The Impact of Intertextuality in Movies on Language Learning

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Abstract

This paper examines the effectiveness of using intertextuality in second language learning through movies. Two types of materials were prepared: first, the American animated movie *Shrek 2* (Adamson et al., 2004) was the primary material, and second, idioms from YouTube shorts were used as points of comparison for regular expressions found in *Shrek 2*. This case study involved five college students majoring in non-English subjects. Among them, one was at an intermediate level in English and four were at a low-intermediate level. After three months of participation, students underwent five tests: three language tests and two open-ended-question tests. The first three assessed recognition, salience, and memory. The results of the recognition and salience tests indicated that participants achieved perfect scores in regular expressions, thanks to intertextuality. The results of the memory test showed that idioms were remembered significantly better than regular expressions. However, this test suggested that intertextuality played a larger role in semantic contexts than in syntactic ones. In the first open-ended-question test, the participants successfully described both an original character and a new character in *Shrek 2*. The final question revealed that most participants appreciated two aspects of intertextuality: creative work and long-term memory gains.

Keywords: intertextuality, memory, salience, recognition, *Shrek 2*

Applicable levels: secondary, tertiary

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Received: April 15, 2024
Revised: May 13, 2024
Accepted: May 25, 2024

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I. INTRODUCTION

Using film has been quite successful for a while in EFL classrooms at a certain university in Korea (Kim & Seo, 2021; Ryu, 2017). For the past 20 years, the university has offered large classes focused on movie-based English language learning (an approach called Movie English). No complaints were received from students until the advent of YouTube and short-form videos. Since then, lecturers have received numerous complaints. Many objections concern the choice of instructors to use just one movie for the entire semester. Students report that doing so is boring and that, moreover, a full-length movie is too long. They find it difficult to stay engaged for two hours (i.e., the entire class time), watching only one movie. Some students have also mentioned that the selected movie does not align with their preferences.

However, instructors are unable to respond to their complaints as requested. Using movies in the classroom has strict limitations, which may fall outside this study’s concern. Only one movie is permitted per class, and consequently, consideration of students’ preferences is not feasible.

In this paper, an alternative solution will be proposed: the incorporation of intertextuality. The term ‘intertextuality’ was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1986, who highlighted the significance of the underlying dynamics inherent in texts (Raj, 2015). While a detailed explanation of intertextuality will follow in subsequent sections, an initial definition by Kristeva is offered here. Kristeva argues that meaning in texts arises from their connections to other texts, making all texts intertextual in nature. This notion builds upon Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept that every word or text is contingent upon and interacts with preceding texts, particularly within a specific social and political context. Intertextuality in film reflects such social and political traditions (Reetamoni, 2016).

Intertextuality is more closely related to daily life than one might expect. For instance, the use of language is not novel, as we have previously heard or used similar language items (Bazerman, 2004). Lenski (1998) provides a compelling example of students employing various strategies to apply the information they learned from studying the US Constitution. One student might form his or her understanding based on a discussion about constitutional rights that occurred during a family dinner, while another might integrate the learned information during a visit to Washington, DC, to interpret it actively. These examples show that students were successful in constructing meaning. In other words, their interpretation of any text is influenced by their past experiences related to the subject.

However, another important aspect should be considered: the concept of a text, which is central to the idea of intertextuality (Hodges, 2015). While the common understanding of text typically refers to written artifacts such as books or documents, the word can actually encompass any coherent arrangement of signs. This broader definition allows for the inclusion of various forms of creative expression such as film, visual art, and music. Thus, a ‘text’ can be interpreted to include any work that can be analyzed for its meaning or message, extending beyond merely written text (Hodges, 2015).

Films are essentially texts that tell stories (Reetamoni, 2016). Gillar (n.d.) argues that “the notion of ‘film as text’ is a metaphor drawn from the idea of reading a book.” People can “read” a story through films. Intertextuality in films can benefit viewers by helping them make connections between new and familiar stories through referencing other movies. This approach can be particularly appealing to L2 learners, who might enjoy encountering multiple narratives within a single film. Therefore, it can be argued that exposure to multiple narratives may help movie-based L2 learners overcome the boredom associated with learning from one movie and one story, as mentioned earlier.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Intertextuality

To gain a better understanding of the concept of intertextuality, Kristeva will be the initial scholar examined. Credited with coinning the term intertextuality in the late 1960s, she builds on Bakhtin’s ideas (regarding the social context of language) and Saussuré’s (concerning language systems) to explain how texts are interconnected. She argues that every text is essentially a “mosaic of quotations” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37), meaning it borrows and reshapes elements from other texts, thereby creating a dialogue with them (Martin, 2011). Kristeva’s phrase, “mosaic of
quotations,” connotes that through a process of absorption and transformation, each text becomes a unique echo of the voices that came before. She emphasizes two words, absorption and transformation. Absorption indicates that every author is influenced by the works he or she has encountered. These influences are absorbed as the writer develops his or her own ideas. Transformation is another important key to understanding Kristeva’s intertextuality. The borrowed elements are not simply copied; if such elements were simply copied, then whatever narratives that emerge would be boring. Instead, the borrowed elements should be transformed to fit their own purpose and message. For example, in the animation film Shrek 2 (Adamson et al., 2004), Prince Charming hurries to rescue the princess, Fiona, and enters a room inside the castle’s tallest tower. What he finds inside is a wolf wearing sunglasses and reading a magazine. In Shrek 2, the wolf looks funny, but the wolf of Little Red Riding Hood, the original narrative, is cunning, sly, and manipulative. This transformation fits the screenwriter’s intention, which is to make a comedy. By conducting an analysis like this one, viewers (or readers) can gain a deeper understanding of the film (or text) and how it interacts with the broader cultural conversation.

The following is Heckmann’s (2023) definition of intertextuality; this definition is worth mentioning because what he is saying actually happens in the real classroom. According to Heckmann, intertextuality is the relationship among texts (e.g., books, movies, plays, songs, games, etc.). In other words, it occurs when one text references another. Intertextuality is most effective when it is explicitly explained and later alluded to implicitly. Either way, this technique is a strong way to share common references to our world. For example, when a show like The Sopranos (Chase, 1999-2007) references The Godfather (Coppola, 1972), suddenly it shortens the bridge between our reality and the show’s “reality.” Thus, it can be argued that part of the appeal of bridging that gap is to make a show like The Sopranos more “real.”

In the first part, Heckmann talks about explaining such intertextual moments explicitly and then later alluding to them implicitly. Imagine you as a teacher are reading the script of Shrek 2 with your students. In the story, Cyclops appears as a bouncer at a bar. Suppose your students do not know who Cyclops is. By explicitly mentioning the source text (here, Greek mythology), the teacher establishes a foundation for the later allusions. Now the students have a reference point by which to understand the connections being made. That is, the explicit reference made by the instructor provides students with a broader context about the character Cyclops. This process enriches students’ understanding of both texts. When the source text is alluded to implicitly, it becomes a kind of inside joke between Cyclops and the students. This, in turn, can be more exciting in the classroom.

2. Intertextuality and Memory

This section and the next will explore the relationship between intertextuality and language learning, focusing on the role of memory and salience. To understand how intertextuality can aid language learning, L2 learners need a solid grasp of language memory. Additionally, they must be familiar with the concept of a favorable learning environment.

The author highlights the concept of massive redundancy within language knowledge. Traditionally, this redundancy has been viewed as a waste. For instance, Chomsky (1995) argues that efficient language learning involves discarding unnecessary redundant elements in favor of a faster language processing system, prioritizing efficiency. As StudySmarter (n.d.) shows, the sentence, “In my humble opinion, I firmly believe that we should reconsider our decision to work on this project,” can be succinctly expressed as, “I think we should reconsider this project.”

However, redundancy should not be regarded as a waste because it has an important role in language development. According to Tal and Arnon (2022):

The prevalence of redundancy in the world languages has long puzzled language researchers. It is especially surprising in light of the growing evidence on speakers’ tendency to avoid redundant elements in production (omitting or reducing more predictable elements). Here, we propose that redundancy can be functional for learning. In particular, we argue that redundant cues can facilitate learning, even when they make the language system more complicated. (p. 1)
The author claims that redundancy can be functional for learning, which means that language redundancy plays a positive role in the process of acquiring and retaining new information. Redundancy is not extra baggage. Rather, it helps L2 students learn. For example, when learning English vocabulary, L2 students read the same vocabulary words in a textbook that they hear in a conversation and encounter in a song lyric. This redundancy—or repetition—might reinforce the vocabulary in their memory. Furthermore, it helps them learn words’ meaning and usage more effectively. In another sense, it can be a usage-based approach.

Tal and Arnon (2022) also highlight the concept of redundant cues being beneficial for learning. According to the authors, repeated elements within language can aid the learning process. These cues can take on various forms of redundancy. For example, an L2 learner encountering the sentence “I went to the store yesterday” might not yet understand the past tense. In this case, the adverb “yesterday” can function as a clue, helping the student learn the past tense construction at a later date.

Now it should be obvious that intertextuality is deeply related to memory in language learning. Gasparov (2010) underscores that intertextuality is just as important and widespread in everyday conversation as it is in literary analysis. Gasparov (2010) aims to show how all new utterances are built upon the foundation of our previous speaking experiences. Intertextuality can act as a powerful tool to improve memory and learning.

3. Intertextuality and Salience

According to psychological research, salience refers to standing out alone among the crowd (Cintrón-Valentin & Ellis, 2016). It may seem, at first, that the concept of salience would be easy to understand but even scholars are often confronted with the difficulty of comprehensively grasping it. Boswijk and Coler (2020) describe the situation thus:

Salience is a concept used in a variety of studies across different fields. Still, it remains unclear just what the concept of salience is. Even within a single discipline, salience conveys an array of meanings. The discipline of linguistics is no exception. Linguistic publications that refer to salience often fail to provide a working definition of the term and use it to refer to phenomena as diverse as surprise, frequency, acoustic prominence, and more. Frustratingly, even when definitions are given, they are often circular: the properties that make a feature salient are the ones that follow from it being salient. (p. 713)

The authors argue that there are two main aspects regarding the difficulty of understanding the concept of salience. The first aspect is context dependence. In a quiet place, a loud sound is easily noticeable, drawing people’s attention to its intensity. However, if a loud sound occurs in the subway, it will not be noticed as easily as it would have been in a quiet place because salience is not an inherent property of something; rather, it concerns how an organism reacts to it (MacLeod, 2015). This is what it means to say that salience depends on context. The second aspect is multiple meanings. Moreover, salience can refer to various things within even just one field, thus causing a lot of confusion. Frequency and surprise are good examples of that which creates confusion. If some words are frequently used in that domain, the words are considered salient. Yet a rarely used grammatical structure could be considered salient because it stands out from a homogeneous group and attracts people’s attention. This is called a “surprise.” In this regard, something becomes salient according to its relative position to its surroundings.

Because of this lack of a clear-cut definition, salience and attention are sometimes used interchangeably in the field of second language acquisition. It is true that attention and salience are deeply interrelated, but they are in fact different concepts. Parr and Friston (2019) explain these differences by using an interesting analogy: the streetlight effect. Imagine a streetlight illuminating a dark street. The brightly lit area becomes salient, standing out visually from the surrounding darkness. Now, if someone is searching for a lost key in the dark, his or her attention will naturally be drawn to the bright spot. This act of focusing on the salient area represents attention.

Boswijk and Coler (2020) mention a limitation of salience. Imagine you are sitting in a classroom when the emergency bell suddenly rings. Students and teachers, startled by the sound, evacuate the building. Fire engines arrive, and there is a lot of chaos. In this scenario, the loud sound of the bell is an example of acoustic prominence, an aspect of salience. However, if the fire alarm rings frequently, then people may become desensitized to it. The initial ring is salient because it is unexpected, but with repeated exposure, it loses its salience (Karsten & Bertau, 2019).
Intertextuality can be a way to revive the salience of concepts, ideas, or other cultural phenomena that people have become desensitized to because of overexposure. Larsen-Freeman’s (2012) complexity theory suggests that intertextuality can help repeated exposure regain its effectiveness:

Repetition is common in language use. Similarly, having students repeat [words or phrases] is a common practice in language teaching. After surveying some of the better known contributions of repetition to language learning, I propose an innovative role for repetition from the perspective of complexity theory. I argue that we should not think of repetition as exact replication, but rather we should think of it as iteration that generates variation. Thus, what results from iteration is a mutable state. Iteration is one way that we create options in how to make meaning, position ourselves in the world as we want, understand the differences which we encounter in others, and adapt to a changing context. (p. 195)

Larsen-Freeman does not mention intertextuality directly, but her idea indirectly connects iteration to intertextuality. Unlike simple repetition, iteration does not imply exact replication. There is often a slight variation. Through such connections, new meaning is created, potentially reviving desensitized salience.

III. DESIGN

1. Background

Current college students who have experienced learning English with movies tend to complain about teachers using films in the EFL classroom. Their complaints primarily focus on 1) movie length, 2) a lower degree of enjoyment, and 3) students’ right to choose which movies are shown. To address these complaints, this paper introduces the concept of intertextuality.

Filmmakers intentionally create connections between their films and pre-existing cultural works and ideas, thus enriching the viewing experience. This enriched experience—that is, where L2 college students can recognize such references—may effectively address their complaints (Reetamoni, 2016).

2. Participants

Five college volunteers participated in this case study. They are all non-English majors; one is at an intermediate level and four are at a low-intermediate level. Since it is believed that most students at the university to which the participants belong are at the low-intermediate level, this level was selected for the study. These participants have had some experience interacting with foreigners due to their majors. They are keen to improve their English communicative skills but, unfortunately, they do not have a proper environment for studying English. Therefore, they were excited to join this study upon receiving information about it.

| TABLE 1 |
| TOEIC Scores of Participants² |
| Participants | Scores¹ | Level |
| A | Around 700 | Intermediate |
| B | Around 500 | Low-intermediate |
| C | Around 400 | Low-intermediate |
| D | Around 400 | Low-intermediate |
| E | Around 300 | Low-intermediate |

¹ Participants prefer to remain anonymous.
² The TOEIC scores presented in Table 1 are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). According to this framework, scores below 550 are considered low-intermediate, while scores of at least 785 or higher are categorized as intermediate (ETS Global, 2021).
³ Participants are reluctant to publicly disclose their scores.
As part of this case study, participants were required to take the TOEIC test and submit their scores, as shown in Table 1. Participants with scores between 300 and 500 are classified as low intermediates. However, this distinction might not be significant, as the participants did not preview or review any study materials before taking the text.

3. Material

This study utilizes two types of materials: the first being movies, and the second consisting of idioms sourced from YouTube shorts. The movie selected for this case study is the animation film, *Shrek 2*. The *Shrek* movies, part of the DreamWorks franchise, are replete with references to classic fairytales like *Pinocchio* and *Little Red Riding Hood*, as well as other films and pop culture, contributing to their distinctive charm. *Shrek 2* is especially known for this playful borrowing, with numerous references that fans enjoy spotting (nathanmiller31, 2019). Table 2 presents some examples illustrating why *Shrek 2* is well-known for its intertextuality. On the other hand, idioms will serve as a comparative reference point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shrek is a comedic twist on classic fairy tale figures, particularly echoing the ogre from <em>Beauty and the Beast</em> and the main character of <em>Rumpelstiltskin</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Donkey, Shrek’s faithful companion, is reminiscent of the talking creatures often seen in fairy tales and fables, such as the donkey from <em>The Bremen Town Musicians</em> and the Cheshire Cat from <em>Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unlike the helpless damsel in distress of fairytales, Princess Fiona is a breath of fresh air. While she shares some similarities with <em>Cinderella</em>, being trapped and yearning for escape, Fiona is a whole new breed. She’s no pushover! Fiona is strong and independent, ready to fight for herself and rewrite the typical princess story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nurmayana (2019) analyzes *Shrek 2* in terms of culture, as demonstrated in Table 3. This represents another instance of intertextuality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>In <em>Shrek 2</em></th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Far Far Away sign</td>
<td>Hollywood sign</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Farbucks Coffee</td>
<td>Starbucks (an American coffee company)</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Burger Prince</td>
<td>Burger King (a fast-food restaurant)</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Versarchery (a clothes store)</td>
<td>Versace (a luxury fashion company)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Friar’s Fat Boy (a fast-food restaurant)</td>
<td>Big Boy (a locomotive company)</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These factors justify the selection of *Shrek 2* as the case study’s primary material, and the film serves as the study’s primary focus. Additionally, short videos, which concentrate on idioms and are sourced from YouTube, will complement the analysis as a secondary resource. Such idioms will be used comparatively to illustrate common expressions in *Shrek 2*.

4. Procedure

This case study spanned approximately three months, with hourly sessions held weekly. Since participants do not preview or review the material before class, an instructor translates the film *Shrek 2* into Korean for them during each session, including the idioms used. The procedure is detailed below.

First, the instructor provides participants with a segment of *Shrek 2* and several idioms. The segment typically consists of a dialogue featuring intertextual references, while the idioms are chosen for their familiarity and amusement.

Second, the instructor explains where the intertextuality appears in the dialogue, leading participants in a discussion on this topic. Third, the instructor occasionally asks questions about original characters. For instance, when discussing
Cyclops, the instructor asks, “Who is Cyclops?” If participants cannot answer, the instructor provides background information from Greek mythology. Similarly, if a wolf appears in the story, the instructor references the original narrative of *Little Red Riding Hood* and reads the story with the participants. Fourth, the instructor introduces five new idioms during each session, discussing each of their meanings comprehensively. Finally, after the three-month period, the instructor administers tests and collects written reports from the participants.

5. Evaluation

This case study incorporates three tests and two written reports. Each of the first three tests focuses on eight language items, half derived from *Shrek 2* and half from idioms. These tests evaluate recognition, salience, and memory, respectively. The two written reports consist of open-ended questions. The first requires participants to compare character descriptions from *Shrek 2* with slightly modified versions, while the second prompts reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the case study activities. The test materials for the three language assessments are included in the Appendix.

IV. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1. The First Test (Recognition)

Generally, people recognize idioms quickly because they are familiar expressions (Tabossi et al., 2009). It is true that idioms are expressions used to communicate common ideas and feelings through making references to familiar experiences and objects. Therefore, we can infer that idioms are generally recognized more easily than regular phrases. However, according to Table 4, all participants recognized regular phrases from *Shrek 2* slightly better than idiomatic expressions. The participants suggested that intertextuality would help them recognize and memorize the expressions used in the animated film.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th><em>Shrek 2</em></th>
<th>Idioms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of correct answers out of 4 expressions (%)</td>
<td>No. of correct answers out of 4 expressions (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>3.5 (88%) (O = 3, △ = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* O = correct answer; △ = half correct

2. The Second Test (Salience)

The second test is a cloze test, which is closely related to salience (Stanfield, 1980). The passage’s context is crucial for selecting the best word for each blank. In Table 5, all participants achieved perfect scores in completing the *Shrek 2* expressions. Regarding this improvement, participants mentioned in the written report that intertextuality helped them become more aware of the context.

While it must be acknowledged that eight items within each test lack reliability and validity, it is essential to acknowledge the participants’ status as low-intermediates and alleviate their testing burden.
Table 5
A Salient Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Shrek 2</th>
<th>Idioms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of correct answers out of 4 expressions (%)</td>
<td>No. of correct answers out of 4 expressions (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>3 (75%) O = 3, Δ = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. O = correct answer; X = wrong answer

Idioms function as single units, with strong connections among the words within each idiom. For this reason, idioms and salience are interconnected as they both succinctly and powerfully highlight common cultural understandings. Therefore, it is unsurprising that participants achieved good scores. Furthermore, compared to idioms, expressions used in *Shrek 2* also demonstrate salience in a concise and impactful manner, thanks to intertextuality.

3. The Third Test (Memorization)

In the third test, participants were tasked with recalling English expressions. They were presented with eight sentences translated into Korean, with four having been derived from *Shrek 2* and another four originating from idioms.

Table 6
A Memory Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Korean translations for Shrek 2</th>
<th>Korean translations for idioms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of correct answers out of 4 expressions (%)</td>
<td>No. of correct answers out of 4 expressions (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3 (75%) O = 2, Δ = 2</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.5 (63%) O = 1, Δ = 3</td>
<td>3.5 (88%) O = 3, Δ = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3 (75%) O = 2, Δ = 2</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.5 (63%) O = 1, Δ = 3</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3 (75%) O = 2, Δ = 2</td>
<td>3.5 (88%) O = 3, Δ = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>70.20%</td>
<td>95.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. O = correct answer; Δ = half correct

As Table 6 demonstrates, idioms were found to be much easier to recall than *Shrek 2* expressions. Idioms are generally easier to memorize and recall, as L2 learners encounter them frequently in everyday conversations and media (elsaspeak, 2023), thus creating familiarity. Another benefit of memorizing idioms is their imagery (Gibbs & O’Brien, 1990). For instance, the phrase “kick the bucket” evokes a memorable image once L2 learners understand its idiomatic meaning. In this respect, *Shrek 2* expressions cannot rival idioms.

Table 7
Mistakes to Recall Shrek 2 Expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Correct answers (Errors)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(3) Get back (back)</td>
<td>Intensifier is missing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) all (missing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(1) ever after (forever)</td>
<td>Synonym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) When did you get back (when were you back)</td>
<td>Synonymous expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) all grown up (~ grown up already)</td>
<td>Synonym (all, already)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(2) an ogre (indefinite article is missing)</td>
<td>Ever has a minor meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>(2) an ogre (indefinite article is missing)</td>
<td>Minor grammatical mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) all (missing)</td>
<td>Intensifier is missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>(1) happily (happy)</td>
<td>Meaning is alright.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) an ogre (indefinite article is missing)</td>
<td>Minor grammatical mistake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The number in parentheses represents the number of the third test.
However, this does not imply that participants have poor skills when it comes to memorizing regular expressions like those in *Shrek 2*. Examining their mistakes in *Shrek 2* expressions might lead to an appreciation of intertextuality. Detailed information on their mistakes is provided in Table 7.

Participant A made minor mistakes. The first one was not actually an error but rather a use of a synonymous expression. The second mistake involved missing an intensifier, although the overall meaning remained intact. Participant B’s errors all stemmed from using synonymous expressions, but they did not significantly impact comprehension. Participant C’s mistakes primarily concerned grammar, resulting in slight issues, but the sentences remained understandable. Participant D and E’s errors resembled Participant C’s, mainly involving grammatical issues.

In summary, most mistakes were syntactic rather than semantic. Participants made few errors with content words, thanks to the improvement in contextual awareness facilitated by intertextuality.

4. Written Report

In this test, participants were presented with characters that *Shrek 2* borrowed from other narratives. They were required to compare “character A” in *Shrek 2* with the same character in the original narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Prince Charming</th>
<th>Cyclops</th>
<th>Fairy Godmother</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Lack of explanation about Prince Charming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>△</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>No knowledge of Cyclops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. O = correct answer; △ = half correction; X = wrong answer

As Table 8 details, participants A, C, and D provided wonderful descriptions of the characters. Participant A remarked that *Shrek 2* was more than just a simple children’s story, that it seemed to incorporate elements of dark comedy. She also enjoyed the recurrence of certain characters. Participant B hinted at the presence of satire. Participant C observed that *Shrek 2* appeared to be a straightforward narrative until he learned about intertextuality. He noted the presence of satire throughout and mentioned that he could now recall many expressions. Participant D expressed surprise at the multitude of texts integrated into *Shrek 2*. Additionally, she enjoyed discussing the characters. Participant E confessed that she lacked confidence in using intertextuality when encountering unfamiliar characters such as Cyclops. Based on participants’ statements, it is evident that intertextuality can provide valuable insights into foreign language learning.

5. Written Comments

As Table 9 shows, participants A, B, and C surprisingly answered, “no cons,” meaning they perceived no downsides to intertextuality. Indeed, they fully embraced intertextuality as a helpful concept for learning English. Participant D also did not reject the use of intertextuality by watching movies, but she did criticize the main film, *Shrek 2*, itself. To her, the plot was uninteresting, and although the animation seemed novel due to intertextuality, the animation frame did not differ from older DreamWorks films. Participant E did not fully embrace intertextuality, but despite partial disagreement, she appreciated the concept.

Thus, all participants welcomed to some degree the use of intertextuality in the classroom. Even though this case study was small, participants’ acceptance nonetheless serves as an encouragement to explore intertextuality further.

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5 The participants wrote their responses in Korean, and the instructor translated them into English for Table 9.
TABLE 9
Pros and Cons About Intertextuality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>So fun to learn culture in a new way. Easy to remember. Excited to see different time and space in one moment.</td>
<td>No cons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Intertextuality may help my major and English learning hand-in-hand. Easy to remember through different narratives.</td>
<td>No cons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Intertextuality teaches me how to understand new words and expressions. I can keep them in mind for a very very long time.</td>
<td>No cons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>It was good to experience a creative twist through intertextuality. Personally, <em>Shrek 2</em> is not my favorite type of movie. The story was boring and too out-of-date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>The overlapping of <em>Ugly Stepsister</em> in <em>Shrek 2</em> and <em>Cinderella</em> helped me get closer to my English learning. Though I didn’t agree with some points, I love the concept of intertextuality. However, I didn’t know some characters at all. It bothered me to move on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

1. Discussion

In the Introduction, it was explicitly stated that Movie English would need to undergo some changes. Therefore, this paper introduced the concept of intertextuality into teaching movies to enhance English language proficiency. Three months after participants received instructions, five tests were administered. Three of these tests focused on recognition, salience, and recall, while the other two consisted of open-ended questions. To ensure reliability, idioms were also included for comparison.

As is well known, idioms are easier to learn and memorize, as they are commonly used in everyday language (Roberto de Caro, 2009). When compared to regular expressions, to which intertextuality adds depth, the results are very reliable.

In the recognition test, all participants achieved perfect scores in recognizing regular expressions from *Shrek 2*. Scores for idioms were practically perfect as well. In the salience test (cloze test), participants achieved perfect scores in recognizing regular expressions, while scores for idioms were nearly perfect. Through these two tests, we observed that intertextuality might have influenced regular expressions, but no specific impacts were mentioned regarding improved language learning.

However, regarding the memory test, another salience test, the results differed from the previous ones. The mean scores for regular expressions were 70.20%, while those for idioms were significantly higher at 95.20%. This indicates that idioms performed 25% better than regular expressions, an outcome that can be attributed to participants’ grammatical knowledge. As previously mentioned, participants were mainly at the low-intermediate level.

When mistakes made in regular expressions were analyzed in detail, new findings emerged. Most mistakes were minor grammatical errors, with only a few semantic inaccuracies (see Table 7). For instance, participants C, D, and E each made one mistake regarding the indefinite article.

Intensifiers belong to the semantic domain, as they intensify the meaning of another word without having a specific syntactic role in a sentence. The third test included “all” and “ever” as intensifiers in the question items. Participant A and D omitted “all” in “You are all grown up,” while Participant C omitted “ever” in “We will all live happily ever after.” Interestingly, none of the participants omitted “all” in “We will all live happily ever after.” This consistency might be attributed to intertextuality; the participants were likely familiar with this phrase due to its frequent appearance in traditional fairy tales. Conversely, the participants may not have recognized the phrase “You are all

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6 This test was an English composition exercise. Since the participants were required to memorize expressions beforehand, they essentially recalled these memorized expressions during the test. Hence, it was also referred to as a memory test.
grown up” as intertextual. The third test suggests that intertextuality is related to semantics. In this regard, idioms are more meaning-based than are the regular phrases from *Shrek 2*.

The written report assessed participants’ knowledge after learning about intertextuality. They were provided with the names of three characters: Prince Charming, Cyclops, and Fairy Godmother. Participants were expected to compare the roles of each character in their original narratives and in *Shrek 2*, potentially leading to the creation of new versions of traditional narratives. Surprisingly, all participants except for Participant B made wonderful comparisons between the two roles. However, Participant B also did make a good comparison between Cyclops and Fairy Godmother. This comparison sparked participants’ creativity, encouraging them to explore the creative world and view the animation in a different light. They thoroughly enjoyed this activity.

The written comments involved written statements about the pros and cons of using intertextuality in the classroom. As previously shown in Table 9, most participants favored the pros of intertextuality. Specifically, they valued two aspects: creativity and enhanced long-term memory. Creativity could contribute to enjoyment, while long-term memory could aid in language learning.

One point of discussion that emerged concerning intertextuality was raised by Participant D, who expressed concern about the choice of *Shrek 2* as the primary material source. She argued that despite creative treatment, the film would inevitably be constrained by its traditional framework and the outdated ideas inherent in the *Shrek* franchise. This discussion carries implications for EFL teachers. While most participants endorsed the use of movies for intertextuality, the study suggests that intertextuality itself does not guarantee appropriate movie selection.

### 2. Conclusion

Movies have been utilized in EFL classrooms for over 20 years. L2 learners seeking to study using films anticipate new approaches to incorporating them into classroom instruction. This paper suggests the concept of intertextuality, which, despite not being novel, has been overlooked in the context of Movie English in the classroom. As stated in the Introduction, intertextuality originated from the work of French semiotician Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s (Lanir, 2019).

This paper has successfully demonstrated that participants enjoy using Movie English in the classroom. They had never imagined that films could serve not only as creative works but also as valuable language learning materials. It is important to note that this study involved only five college students, which is a relatively small sample size. To generalize the findings, further research involving a larger number of students is warranted.

### REFERENCES


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APPENDIX
The Three Tests

Test 1
Translate into Korean.
1. Sleeping Beauty is having a slumber party tomorrow, but Dad says I can’t go. 
2. You must be mistaking me for someone else.
3. I’ve already taken my pills, and they tend to make me a bit drowsy.
4. Your fallen tears have called to me.
5. What’s his face?
6. I’m not just saying that.
7. I have a bone to pick with you.
8. Spring is in the air.

Test 2
Fill in the blanks.
1. When I’m old __________________________, my Prince Charming will rescue me.
2. I need to have someone ______________________ care of.
3. He climbs to the highest room of the ______________________ tower.
4. I’m here to ______________________ make it all better.
5. Let’s sleep ______________ it.
6. You knew all ______________________.
7. We are in a ____________________ here and we need to talk about it.
8. My uncle always opens his home to anyone in need, he truly has a big ________________.

Test 3
Translate into English.
1. 우리는 앞으로 모두 행복하게 살 것이다.
2. 그는 괴물이야.
3. 자네 언제 돌아왔나?
4. 너가 제법 성인이 되었네.
5. 행운을 빈다.
6. 잡을 싸라.
7. 우리 완전 동했어.
8. 덤벼봐.