strickland (2016) explored the presence and practical implications of Bakhtinian intertextuality within online intercultural exchanges involving the use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) technology (a bilingual blog, Skype, Facebook and Dropbox) in university second language writing classrooms. The students' writings in these platforms were qualitatively analyzed to identify the instances of intertextuality. The researcher concluded that the online exchange provided an opportunity for sharing of language which led to the contextualized learning of new lexical items and presentation of intertextuality richer content.

In another study having email exchanges as the data, Bremner and Costley (2018), endorsing the view that the ability to handle intertextual relations in email is an important component of workplace writing competence, explored how students dealt with the demands made by the intertextual nature of workplace writing by requiring them to read and process a collection of texts before composing emails themselves. The produced texts were analyzed by using constant comparison method. The finding of the study revealed that management of multiple texts and their intertextual relations, especially with regard to the extent of information needed, degree of explicitness and management of dialogue and writer-reader relationship, is a challenging endeavor and requires a comprehensive understanding of the features of the communicative discourse in which such texts are produced. The authors also concluded that that there is a need to demonstrate to students the centrality of intertextuality and the ways in which it contributes to the coherence of workplace communication. In an experimental study, Hu (2019) intended to examine the manifestations of three different types of intertextualities (i.e., material intertextuality, generic intertextuality and cultural intertextuality) in the English writings of Chinese university EFL learners. The findings of the study revealed evidences of material intertextualities (i.e., collaging and rewriting, quotations and adopting allusions and examples), certain generic intertextualities in the repetition of specific structures, and cultural intertextualities as a result of activating pertinent schema texts and themes, which confirmed the use of intertextuality as a valuable resource in the context of academic writing.

As the investigation of literature revealed intertextuality is an important and indispensable feature of constructing (new) discourses; however, few studies have explored the traces and implications of this feature in texts produced in academic genres and contexts and, to the present researchers' knowledge, no study has investigated Iranian EFL learners' practice of using intertextuality features in their written texts and especially in the sub-genre of argumentative essay which require the learners to take a stance with regard to their ideas and use variety of sources to defend

their position. Accordingly, the present study by adopting a (critical) discourse analysis framework embarked on this endeavor and tried to provide answer for the following research questions:

1. What are some instances of intertextuality elements in the advanced Iranian EFL learners' argumentative texts and what are their possible implications for the structural conventions of such a genre and the social and ideological context in which the study is conducted?

2. Are there any differences in the nature of materials and intertextuality elements used in TEFL and English Literature students' argumentative essays?

3. Methodology

3.1 Setting and Participants

The participants of the study were a convenient sample of 30 advanced proficiency level M.A students of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and 12 M.A students of English Literature in a State university in Iran (see Table 1). They were from both genders and were between 23 to 30 ages. As it can be deduced from their degree level, they had an experience of about five or more years in learning English in academic contexts and possibly some additional years of studying English in private language institutes. Due to the requirements of the B.A level courses they have passed, they are familiar with the conventions of writing in English especially in the argumentative mode and its usual structure. Because of their other general studies, having contact with the media, living in the communities of interest and having the experience of the context and the world, it was expected that they have the knowledge of the issue raised in the writing prompt which requires them to write an argumentative essay. Two other female instructors who were teaching the conventions of writing in the specific fields of TEFL and English literature in the university also contributed in collecting the required data and written samples. In fact, they required their students to respond to the intended writing prompt as an assignment for their advanced writing courses.

Table 1: Some information about the participants of the study

Major	Total number	Male	Female
TEFL	30	11	19
English Literature	12	3	9

3.2 Instrument and Materials

An argumentative essay writing prompt (see Appendix A) was given to the students and they were required to deliver the assignments in a time span of about two weeks. The students of TEFL were given a written copy of the prompt while the Literature students were informed electronically through the automation system of the university and thus wrote and sent their drafts via emails. A total of 42 five-paragraph essays (having an introduction, three detailed body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph) ranging between 550 to 1100 words each were collected and qualitatively analyzed to identify the instances of intertextuality based on Ahmadian and Yazdani's (2013) model of intertextuality analysis. The argumentative topic was selected because it is believed that such topics could be expected to demand "more complex processing" (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 121) than other types of writing (e.g., narratives), and requires learners to take a specific stance over the issue raised and use a variety of resources to defend and prove their points. It is also maintained that argumentative tasks would lead to more knowledge-transforming and problem solving behavior on the part of learners (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). A point worth mentioning is that a rather general and familiar topic was selected for this essay to enhance the learners' degree of involvement with the task.

3.3 Procedure of Data Collection and Analysis

The present study is conducted within the framework of discourse analysis, which is founded upon "the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life" and is grounded on the idea that "social analysis and research always has to take account of language" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). Furthermore, Ahmadian and Yazdani's (2013) model of intertextuality analysis, as explained in the theoretical framework of the study, is used to identify and elaborate upon the specific instances and techniques of intertextual representation in the written texts. More specifically, since the main objective of the study is to identify the instances of intertextuality in the students' written text, a systematic procedure is required for such an endeavor. Accordingly, the researchers made use of Bazerman's (2004) procedure

for analyzing intertextuality which can be summarized as follows:

1. Identify your purpose for doing intertextual analysis and what questions you hope to answer by doing it;
2. Identify the specific texts you want to examine; in other words, identify your corpus;
3. Identify the traces of other texts by examining explicit overt references to other authors;
4. Start making observations and interpretations by considering the reference in relation to the context of what the author is saying;
5. Look for more subtle clues to cater for your analytical purpose;
6. Start looking for a pattern from which you can start developing a conclusion.

In fact, a qualitative content analysis research methodology was adopted for collecting and analyzing the necessary data. At first, the students were given argumentative essay writing prompt which raised an issue based on the ideological context of study, and after composing the drafts, their texts were systematically analyzed to identify the instances of intertextuality elements and the finding were interpreted with regard to the specific conventions of the genre in which the texts were produced and the sociocultural context in which the study was conducted.

4. Findings and Discussion

The connections between the newly-constructed texts and the previous discourse have been explained in terms of intertextuality which refers to "the ways in which texts and ways of talking refer to and build on other texts and discourses" (kristeva, 1986, as cited in Johnstone, 2008). According to Ahmadian and Yazdani's (2013) model of intertextuality analysis, texts can have relationships with the previous texts and bear intratextual traces of other texts in macro and micro levels. The present study, by analyzing a sample of Iranian EFL learners' argumentative essays, attempted to investigate and elaborate upon the issue of intertextuality and the following sections provide an illustration and explanation of the findings obtained.

4.1 Macro-level Intertextuality

Macro-intertextuality refers to the total structure of the text (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013) and accordingly in the present study can be attributed to the overall structural convention of the texts produced by the students, that is, the essay writing genre and more specifically the argumentative mode.

According to Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) ideas, "as students make meaning through registers and genres within the confines and possibilities of the context of situation and culture, they attempt to manage audience and social purpose, making text production and consumption a social and dialogic process" (as cited in Bunch & Willete, 2013, p. 144). In the same regard, in the academic writing genre, the subgenre of argumentative writing has been the focus of many studies and its features and conventions are explicitly described (Swaels, 1990). An argumentative essay must include "a three-part (introduction-body-conclusion) structure, a position statement (thesis), evidence (reasons and examples to support the position), and a conclusion presenting the essence of the argument or restating the thesis" (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2007, p. 91). In addition, a counterargument can be included to anticipate the potential opposition and make the texts more persuasive (Axelrod & Cooper, 2001).

The macro-level structural analysis of the written essays revealed that the overall structure of the argumentative essays was found to be rather the same in TEFL and Literature students' texts: a statement of the writer's position in the body, followed by some clarifications/support and a concluding paragraph. As for the introduction of the essays, most of the students have provided a background to the topic and have stated their positions; however, some essays lack the counterargument and are mostly descriptive in nature. Here two instances of introductions written by Literature and TEFL students are provided. In spite of being different in terms of language and style (e.g., the literary taste of the text written by the literature student), the main difference between the two selected extracts is that the introduction written by the Literature student has a rather effective counterargument and, hence, expected to be more persuasive.

Literature student: *Mass media have been with us for over a century now. But whether they have been invented to serve the human race or betray its wit, whether to count them as compassionate companions or treacherous enemies is a matter still unsettled and controversial. But it is for sure crucial that we try not to yield easily to the traps set up by deceitful agendas and keep in mind we are all endowed by a gift named thinking which must be nourished but not suppressed.*
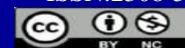
TEFL student: *We live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep moving and do our daily activities like work, entertainment, education and anything else that we have to do. As a result, we have put our trust on the media as an authority to give all these to us. Therefore, the mass media has a huge influence on people especially the younger generation today. It has both positive and negative influences. I will discuss three negative issues.*

Regarding the structure and body of the essays, the conventions stated in the writing prompt given (that is, providing convincing reasons for the stance/position adopted on the issue and following a five-paragraph essay format: a general introduction paragraph, at least three detailed body paragraphs and a general conclusion paragraph) are rather fulfilled by both groups of students, but the texts written by literature students, on average, were more unified, documented and rich in content which may be due to their possible higher proficiency in English (writing) and the effects of their studies in literature, philosophy, etc. In fact, instructional focus on the language in literature with its frequent disruption of expected lexical relations and figurative play can help students to develop more lexically dense and advanced-level writing (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2007). This finding confirms Bremner's (2008) argument that writing is a context-bound process and texts are structured by having shades of previous documents, community expectations, organizational styles and so on.   The information provided by TEFL students, on the other hand, are of general nature and a combination of formal styles and personal experiences and opinions on the issue are provided. These claims can be supported by comparing the following extracts which elaborate on the idea of identity of audience affected by being exposed to the mass media:

Literature student: *Being a teenager is most of the time parallel to the idea of search for identity and also a powerful voice in public. The problem of acceptance and involvement is one of those crucial features in their process of recognition. But the main issue rests in the basic definition of social roles such as gender, femininity, masculinity and motherhood..... By encouraging everyone to see their true identity, one can see that as media is playing its role for the sake of power in control of the majority, the*

individuality can also survive without the cost of loss of identity. Though the garish lightings of media are always tempting, the strong identity of a character can resist the imposing power, not completely, but to some extent.

TEFL student: *Media plays an important role in shaping the personality and identity of people. Individuals get their roles models from media. It has a great effect on making people understand their position and roles in the society and also the rules based on which they act and activities they can perform in relation to different individuals. Through media, governments can develop and spread the ideology they are interested in; once the ideology spreads, everyone accommodates to it….*

As for the conclusion of the essays, both groups of students have restated their main positions, have provided a summary of the main points and by providing some suggestions or solutions have extended their proposition to include some future prospects, which are in line with Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2007) conceptualization of the structure of argumentative essays. By doing so, they have, in fact, gone beyond the recognition of linguistic features and structural conventions of writing and have conceived writing as a set of social practice aimed at writing for a wide range of social purposes (Ivanič, 2004; Stagg Peterson, 2012). The following extracts vividly show these concerns and it is interesting that the extract written by the literature student because of adopting a rather critical stance towards the issue moves to the level of sociopolitical discourse (Ivanič, 2004), which attempts to give an awareness to the audience to question and challenge the status quo, disrupt unequal power relationships and construct powerful identities for rather all members of a society (Stagg Peterson, 2012).

Literature student: *In conclusion, what comes as mass media are mostly ideology and propaganda fashioned in an alluring way to sell itself. What is decorated will always catch the interest of younger generations, who are vulnerable to new trends and ideas and also social norms of beauty, fitness and ideal human being. Now as the exposure hours to media are increasing day by day, mass media could change the way adolescents eat, clothe, think and also decide for their everyday lives. This makes them estranged from the familial bonds and the support that they*

could attain. Meanwhile, it makes them dependent more and more upon media, thus lose their own manners and attitudes.

TEFL student: *In conclusion, we have absolutely no control over the media. However, we do have the final decision on the path we choose to take. The extent of the power mass media is able to influence us only reaches this far, the rest is really still within our control. If we use the mass media appropriately and moderately, it can't have so much negative effect on our lifestyle, thinking and fashion.*

4.2 Micro-level Intertextuality

Micro intertextuality refers to the existence of some elements which can circulate from text to texts in different form and can influence the construction and internal structure of the text. These elements are adaptation, quotation, allusions, indicators, etc. which are "hidden in different layers of the text and constitute a part of its meaning" (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013, p. 160). A discourse analytic content analysis of the argumentative essays written by TEFL and English Literature students was conducted and the instances of this aspect of intertextuality were derived and compared (see Table 2).

Table 2: The frequency of use of different micro-intertextual elements by TEFL and Literature students

Major	Intertextuality elements				
	Indication	Quotation	Allusion	Adaptation	Total
TEFL	91	5	2	9	107
English Literature	44	7	2	8	61

As it is depicted in Table 2, indicators had the highest frequency of use by both groups of students (TEFL= 91 and English Literature= 44). In this category of micro-intertextuality, the writers have provided a variety of ideas and facts about the society in which they are living to show the influence of mass media on the audience. It is worth-mentioning that the ideas cited by the students mostly reflect and invoke the general facts and widely-circulated common beliefs about the society, which are discussed in different gatherings and even raised in the mass media programs. For example, in the following extract a TEFL student has illustrated the effects of mass media and the emergence of new technology like Internet and the related programs in shaping the mindset and behavior of individuals in the society.

TEFL student: *The mass media is known to be the most powerful means of communication .....It may expose the individual to a flood of information.....It*

may become a source of entertainment for individuals. Internet has become the fastest way of communication and means of entertainment. Individuals may spend great deal of time prowling in it. The use of internet for social medias such as Line, WhatsApp and WeChat has become widespread. These have a great influence on the minds of users, on the way they talk, eat, think, wear and so on. For example, regarding the effect of WhatsApp on individuals, we can refer to many words coined by them as they try to communicate and chat with each other. Media makes the younger generation aware of their fundamental rights and duties towards their families and nations.

A rather similar issue is raised by a Literature student who highlights the importance of this effect of media on the individuals and the society. However, due to the nature of their studies and experiences with the literary texts, the language adopted by the literature student is more descriptive and poetic and enjoys a good level of parallelism which is in line with the "presentational" strategy for persuasion (Johnstone, 2008). In this strategy, in fact, the writer uses a rather rhythmic language to move and influence the reader by making "the claim for which one is arguing maximally present in the audience's consciousness, by repeating it, paraphrasing it, calling aesthetic attention to it" (Johnstone, 2008, p. 247).

Literature student: *The domination of media through its shining pictures and splashy advertisement has made a new group of audience who are youth susceptible to their confrontation with individuals. The preliminary steps of education and cultivation which were taught by parents have been eliminated with the presence of television programs or computers. Family has lost the role when media has become the integral and indispensable part of every youth's life. Social media websites like Facebook or Twitter are open to everyone and most of the people don't care too much about the privacy and terms of condition in one community. The freedom that the media suggest is the temptation which a teenager is seeking for when he or she cannot find it to same extent in the family.*

Both groups of students have also pointed to some ideological influence of media which may affect the individuals and society at large. The following extracts show how the media can affect the attitudes of individuals towards some personal, social,
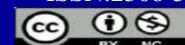
cultural, political and other ideological issues which mostly reflect the issues that are discussed and debated in the country. Iran is an Islamic country which has a rich history and tradition and the authorities attempt to keep and spread the social and cultural norms of the society in different layers. They also claim that after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, they are in the stage of a Soft War and constantly under the attack and influence of western cultures and norms which are distributed through different media programs and ideologies which have targeted the identity of Iranian younger generation. The following examples are indicative of and reflect these rather prevalent and widely-circulated ideas in the Iranian society about the effects of media on younger generation:

TEFL student: *The mass media also has a great role in familiarizing younger generation with different cultures and societies. Some people may want to follow and appropriate the norms of other countries after such a familiarization. It may have impact on their choice of religion, the way they think and act in a society. ...It may influence the political attitudes individuals have in a community. For instance, before listening to the speech of a candidate, an individual may decide to vote Mr. X, while after hearing Mr. Y's claims, the individual may shift to support him. So the mass media may have positive political, cultural and social effects on an individual.*

Literature student: *Media like internet or television try to popularize some attitudes which convey their goal of marketing. In fact nothing happens for the sake of individuality but for the benefit of a society. Long blonde hair, short skirts and blue eyes become the typical style of a beautiful girl, walking and acting like a model for the group of ready-to-copy audience. This can be easily observed that social roles such as the role of gender can motivate certain group of people to conduct special style. In this atmosphere there would be no room for the individual character to think and concentrate on the shaping of an independent person. This representation and sometimes visualization of every concept, even gender, often can lead to the creation of new standard of presence in the society in young people.*

A variety of other indicative issues (like the influence of media on morality, family ties, violence and aggression, sex, body image, marketing, etc.) which again reflect the dominant issues and ideologies of society are also raised in the written drafts, but due to concern for space are not touched upon and raised here.

The next category of micro-intertextuality elements which have the highest frequency of usage (TEFL=9 and Literature= 8) are adaptations which can be defined as the concepts, ideas, notions, etc. taken from previous discourse and used in creating new texts and discourse (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013; Johnstone, 2008). The following are two adapted extracts the students have used to justify their points and make their texts more persuasive:

TEFL student: *…the mass media programs always attempt to manipulate their viewers in the ways they wish to. For example, in the case of Iranian TV viewers, recent TV series broadcasting through miscellaneous Persian satellite channels, most importantly GEM, PMC, Farsi 1 and Manoto, have been aimed at changing the lifestyle patterns of Iranians, especially Iranian women. A study done by Ghavam Zadeh and Mozaffari (2014) investigated the effect of three Persian satellite channels, namely GEM, PMC and Manoto, on lifestyle changes of women in Iran, in this case women in Tehran. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between lifestyle change patterns introduced in the above-mentioned channels and the lifestyle changes of women in Iran. Therefore, the detrimental effects of mass media on the way people live cannot be ignored.*

Literature students: *Mass media theorists such as Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, and Theodor Adorno have each argued for and against the mass media. However what they have always agreed upon is the significance of mass media in the modern world. The word "Mass" indicates that the media is tailored toward a large number of people. So, if the medium is functioning through the suitable building block, it has the potential to affect a large group of people, consequently affecting the whole society, and ultimately altering the course of political and social matters in a country, or even in the whole world. Thus wherever one might stand on the question of what the effects of the mass media are, it is not only undoubtedly affective, but it also has the power to define human beings.*

The first example supports the claim about the manipulative function of mass media by referring to a highly common issue in the Iranian society, that is, being ideologically affected by other cultural

norms and traditions, that has received many attentions in administrative spheres and a variety of strategies and plans are suggested to defend the identity of community and to resolve the problem. The same is true of the extract written by the Literature student. In fact, by citing the scholars/authorities and reporting their ideas and findings, they have used a kind of "quasilogical" persuasion strategy (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, as cited in Johnstone, 2008, p. 246) to present a rather convincing argument to the audience. However, the comparison of other adapted samples revealed that the Literature students have provided more documented adaptations which have a philosophical and literary taste as well that make the claims more convincing. The following excerpt selected from a text written by a Literature student shows and confirms this assertion:

This sophisticated process is what Loius Althusser calls "interpellation" or "hailing the subject". By interpellation Althusser means that through ideology the attitude of people is formed, since the dominant ideology has the power to give a special identity to an individual. In this case, the superstructure which is media forms people's minds and this is what the capitalist society wants. The capitalist owns the power of superstructure; then it uses it against the individuals to shape their worldviews. As Althusser states, "a society's worldview is craftily shaped by a complex network of messages sent to each individual through the elements contained in the superstructure"...

Another category of micro-intertextuality element is the use of quotation which refers to directly or indirectly expressing the ideas of other texts, individuals or scholars (Fairclough, 1992). The quoted examples extracted from the TEFL students' argumentative essays mostly represent the general ideas of ordinary people in the society, but English Literature students have mostly cited the experts' views on the issues of concern:

TEFL student: *Some people believe that mass media do not have any significant role in people's life. They say that although these media distribute an event widely when it takes place, common people cannot interpret it as exactly as experts or politicians... In addition, they say that mass media cannot change the values and beliefs of those people who have very traditional beliefs because they themselves want to stay loyal to those values, despite the vast publications of these media for the prevalence of these changes.*

Literature student: *Beside the freedom aspect, one can see that this fascination rises from the very basic senses in human mind. Jacque Lacan believes that "the visual is the most amenable of the senses to spatialization", the primary sense which defines the world. (38) Through the visual sense people get familiar and also attracted to the outer world. This "privileged [sense] in Lacan's account" (39) makes what has been known as the "Society of Spectacle". In this very recent theory, one can simply recognizes the play of society and its basic means like media which tempt people and make them the silent follower puppets in the hand of the superior power.*

However, in one case, if it may be considered this way, a documented indirect quotation adopted from some scholars' ideas on the effects of mass media is presented by a TEFL student, but again the quoting endeavor of the Literature students, as depicted by the comparative example provided, is more effectively handled:

TEFL student: *Movies, videos or computer games and yellow journalism create a fertile environment for fiction, crime, aggressions, taboos, wrong and incorrect behaviors. Young people watch violence on media that is left unpunished and it has a strong effect on their personality. The excessive view of violence in television programs promotes aggressive behavior among children and may appear in the form of hitting other children, screaming at them or threatening them or intentionally destroying their toys (Mattersteig & Vetter, 1999; Johnson, 1999).*

Literature student: *..... Victor C. Strasburger states, "Heavy television-viewing has also been associated with hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, and an increased prevalence of asthma, sleep disorders, mood disorders, psychological distress, and depression."..... Kasey L. Serdar in her article "Female Body Image and the Mass Media: Perspectives on How Women Internalize the Ideal Beauty Standard" writes, "It appears that body dissatisfaction is more closely linked to appearance-related cognitions than physical reality." ..... Strasburger's statistical data show that there are links between "heavy exposure to sexual content in mainstream media" and "more rapid progression of sexual activity, earlier coital behavior, greater risk for and unplanned pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease." ...*
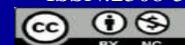
The most difficult task was identifying the instances of allusions in the essays which could fulfill the requirement of the definition provided for this aspect of micro-intertextuality: "a reference, without explicit identification, to a person, place, or event, or to another literary work" (Abrams, 1993, p. 8). To tell the truth, nothing in the extracts was identified which could be considered as a representative instance of this aspect. Therefore, the researchers decided to find those concepts and notions which possibly referred back to some historical incidents in the world or could arouse other frames of references and other related ideas in the minds of readers. Accordingly, the following (identified and cited) examples are of these nature. Both of the examples refer to the seductive behavior of the media and the unreal picture of the society they present to the individuals by referring to the idea of "utopian societies" and "The American Dream" which have a host of abstract and historical beliefs and ideas behind them and according to the theory of "frame semantics" can point to "a particular culturally embedded scene from human experience" (Evans & Greens, 2006, p. 222) which in turn make us envision a complex set of schematic and structural relationships and ideas associated with them.

TEFL student: …*Social networks have reduced the [face-to-face] interaction to the minimum. The picture we create on a social network most often is not the true character we have got in our daily life. Social networks are "utopian societies". They do not show realities that we can notice when we have got a face-to-face interaction with our friends. Thus the mass media are disruptive to express our real emotions; they emotion killers in fact.*

Literature student: *Another way of changing people's life style is through "reality shows". Those TV series called "reality show" are supposed to be real and tangible for the society, but all the things that happen in all those TV series real and palpable for the real people in society? Of course not….That's why they just inject their own ideas to people's minds as realities; in other words, the reality is redefined for real people of the society…..as a result people just dream to be like those rich people shown in "reality shows", and this is the case for "The American Dream", that teaches people to be as hardworking as possible to gain wealth, to become like the upper class….*

Bazerman's (2004) procedure for analyzing intertextuality, which is deployed in the present study, demands looking for a pattern from which a conclusion can be developed. Accordingly, it can be asserted that the identified instances of intertextuality in the present study, which reflected the prevalent ideologies and widely-circulated concerns of Iranian society, reaffirmed the idea that the new pieces of discourse, in spite of having some novel ideas and structures, are created on the scaffolding of previous texts and instances of discourse (Johnstone, 2008). The macro-level instances of intertextuality reflected the general conventions of the argumentative subgenre and the comparison of intertextual elements provided by the two groups of students revealed that in most of the cases texts written by Literature students were more objective, and the assertions were more documented and evidence-based which gave the essays a more persuasive nature. The essays written by TEFL students, on the other hand, were rather more subjective and in most of the cases the students have either used some general and everyday information or have expressed their personal views on the issue. Therefore, it can be asserted that "supporting students in analyzing and appropriating literary resources in whole texts, for example, can provide them with an understanding of how ''texts are unified by linkings, echoes, and correspondences across sections larger than sentences'' (Fowler, 1986, p. 9). On the whole, the linguistic, organizational and informational choices of the students reflected their awareness of conventions of writing in academic genre especially in the argumentative mode, their general and academic studies, their exposure to the media and awareness of widely circulated beliefs in the sociocultural and ideological context of the society at large, their own personal experiences and beliefs and other discursive practices they engage in in the society.

5. Conclusion

The concept of intertextuality requires us to think about newly created texts as the simultaneous practice of choice/strategy and adaptation (Johnstone, 2008). In other words, while being a new and creative effort, a text also turns to previous structural conventions of discourse and may use structure, words, concepts, ideas, etc. presented previously. In the same tradition,

the present study explored this adaptive behavior in the performance of a group of Iranian EFL learners while writing argumentative essays which necessarily require the adoption of previous conventional structures, concepts and ideas to make the texts appropriate and convincing. In fact, by using a discourse analytic framework and some systematic procedures for identifying and analyzing the instances of micro- and macro-level intertextuality elements, the researchers reaffirmed the idea of new texts having the traces of and being produced on the scaffolding of previous discourse. Accordingly, it is recommended that the practice of teaching reading, paragraph and essay writing in an EFL context like Iran must move from a skill-based approach to a more social one in which the students can read and write for authentic and social purposes (Ivanič, 2004; Stagg Peterson, 2012) and the instructors (and curriculum designers) by providing the opportunity for intertextual reading and writing and critical analysis and synthesis of texts must inform and enable students to appropriately and legitimately incorporate previous discourse and others' voices and ideas in their newly-created texts and (hopefully) transfer this knowledge and skill in other literacy-related endeavors in their academic (and social) lives.

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Appendix A: The argumentative essay writing prompt

Dear student, please write an argumentative essay on the following topic:

The mass media, including TV, radio, internet, newspapers have a great influence on people and especially on the younger generation. It plays an important role in shaping the opinions and positions of the younger generation. Argue for or against this statement.

Try to provide convincing reasons for your stance/position on the issue and try to follow a five-paragraph essay format (a general introduction paragraph, at least three detailed body paragraphs and a general conclusion paragraph). You can use all available resources (e.g., your own or your friends' experience, the media, books, newspapers, internet, etc.) to support your ideas.