



EXPLORING METATEXTUALITY IN THE ENGLISH WRITING OF MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS AT SEKOLAH INDONESIA KUALA LUMPUR

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Abstract:

Intertextuality connects texts across cultures, enabling multilingual students to creatively draw from diverse sources and enrich broader literacy discourses. This research used discourse analysis model to examine metatextuality in multilingual students' English writing grade 11 for the 2023/2024 academic year at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur, analyzing how social practices influence language use and linking metatextual elements to current phenomena. This study revealed 74 metatextual elements in 197 sentences, categorized as external and internal. These findings underscore students' advanced language skills and cultural awareness, highlighting the importance of intertextual analysis in understanding the complexity of multilingual students' writing.

Keywords: *Metatextuality, Multilingual, Writing*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing becomes more than just for personal expression; it becomes a sort of connected collection of concepts, stories, and previously published texts that are interrelated and connect the text with the writer and reader (Kellogg, 2008). Writing is often a part of the creative process that involves taking ideas from previous work and reinterpreting them. There are intertextual connections throughout a wide range of literary genres, no text is actually new or original, and separate texts only exist because of their connections to earlier literary works (Kristeva, 1960). Intertextuality has the power to link disparate artistic creations globally. Intertextuality is a heterogeneous feature of many crossing corpora, a text that impacts and correlates with other texts (Hu, 2006), The process of altering a text's meaning and using it for other texts (Fitzsimmons, 2013), and focusing on the connection and interdependence between texts and events and the ways in which meaning can be understood in reference to other texts (Angay-Crowder, 2014). It exists to define intertextuality as the idea that literary works are related to one another and have an impact on one another by incorporating textual components from earlier works into more recent ones.

While middle school children engage literary texts in their individual creative activities, intertextuality frequently presents through their writing. Investigating intertextuality can help students develop their critical thinking skills (Merbti & Benzoukh, 2021) and be a useful literary analysis tool (Carter, 1989). Students can demonstrate their understanding of literature through their writing, which can take the form of essays, novels, or poems and use previous literary patterns and themes to enrich their own work by subtly or overtly referencing characters, ideas, or plot points (Pantaleo, 2006). The fundamental concept of intertextuality is that texts do not exist in isolation, but rather in relation to other texts (Fairclough, 2003). In this study, linguistic text serving a particular purpose in social interaction is referred to as "text" (Pulungan et al., 2010). These are referred to as discursive practices, and the type of discourse they



are used for determines how they are defined (Fairclough, 1992). Discourse practice is one of the many ways that a student's writing differs, even when it is about the same topic.

Multilingual students have a unique advantage in utilizing intertextuality in their writing. With diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they tend to have access to a variety of references from a variety of texts in different languages (Pérez and King, 2024). This allows them to connect concepts and ideas from a wider range of sources compared to monolingual students (Nabila, et al, 2024). In writing, they often draw not only from one literary culture, but combine elements from several different languages and cultures (Zulkifli, et al, 2019). This ability also allows them to more easily recognize and create complex intertextual relationships (Rouabhia, 2024). Multilingualism and intertextuality lie in the ability of multilingual students to bridge different texts and cultures. Their writing is a meeting point for various global narratives that allow them to contribute significantly to broader and multicultural literacy discourses.

There are some recent studies that have focused on intertextuality in the context of ELT. Larsen (2018) discusses that increasing focus and knowledge about the characteristics of intertextuality can contribute to the development of reading skills among ESL/EFL students. Mustofa and Hill (2018) involved a critical review of literature, evaluating and interrogating the practice of reading for interpretation or reading for pleasure in literature classes to understand and appreciate literature in EFL/ESL classes, emphasizing the role of cultural context in interpreting texts with a focus on the interaction between experiences with texts, authors with readers, and readers with other readers. Guerroudj and Hadjoui (2023) investigated the impact of intertextuality on ESL engagement with reading literary texts, focusing on cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement. There are several studies that focus on intertextuality and writing comprehension in ELT specifically for ESL. Hu (2019) looked into how intertextuality developed in the English writing of EFL students in a Chinese institutional that highlighted the significance of addressing specific intertextuality issues in the writing process and indicated that intertextuality is a significant factor in EFL students' English writing. Wang (2016) investigated Chinese ESL graduate students' use of intertextual practices in academic writing, with an emphasis on incorporating novel concepts, ideas, or issues into writing through the use of outside sources.

Compared to other studies, the participants in this study were multicultural as well as multilingual students in one of the high schools in Malaysia, thus allowing for more diverse intertextuality. This study aimed to explore the types of metatextuality in multilingual students' writing. In this way, in-depth knowledge of language proficiency, cultural awareness, and literary appreciation can be obtained by conducting an in-depth intertextual analysis of students' writing. This research contributes to improving the quality of English language teaching and learning, as well as providing new insights into the importance of metatextual elements in ESL students' writing.



2. METHOD

This research used discourse analysis in exploring how language constructs social practice. In general, this method follows the discourse analysis model intended by Fairclough (1992, 2003). This research begins with text analysis to determine the characteristics and types of metatextuality which is one type of intertextuality in articles. Then, metatextuality behavior was examined to figure out whether social practices are represented and underlie the nature of the behavior. To examine the influence of social practices on metatextuality in students' speech writing, the choice of topics discussed was analyzed by linking current phenomena.

The data from this research were the intertextuality elements of 10 (ten) speech script results of grade 11 ESL students at *Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur* for the 2023/2024 academic year. The theme of the speech text was their hopes for Indonesia. Participants in this research are multilingual students, considering that they can produce Indonesian language, Malay language, and English used mainly for the interaction. Therefore, in this study participants were classified as ESL. The data analysis was one type of intertextuality, namely metatextuality. Metatextuality refers to a type of intertextuality in which the text is intertextualized and realized covertly in the article or outside the text. There are two types, (i) external and (ii) internal metatextuality (Genette, 1997).

In this analysis, the researchers act as the main instrument that collects and interprets data. This is done through subjective interpretation of the hidden relationships between the main text and internal and external references. In addition, an analysis table is used to help organize and classify the data. This table contains categories such as the type of metatextuality, the text references involved, and the significance or function of the relationship in shaping the meaning of the text. Thus, this metatextuality analysis is carried out systematically to reveal layers of meaning that are not always directly apparent in the text.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the features of intertextuality in multilingual students' writing. Data analysis reveals various elements of metatextuality in each student's writing results. There are 197 sentences from 10 speech texts that have been analyzed. Of these sentences, there are 74 sentences that contain metatextuality elements. The analysis of metatextuality in speech texts based on their groups is explained in table 1.

Table 1 Metatextuality in The Students' Writing

No	Text	Number of Sentence	Number of Metatextuality	
			External	Internal
1	Text 1	47	5	3
2	Text 2	16	3	2
3	Text 3	15	5	6



4	Text 4	15	5	3
5	Text 5	18	2	5
6	Text 6	15	5	3
7	Text 7	20	5	4
8	Text 8	23	6	3
9	Text 9	6	2	1
10	Text 10	22	3	3
Total		197	41	33

In writing, students build and support their narratives through internal and external references. An internal reference involves things in the same text, where one refers to the same things previously stated, repeated ideas, or statements that connect to the previous one, providing continuity and cohesion. It contributes to the consistency of the very main message and its good integration throughout the text. In contrast, external references indicate that the writing relates to contexts or sources outside of the text itself: historical facts, cultural events, or relevant literature. The trend in so many texts toward greater emphasis on external metatextuality may be a reflex of the need for students to mark their awareness of the larger cultural and literary context. This evidences that students create a bond of their writing to greater knowledge or broader experiences outside of the text itself (Nabila, et al, 2024). For multilingual students, making effective use of outside-the-text references demonstrates more accurate knowledge of language and culture (Pérez and King, 2024). The students thus not only show mastery of the medium, the English language, but in some instances are also showing contextual grasp over the relevant cultural sphere, which is most necessary for effective communication and persuasive delivery.

External Metatextuality

Table 1 showed external metatextuality that refers to entities or events outside the text itself. They use the names of people, events, or concepts that already exist outside the text to strengthen an argument or explain an idea. External metatextuality referring to a person's name is shown in the sentence:

- "... there are thousands and even hundreds of officials caught in corruption cases such as Nurdin Abdullah, winner of the Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award (BHACA) in 2017 caught by KPK on February 16, 2021." (text 1)
- "Johnny G Plate, who corrupted around 8 trillion rupiah under the disguise of his 4G BAKTI project" (text 2)
- "Ferdy Sambo was sentenced to life imprisonment for a shooting incident, but it was revealed that he was transferred to a prison with much more comfortable facilities." (text 8)

In sentence (a), it refers to a real event and a real person, Nurdin Abdullah, who was caught in a corruption case. According to a news article by Tempo.co, Nurdin Abdullah, a former regent of Banyuasin, South Sumatra, was arrested by the Corruption



Eradication Commission (KPK) on February 16, 2021, for allegedly receiving bribes (Tempo.co, "KPK Tangkap Bupati Banyuasin Nurdin Abdullah", February 16, 2021). Sentence (b) cites to a real person, Johnny G Plate, and a real project, the 4G BAKTI project, which was involved in a corruption scandal, Johnny G Plate, the former director of the 4G BAKTI project, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for corruption (Kompas.com, "Johnny G Plate Divonis 10 Tahun Penjara", August 24, 2020). Meanwhile, In the sentence (c) refers to Ferdy Sambo's life sentence and his transfer to a prison with more comfortable facilities. This relates directly to news coverage and public discussion regarding the handling of high-profile cases by the Indonesian legal system, particularly the controversy surrounding the treatment of influential individuals in the justice system (CNN Indonesia, "Kritik Penempatan Ferdy Sambo di Lapas Kelas Satu Cipinang", March 24, 2023).

Meanwhile, external metatextuality that refers to an event is shown in the following sentence:

- a. "As we know, President Jokowi's decision to move the capital is a wise step..." (text 3)

In this sentence, President Jokowi's decision according to a news article by The Jakarta Post that President Joko Widodo has announced plans to move the country's capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan (The Jakarta Post, "Jokowi announces plan to move capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan", August 26, 2019). The mention of President Jokowi's decision to move the capital connects the text to the real world through explicit references to political events recorded in Indonesian history.

In addition to referring to a person's name or an event, external metatextuality also explains the concept referred to in the sentence. The following sentences that show external metatextuality relate to the concept of the sentence.

- a. "The idea of mutual cooperation in Pancasila can help overcome challenges, whether it's dealing with natural disasters or working on national infrastructure." (text 4)
- b. "Let's take Denmark as an example, where they implemented rubbish barriers in their rivers to prevent waste from accumulating." (text 5)
- c. "The heroes have fought hard to the point of bloodshed for the sake of their nation despite the ties that prevent freedom" (text 6)
- d. "Limited access to proper education in Indonesia demands our immediate attention and concerted action." (text 7)
- e. "Through inclusive education, strict law enforcement, and the promotion of gender equality, we can shape a better future." (text 9)
- f. "Discrimination, unequal opportunities, and societal prejudices persist, hindering the realization of true unity in diversity." (text 10)

Sentence (a) is an example of external metatextuality because it refers to a real concept, Pancasila, which is the state ideology of Indonesia. It cites to the official website of the Indonesian government, "Pancasila is the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state, consisting of five principles: belief in one God, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy, and social justice." (indonesia.go.id, "Pancasila: The



Philosophical Foundation of the Indonesian State"). In the sentence (b) refers to a real country, Denmark, and a real environmental initiative, the implementation of rubbish barriers in rivers. Denmark has introduced a new system of rubbish barriers in its rivers to prevent waste from entering the ocean (The Guardian, "Denmark introduces 'rubbish barriers' to stop waste entering ocean", June 5, 2020). Sentence (c) alludes to real historical events and figures, such as national heroes who fought for independence. Based on a news article by BBC News, Indonesia celebrates its independence day on August 17, commemorating the country's struggle for freedom from Dutch colonial rule (BBC News, "Indonesia independence day: What's behind the celebrations?", August 17, 2020).

Whereas, sentence (d) discussed limited access to decent education in Indonesia. It highlights ongoing challenges in Indonesia's education system, in line with various reports and articles discussing the need to improve access to education, especially in remote or underprivileged areas (Kompas.com, "Pemerataan Akses Pendidikan di Daerah Terpencil Masih Jadi Tantangan", June 5, 2023). In sentence (e), it refers to the advocacy of inclusive education, strict law enforcement, and gender equality. These are themes that are prominent in discussions about national development and human rights in Indonesia, in line with policy debates and advocacy efforts that are often covered in the media (The Jakarta Post, "'Inclusive Education in Indonesia: A Long Road Ahead", February 21, 2023). Lastly, sentence (f) highlight discrimination, inequality of opportunity and social prejudice. It reflects ongoing social challenges in Indonesia, echoing many articles and discussions on issues such as ethnic or gender-based discrimination and the struggle to achieve true social equality (Tempo.com, "Diskriminasi dan Kesetaraan Gender di Indonesia: Masih Banyak Pekerjaan Rumah", January 13, 2023).

The result of external metatextuality show how the external metatexts are made within the different sentences by relating the text to the current event, person, or idea in reality (Prikhoda, 2019). Each sentence refers to a current issue in Indonesia or within the world, such as the corruption case between Nurdin Abdullah and Johnny G Plate, President Jokowi's decision to move the capital city, and the concept of the Pancasila ideology. By mentioning the moving of the capital city by President Jokowi, the text is related to reality through explicit references to political events recorded in Indonesian history. This shows how the author relates the content of the text to the social and political context outside the text to provide credibility and relevance to the arguments presented (Triana, et al., 2020). This suggests that in addition to providing information, the author also makes connections between the information and real-world events, which can help the reader better comprehend and engage with the text's ideas.

Discussion of external metatextuality is important in the way it can show how texts function within a broader social and political context. The use of allusions to topical issues not only reiterates the arguments presented by the author but also opens discussion from the text and the reader regarding existing reality (Eve, 2016). Such examples of corruption cases, regarding public figures like Nurdin Abdullah and Johnny G Plate, draw attention to ethical issues within the government today. Thus, this



provides information to the readers but also challenges or provokes them to think about the consequences implicated by these issues.

Moreover, external metatextuality analysis shows that such context reveals the author's attempt to show not merely a naked fact but rather to build a narration relevant to the reader's life experience (Diegner, 2017). In this regard, the use of news sources from verified sources such as The Jakarta Post adds a new dimension of intertextuality in that the author has included views or information from other authoritative texts. This, therefore, reinforces external metatextuality by relying on sources outside of the writing as the basis of information. The implication of the use of external metatextuality in adding meaning to the text is that it creates a direct relationship between the text's narrative and the broader social or political reality (Charon & Lehartel, 2023), hence enabling the readers to acquire a more specific understanding of the contents of the text within a larger context.

Internal Metatextuality

Table 1 also showed internal metatextuality that refers to and constructs narratives internally within the text itself, often by referring to other elements in the same text or serving to reinforce the main message. In internal metatextuality, the researcher comments on a particular part of the text being written, providing guidance on how the text is understood and inserting reflections on how it was written or created.

- a. "Friends, are these things not painful? For me, it hurts. And you as the younger generation of Indonesia should feel hurt too." (text 1)
- b. "It is important to us to recognize how to handle this problem..." (text 2)
- c. "Together, we can build a new capital city as a symbol of positive change and sustainable progress." (text 3)
- d. "Lastly, our big hope is for the next generation to carry on the Pancasila spirit." (text 4)
- e. "Let us together be agents of change to protect Indonesia's natural beauty and leave a sustainable legacy for future generations." (text 5)
- f. "From there we can continue, from one small step in the process until it produces something big that also makes a difference." (text 6)
- g. "Let us unite in the pursuit of knowledge, ensuring that every Indonesian has the opportunity to shine and contribute to the progress of our great nation." (text 7)
- h. "My hope for Indonesia in the future is that all Indonesian citizens, both the less privileged and the privileged, will obey the existing regulations, behave better, be more open-minded." (text 8)
- i. "Therefore, it is time for us to unite, denigrate such behavior, and provide support to victims so that they feel heard and empowered." (text 9)
- j. "It's genuinely heartbreaking to know that some people can't feel safe nor comfortable living in their own country." (text 10)

In sentence (a), it refers to a real event and a real person, Nurdin Abdullah, who was caught in a corruption case. According to a news article by Tempo.co, Nurdin



Abdullah, a former regent of Banyuasin, South Sumatra, was arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) on February 16, 2021, for allegedly receiving bribes (Tempo.co, "KPK Tangkap Bupati Banyuasin Nurdin Abdullah", February 16, 2021). Sentence (b) cites to a real person, Johnny G Plate, and a real project, the 4G BAKTI project, which was involved in a corruption scandal, Johnny G Plate, the former director of the 4G BAKTI project, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for corruption (Kompas.com, "Johnny G Plate Divonis 10 Tahun Penjara", August 24, 2020). Meanwhile, In the sentence (c) refers to Ferdy Sambo's life sentence and his transfer to a prison with more comfortable facilities. This relates directly to news coverage and public discussion regarding the handling of high-profile cases by the Indonesian legal system, particularly the controversy surrounding the treatment of influential individuals in the justice system (CNN Indonesia, "Kritik Penempatan Ferdy Sambo di Lapas Kelas Satu Cipinang", March 24, 2023).

In sentence (a) connects the expressed emotion to previous data or statements about Indonesia's problems, such as the low average IQ and poverty rates. Sentence (b) refers to the previous sentence which introduced the topic of corruption. This is an example of internal metatextuality because it builds on and expands ideas that have been introduced in previous speeches. Sentence (c) repeats the main idea that has been mentioned before to strengthen the message. This repetition is part of the internal metatext that helps clarify the main message of the speech. The use of the word "we" in the sentence is a way to directly involve the audience, create a relationship between the speaker and the listener, and emphasize collectivity. This is an element of the internal metatext that sets the tone and relationships in the text. Whereas, sentence (d) cites back to the main theme that has been raised previously, namely the importance of the next generation continuing the values of Pancasila. This strengthens the narrative and overall message of the text by emphasizing that the spirit of Pancasila, which may have been explained or discussed in the previous section, must continue to be carried forward by future generations.

In the sentence (e) refers to concepts that may have been discussed earlier in the same text. This sentence reinforces existing messages, such as collective responsibility and sustainability, by inviting the reader to act on previously explained ideas, creating continuity and strengthening the overall narrative in the text. Slightly different from sentence (f) which alludes to an action or process that has been discussed previously in the text. This sentence builds continuity by showing the development of small steps towards a bigger and more meaningful result. Thus, this sentence strengthens the narrative in the text and creates an internal connection between the ideas that have been conveyed previously and the final goal to be achieved, so it falls into the category of internal metatextuality. Sentence (g) is categorized as internal metatextuality because it cites to a theme or idea that may have been introduced earlier in the text. This sentence reinforces the idea of unity and the importance of education that may already be part of the main narrative of the text. By calling for unity in the pursuit of knowledge and ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to contribute, this sentence builds on and develops an existing message, creating continuity in the text. This shows that the



sentence serves to deepen and strengthen the narrative internally, making it fall into the category of internal metatextuality.

While, sentence (h) refers to a discussion or theme that has been introduced earlier in the text. This sentence appears as part of a broader narrative about hopes or visions for the future of Indonesia, particularly in relation to legal compliance, societal behavior, and openness. By stating hopes for the future, this sentence reinforces the message that has been built up in the text, perhaps after describing the challenges or social issues faced by Indonesian society. Sentence (i) cites to a discussion that has been previously constructed in the text and conveys a moral message that emphasizes shared responsibility in dealing with the problem, which reflects the values that the speaker considers important. Lastly, in the sentence (j), it explains the challenges that minorities face and how it contributes to discomfort and insecurity in their lives, providing an internal explanation of the reasons behind the mismatch between slogans and reality.

Texts are belonged under the concept of internal metatextuality because they allude to and create narratives internally inside themselves, often by referring to other elements in the same text or serving to reinforce the main message (Allen, 2000). The use of pronouns such as “us,” “we,” “our,” and “you” in the quoted texts plays an important role in building internal metatextuality, creating a connection between the writer or speaker and the audience. For multicultural as well as multilingual students, this provides an opportunity to feel recognized as part of a larger community (Abacioglu, et al, 2023). Internal metatextuality creates a strong connection between the message of the text and its readers, who in this context are students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Hyland, 2017). Through the use of these pronouns, messages about collective responsibility and involvement in social issues can be conveyed in a more inclusive manner.

These pronouns denote an inclusive perspective that underscores solidarity, particularly among multicultural students who most frequently feel the identity challenge or cultural marginalization. For example, the phrases "Let us unite" (text 7) and "Let us together be agents of change" (text 5) appeal to the readers to take part in larger social changes. That is relevant because it means the multilingual students have something to contribute to in order to build up the future of the country, too, whatever their different backgrounds are (Eden, et al, 2024). This would provide a sense of togetherness, something important in a multicultural society like Indonesia.

Moreover, texts which use "you" and "we," for example, "And you as the younger generation of Indonesia should feel hurt too" (text 1), give the multilingual students a direct appeal. In the educational context, such appeals are very important since they assist in instilling a sense of belonging and responsibility among the students. The message herein encompasses the multilingual students in becoming an integral part of this nation, Indonesia, and the positive changes to be wrought. They are reminded that though they are different, they are part of a bigger narrative that builds the nation.

The use of such pronouns carries an implication for a future of inclusion and equality, as would be extrapolated from the statement, "My hope for Indonesia in the future is that all Indonesian citizens.," (text 8). This points toward a perspective wherein



no one would be marginalized, an important message to multilingual students, who often felt there were inequities with regard to either educational opportunities or social acceptance. Such an internal metatextuality lets them feel that they have their place and role in creating a better future for all citizens.

Internal metatextuality serves to crystallize the main message, as well as to create continuity in the narration (Deane, 2020). This text indeed forms a close relationship between all factors in the narrative by referring to already mentioned ideas on social issues, Pancasila values, and collective responsibility. The repetition of the main idea, underlining it as a collective, and finishing the information with related data produce, as a consequence, a more underlined and profound total message in the text. Every sentence that is connected with a previous theme or discussion develops a coherent and integrated account, making the text more solid, consistent, and comprehensible to the readers. These findings represent a clear cut on how internal metatextuality is used effectively to create unity in narration and to clarify the message meaning in the context of writing.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings on external and internal metatextuality show how texts can connect multilingual students' ideas to a broader context, either through references to individuals, events, or pre-existing concepts. The external metatext elements connect a text to some other things outside of it, such as historical events or cultural concepts, by enhancing meaning and locating it within a bigger framework or context. By contrast, internal metatextuality reinforces narrative continuity by referencing and elaborating on previously introduced themes. Both the external and internal forms of metatextuality appearing in the writing of multilingual students demonstrate evidence of a more mature engagement with the text; this shows their capabilities to negotiate complex cultural and linguistic contexts while deepening and assuring continuity in their stories. This engagement could be seen to reflect their multilingual competencies and their subtle knowing of how language dances with culture.

Future research should consider analyzing the other four types of intertextualities identified by Genette (1997) to provide a more comprehensive understanding of intertextuality in speech texts. Longitudinal studies that track the development of intertextuality skills over time, as well as comparative studies across genres and media, could further elucidate patterns and differences. Longitudinal studies which follow growth in intertextuality over time and comparative studies across genres and media may shed further light on patterns and differences. Another worthy research issue would be investigation into the use of intertextuality strategies and their impact on audience reception, as well as considering what pedagogical approaches are most effective in teaching such skills.



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