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The effect of intertextuality on Iranian EFL learners' critical writing

Saeideh Ahangari ^{a,*}, Hayedeh Sepehran ^a

^a *Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch, Iran*

ABSTRACT

Intertextuality is the relation of each text with the texts surrounding it. Any word or phrase we are writing or saying has relationship with what we have heard or seen before. This shared language makes others understand us. On the other hand, critical thinking is the ability to think reasonably, reflectively and skillfully. Since it is believed that intertextuality results in critical thinking, this study aimed to focus on the effect of intertextuality on learners' critical writing skill. To do so, the researchers selected 60 Advanced EFL students from three intact classes at the Iran Language Institute and assigned them randomly into three groups. After assuring the groups' homogeneity in terms of their general English proficiency and writing skill in the beginning of the study, the researchers asked the first group, considered as the control group, to write a composition about Generation Gap. Then the first experimental group read two texts about Generation Gap and then wrote a composition about it; the second experimental group watched a short film about Generation Gap besides reading the texts and then wrote a composition about it. Having compared the written compositions in terms of critical thinking elements, the researchers found out that there is a meaningful relationship between intertextuality and critical writing. That is to say, the more intertextual relationship (in our case print and visual texts) the learners are involved with, the more critical elements they utilize in their writing. Findings of this research have some pedagogical implications.

Keywords: intertextuality; critical thinking; critical writing; film; reading

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* Corresponding author: Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran
Email address: ahangari@iaut.ac.ir

Introduction

Writing is a unique method of communication because of the fact that it is an activity which is overtly more critical than the other three means of communication, i.e. speaking, listening and reading (Hobson & Schafermeyer, 1994). According to Bean (1998), in order to recognize and illustrate the connection between good thinking and good writing, we must not see knowledge as something other than discrete bits of information to be studied and stored in memory. Learners must think about knowledge and the world in a critical way in order to judge and evaluate information and reach an educated opinion about it, not merely accept it at face value. Critical thinking means to think correctly about relevant knowledge and the world. It is to think in higher order enabling the person to judge, evaluate and assess responsibly. It is to think reasonably, reflectively, responsibly, and skillfully (Schaferman, 1991).

Critical thinking and writing are to be thought of as skills and students are in need of acquiring these skills in order to learn how to reason and argue logically and how to face a problem from various perspectives. All these make the learners use the evidence they have collected for their arguments, think openly, and express their opinions about the problems in their writing (Hollowell, 2010). It is assumed that utilizing both reading and writing in classrooms can work effectively since they play a complementary role for one another. Furthermore, critical thinking competence leads the learners to voice their own thoughts and opinions; thus, these two skills should be seen as dual competencies and must be taught in EFL writing and composition classrooms (Alagozlu, 2007). Having individual voice that is not affected by other concerns and claims is a must in order to think critically (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999).

Writers are creators and collectors. They use the texts from the past as sources and collect pieces from different varieties of texts and then unscramble them so as to make new texts with new meanings and to create new discourses. These new meanings and discourses, embedded in new texts, are the result of intertextuality, a principle in which texts rely on other texts to create meaning (Porter, 1986). "The relation each text has to the texts surrounding it, we call intertextuality" (Bazerman, 2004, p.1). In other words, intertextuality is the creation of a new text out of the existing texts, that is, by relying on the knowledge of old texts, we can cite a new text (Dahal & Ghimire, 2002). Intertextuality is also considered as a network that connects all the texts to one another and enables the writer to create new meaning (Dahal & Ghimire, 2002). Theories of intertextuality regard texts as a network of connections and relationships. This network connects all the texts and makes it possible for the texts to incorporate other texts. According to these theories, texts are not standing alone as discrete units; but rather in connection with other texts (Nelson, 2008).

Intertextuality can also be defined as the relationships between the text, reader, reading, writing, printing, publishing, and the history in the language of the text and the one in the reader's reading (Plottel & Charney, 1978 as cited in Barthes, 1988). Hurrell and Sommer (2001) support the literal meaning of intertextuality as the juxtaposition of texts and believe that intertextuality is at work when texts, media and genres are connected and used as references.

While students are talking of a particular text, they are involved in a complex cognitive mental process, because they have to make relations between the texts. Then they should refer to related texts and personal experiences by remembering similar meanings among the texts and after recalling, they should get involved in some cognitive processes like comparing, predicting and evaluating (Behak & Massari, 2009). As readers, to understand and notice a new text, we use the information, knowledge and experience from previously read texts, and as writers, we take advantage of the resources provided by prior writers in order to respond to prior writers (Ball & Freedman, 2004).

Popular mass media can generate interesting topics for composition classes. Using advertising images, movies, magazines and television series can foster critical thinking while writing (Boyd & Robitaille, 1987). By integrating films in writing classes, we can help learners improve their writing skills and critical thinking (Kasper, 2000). The classes in which films are taught as a text are based on the analogies between what learners have already experienced about movies and TV programs they have watched and what they require to know and learn as writers of new texts. According to Masiello (1985), showing movies in the classroom makes students learn how to watch and observe meticulously, which causes them to be more careful and sharper writers. Baratta and Jones (2008) suggest the relation between film and writing and emphasize the aid of screening in developing writing skills. They also claim that each film contains some knowledge and students can argue and then transfer this knowledge to their writing. Masiello (1985) also asserts that using films in writing classes raises students' attention to the concept, helps them in their elaboration of the idea and eventually leads to a better writing.

Most of the researches have compared the differences between the Western and non-Western cultures and have discussed their alternative effect on the learners' characteristics and thinking patterns. Despite the number of the studies carried out on the role of critical thinking, it is still in its early stages. Most of the researches have been done by western scholars and there are some mismatches between the findings of their studies (Rashid & Hashim, 2008). Those who are taking a universalist view toward critical thinking claim that most learners in general and Asian learners in particular are not able to think critically due to the fact that Asians have been raised in the communities where group harmony and conformity are emphasized. Atkinson (1997) claims that it is possible to teach critical thinking to the learners from different cultures because critical thinking is an implied and commonsense behavior that can be learned by mainstream U.S. children as they grow up. To support his claim, Atkinson suggests two kinds of evidence. His first claim is that critical thinking has a self-evident nature that makes it hard to define. He supports his idea by giving some examples of those researchers who have failed to provide suitable definitions for critical thinking. Thus, it is concluded that critical thinking exists at the level of a social practice. The second evidence is rooted in anthropological studies in which the learning behavior of mainstream and nonmainstream U.S children is contrasted.

Some other Western scholars like Fox (1994) claim that Asian students do not have critical thinking abilities, because critical thinking is a component of Western culture and Asian students are not familiar with this kind of thinking. He considers critical thinking as a product of American culture which leads to good writing and claims that only some cultures possess this way of thinking. Atkinson (1997) suggests that 'thinking' is located within the individual at least in Western countries, whereas 'critical' involves social realities and individual conflict. According to this viewpoint, this kind of thinking is a social practice and cannot be taught in other societies, because their sociocultural norms are not in harmony with critical way of thinking. It is believed that this kind of behavioral pattern is reflected in Asian learners' writing that lacks critical thinking elements and individual voice. These elements are considered as part of Western education and enable the learners to express their own personal experience, original thoughts and ideas in both first and foreign languages. Some researchers refer to Asian societies as 'status-oriented', 'hierarchical', 'group-oriented', 'collectivist', and 'interdependent' in contrast to Western societies which are labeled as 'individualistic', 'adversarial', 'horizontal, and 'critically thinking' (Stapleton, 2001).

Atkinson (1997) refers to other studies which show the way Japanese children are socialized to show empathy and conformity which, as Atkinson argues, are against the spirit of critical thinking. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) claim that teaching critical thinking for L2 writers is not easy, because this kind of teaching involves individualistic and adversarial practices. Thus, TESOL educators must be careful and cautious in approaching the critical thinking bandwagon.

However, through studying the case in Asian countries like Japan, some researchers such as Davidson and Dunham (1997) and Stapleton, (2001) have rejected the viewpoint that Asians are deficient in critical thinking skills. They found out that these students have abilities to think critically and the most important, critical thoughts could be taught to the students in English language classes. Nevertheless, it requires more research in different Asian contexts to investigate the concept of critical thinking and writing thoroughly. In Vietnam, Le Ha (2006) mentioned that ELT classrooms do not need to follow western teaching standards and this difference in educational priorities is not a matter of corruption and hence, the researcher suggested a harmonious combination of both western and nonwestern standards as a solution to improve the language competence of Vietnamese learners and teachers. Carrol (2004) also disagreed with the Western scholars and claimed that the Japanese learners' problem in discussions is the result of their limited language proficiency and resources, not their deficiency in showing critical thinking skills.

In a study carried out in Turkey, Alagozlu's (2007) research was in line with Carrol's (2004) suggesting that besides lack of critical thinking, some other factors influence Turkish EFL learners' success in their writing and hinder them from thinking critically and reflecting their own ideas. These factors, as mentioned before, are language proficiency level and resources. Alagozlu's study indicated that Turkish educational system does not emphasize critical thinking, and that language learning is based on a memorization and in their content-based courses, learners are not independent enough to support their ideas and thoughts using their own words. The way Turkish learners are educated along with other personal and social factors can interpret why they fail to think critically. The second outcome of her study reveals some learners' thinking patterns which share similar thinking behavioral patterns as those mentioned in the studies of Fox (1994), Atkinson (1997), and Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996). However, as Le Ha (2004) mentions cultural differences do not mean a deficit and critical thinking is not unfamiliar and totally foreign to Asian learners (Matsuda, 2001), and can be taught to the learners (Kökdemir, 2003).

In his study, Stapleton (2001) tried to measure critical thinking elements in the learners' writing arguing that if critical thinking cannot be defined and empirically studied, how it is possible to claim that Japanese cannot think critically because such researches and studies are not made on the basis of experimental or empirical data directly related to critical thinking. He proposes six key elements for critical thinking that provide a criterion for evaluating and assessing the application of critical thinking in written texts. These elements are as follows:

1. Claims: The statements whose truth is argued are considered as claims. Claims are opinions that are considered as the most appropriate answer to a problem and controversial issue. Claims must be supported by reasons. If a claim stands on its own and is not supported by a reason, it cannot be regarded as an argument but an opinion (Stapleton, 2001). Claims consist of proposals, definitions, and evaluations. Linguistic elements of proposals are modals like 'may', 'might' and verbs like 'suggest', 'show' 'demonstrate' 'indicate' and so on. Simple present tense and verb 'to be' determine definitions. Moreover, extensive use of adjectives as well as subjective judgments is an indicator of evaluation (Alagozlu, 2007).
2. Reasons: The statements that support claims and provide reasons for believing and accepting claims are considered as reasons. In other words, they prove why claims should be believed (Stapleton, 2001). Reasons are identified by words and phrases such as 'because', 'for this reason' and 'for one thing' and such similar conjunctions showing cause and effect relationships (Alagozlu, 2007).
3. Evidence: The statements or assertions that are used to strengthen the arguments are considered as evidence (Stapleton, 2001) which is of many forms such as personal experience, research studies,

statistics, citing authorities, comparisons and analogies, pointing out consequences, facts, logical explanations, and precisely defining words (Ramage & Bean, 1999, cited in Alagozlu, 2007).

4. Recognition of Opposition and Refutation: They are the statements that offer alternative viewpoints to the ones expressed in the claim (Stapleton, 2001). Phrases and words such as 'it may be argued that...', 'it might be asserted/contended/maintained/claimed that...', 'it is said thatbut,....'; 'some people claim that...however', and conjunctive devices like 'although', 'despite' and 'even though' can be considered as indicators to identify opposing viewpoints and refutations (Alagozlu, 2007).

5. Conclusion: They are the statements or sets of statements that are used to show what the writer wants the reader to believe (Stapleton, 2001). Conclusions can be identified by declarations such as 'I agree', 'I disagree', 'I am undecided' or indicator words or phrases including 'therefore', 'instead' and 'as a result' or 'in conclusion' (Alagozlu, 2007).

6. Fallacies: In some cases, arguments are faulty and flawed. Different types of errors in reasoning are described as fallacies (Stapleton, 2001). For Alagozlu (2007), the most frequent types of them are oversimplification, drawing an irrelevant conclusion, and hasty generalization.

Different scholars have proposed different techniques and strategies for improving the language learners' critical thinking and especially critical writing. In the present study, intertextuality as a technique for improving the critical writing of the learners has been investigated.

Dahal and Ghimire (2002) believed that the role of genre and intertextuality is neglected in English language classes in Nepal. In their study, they tried to have an analytical view on how texts function in the society and indicate how genre and intertextuality could be useful while teaching writing in the high school classrooms in Nepal. According to Dahal and Ghimire, in such classes, process writing is not taken into account in discourse level and learners have no knowledge of genres. In teaching for writing such genres, due to neglecting communicative purposes of genres, the interrelationship between the genres is not taken into consideration either. Neither teachers nor learners are aware of the purpose of the text and its intertextuality and that texts have a dialogic relationship with other texts and should communicate something to the reader. All these make writing mechanical. In their research, Dahal and Ghimire realized that genre and intertextuality have an important and insightful role in English language teaching. They state that writing skill must be integrated with other modes of language like reading skill; otherwise, it can not develop automatically. It was found that writing brings various genres in the society and can be improved by increasing students' exposure to varieties of genres, role-playing in the classroom, substituting familiar and culturally appropriate items with unfamiliar and culturally inappropriate ones. Learners need to think, discuss, brainstorm, see examples of other genres, and do some preliminary writing so as to start a real task.

Baratta and Jones (2008) did a research on the use of film as an essential means in academic writing pedagogy and the improvement of academic writing instruction over time. They focused on the use of visuals as a unique and interesting means to help students learn. There are three important points in their findings. The first one is that, film, as a teaching method, captures learners' attention and interest and helps them learn effectively and "its familiarity to students and their enjoyment of such a medium is a key contributory factor" (p. 32). Another finding is that the metaphorical aspects of the approach help students learn by visualizing the subject. Filmic visual is a way to inspire schema or mental images which can render complex information into simpler language. And according to the last finding, majority of students appreciated the visual approach and stated

that it helps them learn the conventions of academic essay writing; moreover, the improvement in their essay grades was considered as the success of this pilot study.

In conclusion, since intertextual connections among different types of texts can bring about changes in the learners' attitudes, it can be utilized in educational settings as a medium for critical thinking which develops higher order thinking skills (Derakhshan, Khatib, & Rezaei, 2011).

As far as the researchers know, no study has been carried out in Iranian context to investigate the effect of intertextuality on the critical writing of the EFL learners. Considering this gap in the literature, the researchers, in the present study, aimed to focus on the effect of intertextuality on critical writing in EFL classes and to find the reason for the failure of learners in conveying their personal ideas in their writing. Thus, the following research question was raised:

Do different types of intertextuality (reading a text or watching a film of relevant topic) have different degrees of effect on EFL learners' critical writing?

In fact, the researchers intended to find out whether using texts and films as intertextual elements in writing classes can cause students to think critically or not.

Methodology

Participants

80 female English language learners at Iran Language Institute were selected as the population of this study. Their first language was Azerbaijani Turkish and their age range was between 20 and 28. To determine the homogeneity of the population, the researchers administered a TOEFL test and selected 60 participants whose scores were between 33 and 53 (one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean) as the sample population. All learners were at Advanced level of language proficiency and attended English classes twice a week.

Instruments

The TOEFL test was utilized to homogenize the sample population. The version used in this study contained 15 structure items, 25 written expression items and 50 reading comprehension items. The total score of this test was 90 and those participants whose scores were less than 33 and more than 53 (one standard deviation above and below the mean) were excluded from the research. In order to investigate the effect of intertextuality on the learners' critical writing ability, the researchers used two articles named 'Generation Gap', and 'Generation Gap - Does it exist?'. They also showed a video with the same theme named 'Life (part 2), Generation Gap'.

Procedure

The 60 EFL learners who had been chosen as the sample population were selected from among 80 learners after administering a TOEFL test as mentioned above. They were selected from three intact classes but were randomly assigned into 3 groups, one control and two experimental groups, each with 20 participants. At the onset of the study, all the participants were asked to write a paragraph of 150 words about the topic "What do you most think about?" This writing was considered as the pre-test to check the homogeneity of the learners in terms of their general writing ability. The participants continued their normal classes for a week taught by the same teacher. There

was no treatment related to the research purpose. The participants' pre-test writings were read and scored by the researchers. Then, the pre-test writing scores of the three groups were compared by running a one way ANOVA test. As no significant difference was found among the pre-test mean scores of the participants of three groups, the researchers continued their research project about the role of intertextuality in EFL learners' critical writing. After a week, as the post-test, the control group was asked to write a text of 150 words about generation gap. The logic behind the choosing of this topic was to encourage learners to discuss their own idea and justify it by examples from their own society. The first experimental group read two texts about generation gap before writing their composition. And the second experimental group watched a movie with the same theme besides reading the same texts, and then wrote a text on that topic. But the control group had to write about the topic without receiving any additional information. Both pre-test and post-test were evaluated by the researchers and scored in terms of critical writing elements based on Stapleton's (2001) criteria. A five-level likert scale (voice and four critical elements) was designed by the researchers in order to compare the scores and inter rater reliability of those two sets of scores was measured. According to the number of the occurrence for each critical thinking element, the researchers assigned four points in the likert scale (as scores) ranging from one to four. That is to say, if a critical element occurred zero to twice in the learners' written text, it was scored one point; between three to five times, two points, between six to eight times, three points; and if the critical element occurred between 9 to eleven times, it was scored four points. Adding up all the points for all critical thinking elements (claims, proposals, reasons, and opposing viewpoints, and voice) in the written texts, the researchers calculated the total score of each learner.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of intertextuality on critical writing of the EFL learners. Different types of critical elements were adapted from Stapleton (2001). According to Stapleton, there are six critical elements, mentioned before in details. In this study, the researchers investigated and analyzed individual voice and four of the critical elements including: modals like may, might ... (as claims), subjective judgments (as claims), cause and effect relationships (as reasoning), and conjunctions like however, although, despite ... (as opposing viewpoints and refutations).

At the beginning of the research, to ensure the homogeneity of the participants the researchers administered a TOEFL test. Then for the comparison of the learners' proficiency scores in three groups, they utilized an ANOVA test. Since there was no meaningful difference between the scores ($F(2, 57) = 1.85, p = .16$), it was assumed that the participants of the three groups were approximately homogeneous in terms of general proficiency.

All the papers written by the participants for the pre-test and post-test were scored by two raters and inter-rater reliability index was calculated. The reliability index for the control group's pre-test and post-test scores were .67 and .75; for the first experimental group it was .78 and .80; and for the second experimental group it was .85 and .78 respectively.

As mentioned before, all the participants wrote a composition as a pre-test under the same condition. In order to see whether there was a significant difference among the groups, regarding their pre-test, the researchers ran a one way ANOVA on the pre-test mean scores of the three groups. The result of ANOVA test is shown in the following tables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Pre-test Scores of Three Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
C G	20	4.40	1.65
E G1	20	3.80	1.48
E G2	20	3.86	1.45

As table 1 indicates, the mean scores of the three groups in the pre-test were somehow similar, i.e. the mean score of the control group was 4.40, for the first experimental group it was 3.80 and for the third group, which was considered as the second experimental group, the mean score was 3.86.

Table 2

ANOVA Analysis for the Comparison of Pre-test Scores

	Sum of squares	df	mean square	F	sig.
Between groups	4.33	2	2.16	.92	.40
Within groups	134.02	57	2.35		
Total	138.36	59			

The results of ANOVA test in table 2 indicate ($F(2, 57) = .92, p = .40$) that the p value was more than .05 and it means that there was not a significant difference among the groups' pre-test mean scores.

As mentioned before, the aim of the research question was to find out whether there was any significant difference among the groups regarding their critical writing when they have different types of intertextuality. To answer this question, the researchers utilized another ANOVA test to compare the participants' pos-test scores in three groups. The results of descriptive statistics and ANOVA test are shown in the following tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Pos-test Scores of Three Groups

	N	mean	std. deviation
C G	20	4.10	1.81
EG1	20	5.27	1.52
EG2	20	7.02	1.99
Total	60	5.46	2.13

As table 3 indicates, the mean score of the second experimental group participants who had been exposed to more intertextuality, two texts and a film before composing their own writing, was more than the other two groups. The first experimental group participants who had just read the two related texts before composing their writings outperformed the control group participants who had not been exposed to any kind of intertextuality. In order to see whether this difference is statistically meaningful or not, the researchers ran an ANOVA on the obtained data, the results of which are shown in the following table 4.

Table 4

ANOVA Analysis for the Comparison of Groups' Post-test Scores

	sum of squares	df	mean squares	F	sig.
Between groups	86.65	2	43.32	13.55	.000
Within groups	182.27	57	3.19		
Total	268.93	59			

The results in table 4 indicate that the main effect of intertextuality is statistically meaningful ($F(2, 57) = 13.55, p = .000$). It means that the more intertextuality the participants were exposed to, the better they performed in their critical writing.

As the results of ANOVA analysis on post-test scores of the participants in three groups reflected a significant difference for the writing scores, a post hoc analysis was conducted in order to identify the location of the difference.

Table 5

Post Hoc Analysis, Tukey HSD

group	group	mean difference	std. error	sig.
con	exp 1	-1.17	.56	.104
	exp2	-2.92 *	.56	.000
exp 1	con	1.17	.56	.104
	exp2	-1.75 *	.56	.008
exp2	con	2.92 *	.56	.000
	exp1	1.75 *	.56	.008

As it is shown in table 5, the difference between the control group and second experimental group ($p = .000$), as well as the difference between the first experimental and the second experimental groups ($p = .008$) was statistically significant. However, the difference between the control and first experimental group (.104) did not reach a significant level.

Discussion

In recent years, most of the studies in the field of foreign language teaching were about comparing Eastern and Western learners in terms of critical thinking abilities. As it was mentioned in details before, some researchers believe that Eastern students lack capability of critical thinking and individual voice. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether Iranian EFL learners were able to think critically and to reflect this ability in their writing or not. Another purpose of this study was to indicate whether 'Intertextuality' could affect the learners' writing skill in terms of critical thinking elements or not. In fact, via this study, the researchers aimed to realize whether the view of those researchers who considered Western learners much better in critical abilities than Eastern learners was true or not.

Since it is believed that using different intertextual texts enable learners to think, discuss and brainstorm and since intertextuality can be useful while teaching writing (Dahal & Ghimire, 2002), the researchers of this study used two printed texts (reading) and a visual text (film), as intertextual texts, in order to investigate their impact on learners' critical writing skill. After analyzing the learners' papers (written texts) in terms of critical thinking elements, the researchers noticed a considerable change and improvement in the experimental groups as compared to control group. Even though, in the first experimental group who had read two texts before writing, as an intertextual element, an increase was noticed in the mean score compared to the control group, this increase did not reach a significant level. However, for the second experimental group participants, who had read two texts and watched a related film before writing their papers, the element of intertextuality was doubled and the learners outperformed the other two groups and used more critical elements in their writings.

There are some research studies conducted about this subject. In their research, Behak and Massari (2009) combined different texts such as a short story (print) and a movie (visual), as intertextual texts, and used them in an ESL classroom. Their purpose was to create critical thinking and to help them to learn the texts exemplification materials. They believed that intertextual texts generate critical thinking and writing skills. According to these researchers, intertextuality has the potential to have an impact on learners' critical ability both at intellectual and personal levels. In other words, the intertextuality of both printed and visual texts provides the learners a springboard for critical thinking which in turn promotes language learning. The present study is in line with Behak and Massari's research in that the intertextual texts, reading and film, could increase the critical writing ability of the Iranian EFL learners in a salient way.

The present study is also in line with another study conducted by Barnawi (2010) who discussed that critical thinking and voice are closely related to EFL and ESL writing ability and presented some pedagogical practices to develop critical thinking and voice in college writing classrooms. He also proposed some pedagogical tasks in composition classes which offer possibilities to urge EFL teachers to redesign other pedagogical tasks in different contexts. These tasks must suit EFL and ESL contexts, goals and expectations. Of course, Alagozlu's (2007) findings proved that in spite of the fact that Turkish EFL learners had a positive view toward critical thinking elements and voice, they were unable to apply these elements in their essays. In this regard, Stapleton's (2001) research which investigated Japanese EFL learners' attitude toward critical thinking and voice indicated that they have great tendency to apply critical thinking and voice. His study also criticizes the idea that Japanese learners are 'interdependent', 'group-oriented', and 'status-oriented'. However, the findings of the present study are in contrast with Atkinson's (1997) confirming that Asian learners are not critical thinkers and maintain harmony, because the results showed that Iranian EFL learners could use critical elements and individual voice in their writings through intertextuality.

This study is also in agreement with Porter's (1986) findings who believed that intertextuality has the potential to affect all aspects of writing pedagogy and supports the value of critical reading in the composition classrooms. According to some other researches, intertextuality is regarded as an instructional approach which can also be used in reading classes. Intertextuality makes connections between what is being read and what has already been read on a topic (Allen, 2000); it also synthesizes the data and knowledge among different texts on the same topic (Breiter, 1990).

According to Short (1992) when learners are exposed to print and non-print sources, they are encouraged to make connections between them. That is why using intertextual texts in reading and speaking classes makes learners reflect and think critically, because it provides relevant background knowledge about the topic. Our findings are also in accordance with Anderson's (2008) who utilized film as an intertextual element in writing instruction and composition classes in order to study the implications of using film in writing ability of the learners and to study what critical framework the learners apply to hone critical thinking. In his research, Anderson looked at the development of critical skills through film study. He had selected the learners who had experienced incorporating films in their writing courses before they participated in his study. He concluded that film is a unique pedagogical tool and its application motivates learners to think and write critically and effectively. He also maintained that film study gets learners to understand critical arguments and to get proficiency in critical responses through critical writing. In accordance with his study, in the present study, the researchers supported the technique of applying films in writing classes to help Iranian EFL learners to write critically. As mentioned earlier, the second experimental group, who both read two texts and watched a film, could noticeably use more critical elements in their writing.

Of course, some researchers have opposing views toward applying film in teaching writing. They claim that the inclusion of film in writing classes makes writing of marginal importance. Some claim that today and tomorrow's students are in need of traditional courses in writing and reading in order to gain success in their college careers and to become part of the socio-political community (Siegal, 1999, cited in Anderson, 2008).

Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the effect of intertextuality as a springboard on the Iranian EFL learners' critical writing. The results of this study showed that reading and film, as intertextual elements, have a positive effect on critical thinking of Iranian EFL learners and enable them to reflect it in their writing. Being able to think critically and applying it in their writing can provide learners with better ways for a more successful life. It must also be mentioned that lack of critical thinking and individual voice should not be considered as a deficit for students and not-utilizing it in educational system of Eastern countries must not be regarded as a shortcoming, because it roots in teachers and learners' lack of knowledge and also socio-cultural notions. However, combining critical thinking with existing educational setting can enrich language competence.

Like all studies, this study has suffered from specific limitations and delimitations. The study had to be delimited in a number of ways. Firstly, only female learners took part in the study and thus, the results may not be generalized to all EFL learners. Secondly, this study was conducted with advanced EFL learners, and the results might change at different levels of proficiency. Thirdly, the researchers analyzed only four elements of critical thinking including: modals, subjective judgments, reasons, and opposing viewpoints and refutations, because these elements could be more objectively scored compared to the other two elements which were more subjective. In

addition, there was no overt treatment in this study. If this research is carried out in a long-term period of instruction and if the learners are taught critical thinking techniques, the results may noticeably change for the better.

Since thinking is a broad field, critical thinking can be studied from different perspectives in order to pave the way for its improvement. Critical thinking and its relation to other language skills such as critical reading, speaking and listening can be suggested for future studies. Researchers can also conduct a study on finding different ways for applying critical thinking elements and make a comparison between the learners' L1 and L2 critical writing. Since all participants were female in this research, for future research, male learners' critical ability can be studied too. Moreover, since the participants in this study were all from the same cultural background, another research study can be carried out in international classes to compare whether the results vary and whether cultural differences affect the critical ability of the learners or not. In terms of intertextuality, some researches can be conducted to study media literacy, teaching strategies, writing pedagogy, cultural studies and writing theories. Theories of intertextuality can also be used to do research on academic writing in colleges and to compare the results both in short-term and long-term periods. The participants of this study were all EFL learners, thus, the effect of intertextuality can be studied in ESL context for a deeper analysis. Future researches can utilize various types of intertextual texts and study their effect on different language skills. Besides, since there was no treatment in the present research, an experimental study is recommended to interested researchers.

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Saeideh Ahangari is an assistant professor in TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch. Her main interests are Task-based language Teaching, CALL, language skills and their interface with the issues in language testing. She has published many articles and participated in many national and international conferences.

Hayedeh Sepehran has an MA degree in TEFL. She has been teaching English in Iran language Institute for thirteen years, and is a TOEFL and IELTS tutor. Her main interests are: language teaching and learning strategies, learner autonomy, and task-based language teaching.