

# Intertextuality in media discourse: A reader's perspective

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## Abstract

The article is a part of a research project on how intertextuality is perceived by readers of media texts. The focus of the article is on how intertextual references are recognized, interpreted, and substituted by EFL respondents. Based on the results of the survey, conclusions are drawn to address the following research questions – whether respondents can recognize intertextual references as such in the context, whether they can interpret an utterance despite failing to detect intertextual segments, and whether there exists a correspondence between recognizability of an intertextual reference and attempts at defining and/or replacing it. This paper is an attempt to empirically verify theoretical views on intertextuality. The results of the survey provide insights into how intertextuality is perceived by respondents.

**Key words:** intertextuality; media discourse; precedent-related phenomena.

## 1. Introduction

While there exists extensive linguistic literature on intertextuality (Allen, 2011; Bauman, 2004; Genette, 1997; Hodges, 2015; Orr, 2003; Wiggins, 2020; Worton & Still, 1990), most studies focus on intertextuality as a literary category (Caselli, 2013; Coffee, 2018; Eco, 2006; Riffaterre, 1994; Trivedi, 2007). Amongst the multitude of those, we were able to find only one survey (Ahmadian & Yazdani, 2013) that specifically addressed the question of how intertextuality was understood by the reader/recipient and on the possible effects of intertextuality awareness on the process of reading. Yet even this study fails to answer some of the questions that inadvertently come to mind when thinking about intertextuality and the reader. Therefore, considering a gap in research, this present study aims to answer the following questions:

(1) if the reader sees a reference to another text, does he/she necessarily regard it as such?

(2) if the reader fails to see a connection with another text, will this prevent him/her from trying to reach an interpretation of the utterance that contains implicit references to other texts?

(3) is there any correspondence between the “recognizability” of a certain intertextual reference and attempts at defining and/or replacing it?

Consequently, the goal of the present study is to find answers to these questions and to bring more clarity to the notoriously ambiguous category of intertextuality from the readers’ perspective. As has been mentioned above, intertextuality is traditionally studied in literature, but it was our intentional decision to study how it is perceived by recipients of media texts, which, unlike works of literature, are meant for immediate consumption by the readers. When the authors of media articles insert intertextual fragments in their texts, their obvious intention would be to add color or expression to their texts, at the same time expecting the reader to immediately recognize the reference and end up with the intended meaning of the utterance. With this in mind, we developed a survey that would help us get clarity on how intertextual references are perceived by readers of media texts. A selection of segments from contemporary media texts was shown to a group of respondents, and their responses have been recorded and analyzed. It is important to note that participants of this study were representatives of Gen Z, born between 1995 and 2010. Their lives have been surrounded by media and technologies, according to Davies (2020). In addition, Doherty (2020: 11) states that Gen Z is very engaged with intertexts and paratexts of a Broadway show since it was the subject of the study. Furthermore, Allen (2011) provides the understanding of how a reader perceives text by being critical of its meaning and reinventing its interpretation:

To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something that exists between a text and all other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext. (Allen 2011: 1).

In our case, the presented study will consider the respondents’ generational characteristics to draw conclusions about the readers’ perspective on intertextuality in media.

## 2. Intertextuality and the theory of precedence

The term *intertextuality* was introduced in literary and linguistic studies by Julia Kristeva in 1969 (Allen, 2011: 3). According to J. Kristeva, who was inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas on dialogism, “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1980: 66). Ever since the introduction of the term, the con-

cept of intertextuality has often been defined in rather vague and ambiguous terms. Each new fundamental study on intertextuality adds to this vagueness and ambiguity, as every scholar finds something new about this notion that has not been properly highlighted by previous researchers, which is just another proof of the complexity of both the term and the phenomena it defines. Traditionally, intertextuality is “the name often given to the manner in which texts of all sorts (oral, visual, literary, virtual) contain references to other texts that have, in some way, contributed to their production and signification” (Childs & Fowler, 2006: 121). Because this is such a wide approach, so many functionally or structurally unrelated phenomena can be considered as intertextuality, ranging from citations in scholarly works, quotations of politicians in media reports, literary allusions, parody, translation, and plagiarism. It is clear that the way in which intertextuality manifests itself in each of the above-mentioned contexts is going to be significantly different, and, consequently, the specific tools and approaches needed to both detect and explore intertextuality in each field are going to vary greatly.

Umberto Eco stressed the active role of the reader in the process of interpreting intertextuality. Reading as such becomes an active cooperation through which the reader will attempt to extract from the text what the text does not say (what it only presupposes, promises, entails, and implies logically), will fill in empty spaces, connect what appears in the text with the fabric of intertextuality (Eco, 1993: 13). Depending on how this cooperation goes, two types of readers emerge – the semantic reader, who wants to know what happens, and the semiotic, or the aesthetic reader, who wants to know how what happens has been narrated (Eco, 2006: 222-223).

This approach seems to be putting too much pressure on the reader, as reading is no longer a passive contemplation of the text, but an active production process. The meaning is created during the process of reading, and the reader is expected to have some profound background knowledge, as well as analytical skills to recognize and interpret intertextuality in the text. While this approach may be relevant in the reading of literature, intertextuality is also widely used in other forms – media discourse, political discourse, advertisements. Is it always justifiable to expect that recipients of such texts will necessarily enjoy untangling the intertextual fabric in them to uncover the original meaning that has been hidden behind a labyrinth of intertextuality? This “elite” status of the reader who is well-read and trained in recognizing previous texts is often cited by critics of intertextuality as one of its main disadvantages. According to Kilbride (2018), “it seems to require specialist knowledge on the part of the reader. It ignores the fact that a word or phrase can mean something to a reader, whether or not the reader knows if that word or phrase has already been used by a previous writer.” Moreover, Childs & Fowler (2006: 122-123) argue that “the ‘meaning’ that is de-

rived from any given text (whether it be a novel, a poem, a film, a sitcom, an advertisement) depends upon the reader's prior encountering of the intertexts that are invoked – without the necessary semiotic exposure the reception of the work would inevitably bring forth differing, but equally valid interpretations." This approach may not seem to be very useful in media texts, as in these the main ideas should be presented on the surface, the content must be more user- or reader-friendly, as few authors of media texts would expect their readers to be engaged in a thorough analysis of post-modern features of their texts. Yet, media texts are full of intertextual references and not just in the form of direct quotations from press releases, speeches by politicians, or other such sources. Multiple studies exist on intertextuality in media that illustrate how intertextuality is used to create an emotional or expressive effect (Hart, 2017; Meinhof & Smith, 2000; Oliveira, 2004; Talbot, 2007), or even how it could be used to manipulate the recipient (Morgan, 2019; Saraireh & Saraireh, 2020; Velykoroda, 2010). To differentiate the broad understanding of intertextuality as any kind of relation (linguistic or conceptual) existing (sub)consciously and/or (un)intentionally between two or more texts, we shall employ a more specific term for the intertextual references that were the object of our analysis – precedent-related phenomena.

The theory of textual precedence or precedent-related phenomena was introduced by Yuriy Karaulov (1987) in the late 1980s and later developed and refined by Gudkov (1999) and Krasnykh (2002). Karaulov spoke about precedent-related texts in the context of linguistic persona. He claimed that every culture has texts (both in verbal and non-verbal form) that are cognitively and emotionally meaningful for speakers (Karaulov, 1987: 216). Karaulov talked primarily about texts (the Bible, Greek and Roman mythology, classical literature), but his theory was later expanded, and instead of texts, scholars talked more commonly about precedent-related phenomena (Gudkov, 1999). These were usually subdivided into four categories: precedent-related texts, precedent-related situations, precedent-related names, precedent-related phrases, or expressions (Krasnykh, 2002), and they function as certain symbols or paragons in a specific linguocultural community (Krasnykh, 2002: 171). A more detailed overview of the forms of precedent-related phenomena could be found in our previous studies (Velykoroda, 2012: 23-40; Velykoroda, 2019: 33-35). Suffice it to say that precedent-related phenomena turned out to be an especially useful category for the analysis of all forms of media texts, as they allow for greater precision in the analysis of intertextuality in media. Moreover, they enable researchers to specifically identify those forms of intertextuality that signal the author's attitude to either his/her text, or to the objects in the texts, or to the situation discussed in the text. Unlike other forms of intertextuality, precedent-related phenomena are supposed to be easily and immediately recognized by the addressee,

while intertextuality may remain unnoticed by readers with less background knowledge (Velykoroda, 2016: 70). In media discourse, precedent-related phenomena often create conceptual metaphors, when source domain concepts (the source of a precedent-related phenomenon) are mapped on the target domain concepts (the actual object of the article) (Velykoroda, 2019: 37-39):

- (1) *Like an American **Moses**, she [Hillary Clinton] was an imperfect prophet, leading women to the edge of the **Promised Land**<sup>1</sup>. Now it's up to another woman to enter it.* (Time, December 19, 2016).
- (2) *Otherwise, Facebook will continue to be cast in the role of the Web's sketchy **Big Brother**, sucking up our identities into a massive **Borg brain** to slice, dice and categorize for advertisers.* (Time, May 31, 2010).

We can propose that precedent-related phenomena in printed texts operate like **cognitive hyperlinks**, as a specific precedent-related phenomenon in the text will always be cognitively "highlighted" in a different color, and if the recipient "clicks" it, he/she will be redirected to another mental image in their brain that will contain most basic and common information about this idea or event. They allow readers to jump to other culturally important texts or situations and map their components onto the content of the article they are reading quickly and effortlessly. With one word or a short phrase, the authors are able to create expanded situational conceptual metaphors that may significantly alter and enrich the semantic, or surface-level reading of the text.

While it is clear from the examples above that a successful reading of an utterance depends on an interpretation that is enriched with the additional associations that are attached to the utterance with the help of intertextual references, there are certain questions that should be answered when it comes to how recipients actually interpret such fragments in media texts. Scholars have tried to explain from relevant theoretic framework how such utterances are interpreted by recipients: readers form an *ad hoc* concept that helps them achieve a plausible interpretation of the utterance; even though the processing effort will increase, this is compensated by a significantly bigger cognitive effect that is created through the use of intertextual references (Velykoroda, 2012: 138-155; Velykoroda, 2016: 71-72). However, these assumptions have remained largely theoretical speculations, as they have never been tested on recipients. Firstly, are precedent-related phenomena recognized as intertextual references? Secondly, whether or not they are, will the recipient know the meaning of the specific precedent-related phenomenon? Thirdly, whether or not the meaning is known to the recipient, are the

<sup>1</sup> In this and the following examples cited, emphasis is added to the key passages and marked in bold.

readers able to interpret the unit in this specific segment of the text with limited context? The answers to these questions will shed light on the readers' perspective on precedent-related phenomena in media discourse. We set out the following hypotheses to test with the help of the previous questions:

- (1) precedent-related phenomena are not necessarily recognized or treated by readers of media texts as references to other texts;
- (2) even when they are not recognized as references to other texts, readers are still capable of attempting to interpret them within the given context.

### 3. Materials and methods

To explore the reader's perspective on intertextuality in media discourse, we quantitatively assessed the answers to determine participants' attempts to answer the posed questions in the survey in terms of defining, recognizing, and interpreting precedent-related phenomena. To be specific, we made a random selection of six examples with intertextual references from *Time* magazine (international edition), found in their printed issues from September 2019 to October 2020. The choice of six examples was dictated by our intention to ensure that completing the survey would take up to 15 minutes, as otherwise the respondents could refuse or be unwilling to give detailed answers. The specific examples selected from the survey included intertextual references from various sources, as this would help us see whether there is a difference in how the source of the intertextual reference affects its identification, recognizability, and proper interpretation.

#### 3.1. Context of the study and participants

For the purpose of this study, we randomly selected 27 respondents among students of the Department of English at the Precarpathian National University, Ukraine. This university is the oldest in the region and used to be a pedagogical institution in the past (Moroz, 2017). The survey was conducted from December 2020 to March 2021. All of these students are linguistics majors with a high level of English (equivalent to C1), and all of them have previously received some linguistic training (though not necessarily any specific instruction on the theory of intertextuality). Moreover, the participants are considered to be Gen Z, which is characterized by the high level of engagement with technologies, media, and the digital world in general (Davies, 2020). This unique feature of the population under research makes this study look further into some of the underlying causes of students' responses and their knowledge of the precedent-related phenomena. The choice of

non-native speakers rather than native speakers of English was intentional, as non-native speakers with an advanced level of a second language and some background in linguistics could be more conscious of the linguistic connections than native speakers who generally rely more on intuition (Moussu, 2018: 1212-1213). Moreover, this could also have implications for how ESL training should be adapted to improve their intercultural communication skills.

### 3.2. Instruments

To test readers' perspectives on intertextuality, we conducted a Qualtrics survey. The survey was anonymous, each participant could see a segment of the text from a magazine article, followed by questions relating to the intertextual fragment that would show whether the respondents are able to identify, define and rephrase the intertextual unit. In addition, the survey had a demographics part which provided the researchers with information about participants' age, education level, and gender identity. As to the selected intertextual examples that were given to participants in the survey, we purposefully selected them from various spheres, such as classical literature, modern literature, films, pop culture, and children's literature to represent a wide variety of intertextual examples. Next, we discussed several possible citations from *Time* magazine, and the following six examples were used in the survey:

- (3) COVID-19 creates a childcare **catch-22** (*Time* May 25, 2020: 6) (source: a 1961 novel by Joseph Heller)
- (4) If American political leadership has receded, its deep cultural bonds are more difficult to replace. That is the **kryptonite** to Communist China's global ambitions – to lead, it has to be liked, too. (*Time* May 25, 2020: 37) (source: Superman stories)
- (5) [...] she wrote the new book in part because she worries the world is trending more towards **Gilead** than away from it. (*Time* September 16, 2019: 40-41) (source: Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*)
- (6) This has led demonstrators to adopt intricate tactics to evade **Big Brother's** all-seeing eye. (*Time* December 29, 2019: 35) (source: George Orwell's 1948 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*)
- (7) I love clay. I love fire. Maybe I'm a distant relative of **Prometheus**. (*Time* April 6/13, 2020: 66) (source: Greek mythology)
- (8) A President obsessed with strength and dominance could never stand to be revealed as a sick, vulnerable old man, a mortal made of flesh like the rest of us, ashes to ashes. There could never be a **Wizard of Oz** moment for [the president], with his might-makes-right brand of politics. (*Time* October 19,

2020: 22) (source: A 1900 novel by L. Frank Baum *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*).

To analyze the interpretation of the examples, the authors compiled three questions for each example, which would ultimately provide data to answer the main research question of this study. The researchers organized the structure in the following way to receive sufficient data to ensure that the hypotheses of the research are answered:

(1) The respondent sees the example with an intertextual element (visually indistinguishable from the rest of the text, the same way it is seen in the magazine) and is asked a question whether they “recognize any references to other texts/films/works of art/other sources in this fragment.” This question is asked to check whether the participants are aware of intertextual segments in the text. It should be noted here that even if the answer is “yes,” it does not necessarily guarantee that the respondent recognized the correct segment as intertextual or whether they are aware of its intertextual status.

(2) The second question identifies the intertextual fragment and checks for the respondent’s awareness of its meaning. The respondents are asked, “Who/what is XXX?” At this level, the respondents are more likely to provide information on the origin and meaning of the intertextual segment. Even if they were unable to correctly identify the reference as intertextual, they may know the meaning irrespective of the context. Conversely, even if they have claimed to recognize the intertextual reference, they may have identified a wrong segment, which will become obvious if they are unable to define it.

(3) The third question checks for the respondents’ interpretation of the key element in this context: “If you could replace XXX with another simpler word or a short phrase, what would you use?” This question is asked to verify whether the respondent has accurately identified the key element in the utterance and whether they can reconstruct the meaning of the utterance. Also, if the answer to the first question was “no,” this question will let us see whether the respondent, despite not recognizing the intertextual reference, is able to attempt to interpret the utterance.

### **3.3. Data collection procedure**

After securing an IRB approval (IRB Log #20-187-IUP), formal e-mails were sent to potential participants with secure anonymous links to the survey. Participants had to sign an informed consent prior to starting the survey and create a pseudonym, so their identities were protected.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Due to the nature of the research questions of this study, the survey data had qualitative question types. However, for the purposes of this article, the researchers analyzed quantitative results only. The qualitative results are beyond the scope of the present article. Therefore, data analysis was based on calculations, tables, and pie figures provided below.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Total results

To interpret the results of the survey, we conducted a quantitative study of the responses and split them into respective categories. Overall, 27 respondents completed the survey, and all of their responses were recorded. Since each respondent answered the questions on 6 text fragments, we received 162 responses in total. The survey included three questions, and, consequently, the responses were recorded into three separate categories: (1) **recognition** (yes/no), (2) **definition** (open answer), (3) **replacement** (open answer). The total results from the survey are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Total results.

Recognition		Definition		Replacement	
Yes	No	Attempted	Not attempted	Attempted	Not attempted
97	65	106	56	88	74
59.88%	40.12%	65.43%	34.57%	54.32%	45.68%

Ideally, we would expect that if a respondent answers “yes” to the first question (“Do you recognize any references to other texts/films/works of art/other sources in this fragment?”), they should also be able to interpret it and also replace it with a synonym.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, when they answer “no” to the first question, hypothetically, they are less likely to attempt to define the intertextual segment or to replace it. However, this was not always the case, and sometimes despite giving a negative answer to the recognition question, the respondents provided definitions and/or replacement, and despite giving a positive answer to the recognition question, they did not always attempt to define and/or replace the phenomenon. Consequently, we would like to present the data more fully considering these discrepancies, first within the

<sup>2</sup> We are aware of the situation when the respondent may recognize a “wrong” segment as intertextual, and we understand that this may have had impact on our results. We are going to discuss this in more detail when discussing the research limitations.

affirmative recognition responses (Table 2), and then within the negative recognition responses (Table 3).

Table 2: Results within the affirmative recognition responses.

	Definition attempted	Definition not attempted	Replacement attempted	Replacement not attempted
total number	81	16	64	33
percentage in "yes" category	83.51%	16.49%	65.98%	34.02%
percentage in total responses	50%	9.88%	39.51%	20.37%

Table 3: Results within the negative recognition responses.

	Definition attempted	Definition not attempted	Replacement attempted	Replacement not attempted
total number	25	40	24	41
percentage in "no" category	38.46%	61.54%	36.92%	63.08%
percentage in total responses	15.43%	24.69%	14.81%	25.31%

As can be seen from the results, in the "yes" category, 50% of the total responses attempted definition, and nearly 40% attempted replacement, while 25% of the responses in the "no" category attempted neither to define nor to replace the phenomenon. The remaining responses were recorded in two new categories: (1) 25% of the responses with incongruence between the yes/no response to *recognition* and *definition* attempts (Figure 1); (2) 35% of the responses with incongruence between the yes/no response to *recognition* and *replacement* attempts (Figure 2).

As can be seen from Figure 1, we have in total four categories of responses. 50% of the respondents claimed to recognize an intertextual segment and then attempted to define it (green color). 25% of the respondents did not recognize an intertextual reference and did not attempt to define it (red color). These two categories flow within the intuitive logic of research: if a respondent recognizes intertextuality, he/she will most probably define it; if they do not recognize it, they will not attempt to define it. Then two new categories emerged: (1) about 10% of the respondents claimed to recognize an intertextual reference, however when asked to define it, they made no attempt to do so (blue color), (2) another 15% of the respondents did not recognize an intertextual reference, however, they attempted to define it

(yellow color). These two new categories (totaling 25%) include the responses with incongruence between the first and the second questions.

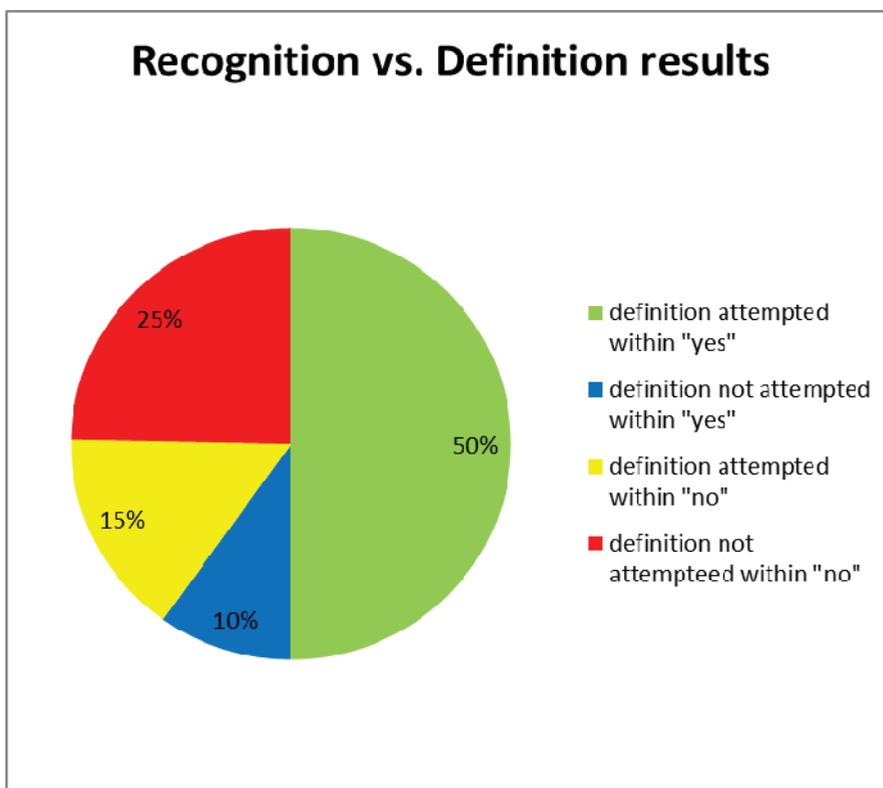


Figure 1: Definition results.

Similarly, we will now describe the same results for the replacement category of responses. As can be seen from Figure 2, we have in total four categories of responses. 40% of the respondents claimed to recognize an intertextual segment and then attempted to replace it (green color). 25% of the respondents did not recognize an intertextual reference and did not attempt to replace it (red color). Then two new categories emerged: (1) 20% of the respondents claimed to recognize an intertextual reference, however when asked to replace it, they made no attempt to do so (blue color), (2) another 15% of the respondents did not recognize an intertextual reference, however, they attempted to replace it (yellow color). These two new categories (totaling 35%) include the responses with incongruence between the first and the third questions.

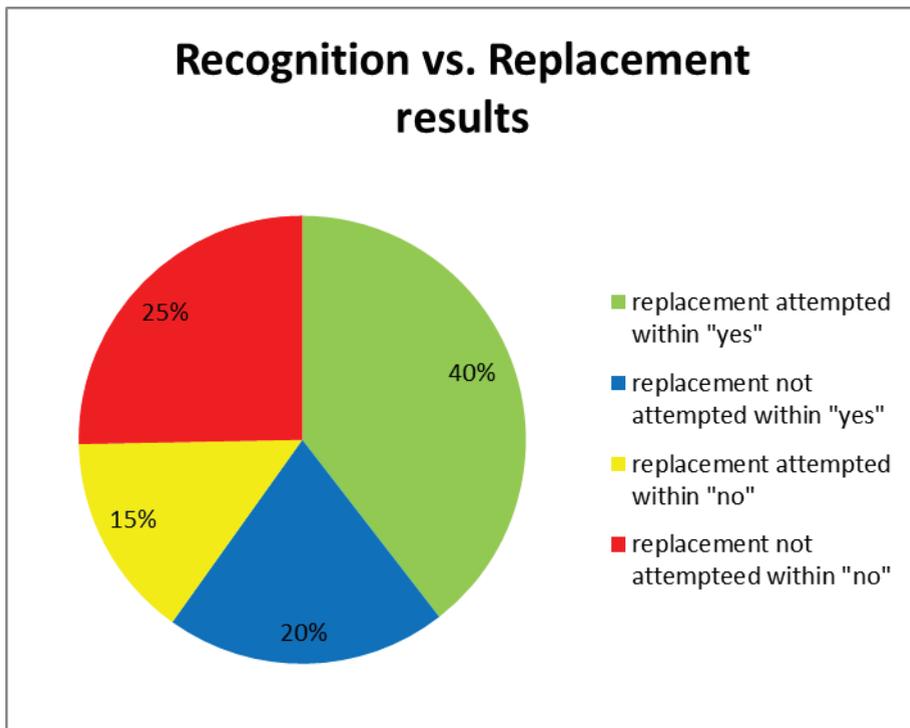


Figure 2: Replacement results.

These results show the general picture irrespective of specific responses to each precedent-related phenomenon. Further we would like to present the results specifically for each example.

#### 4.2. Results by citations

First, we will analyze the results of the first question dealing with the recognition of intertextual references (Figure 3). As can be seen from Figure 3, three examples are significantly more likely to be recognized: *Big Brother*, *Prometheus*, and *Wizard of Oz* (more than 75% of the respondents claimed to recognize them). The other three examples: *Catch-22*, *Kryptonite*, and *Gilead* are less likely to be recognized (about 50% or fewer). Of these, two scored less than 50%, while *Kryptonite* scored 52%.

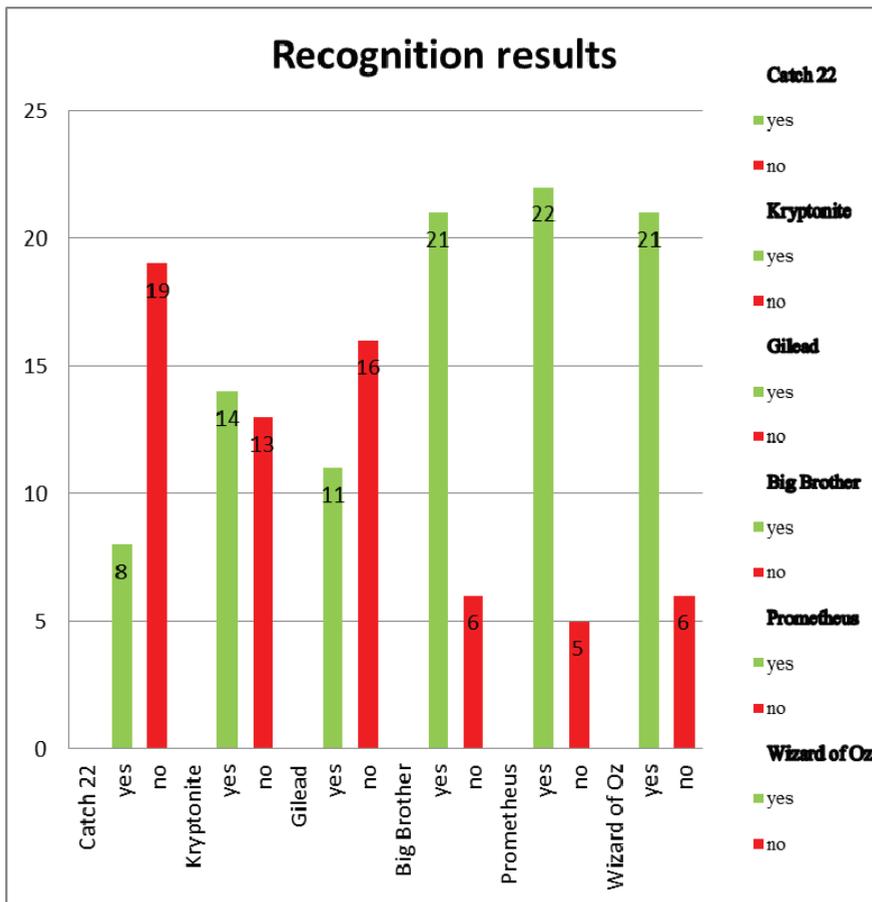


Figure 3: Recognition results by examples.

In terms of definition, two examples (*catch-22* and *Gilead*), which were less commonly recognized as intertextual, received significantly fewer attempts at the definition (33% or fewer), while the other four examples received more than 70% of attempts to define the respective phenomenon. Detailed information on definition attempts is contained in Figure 4.

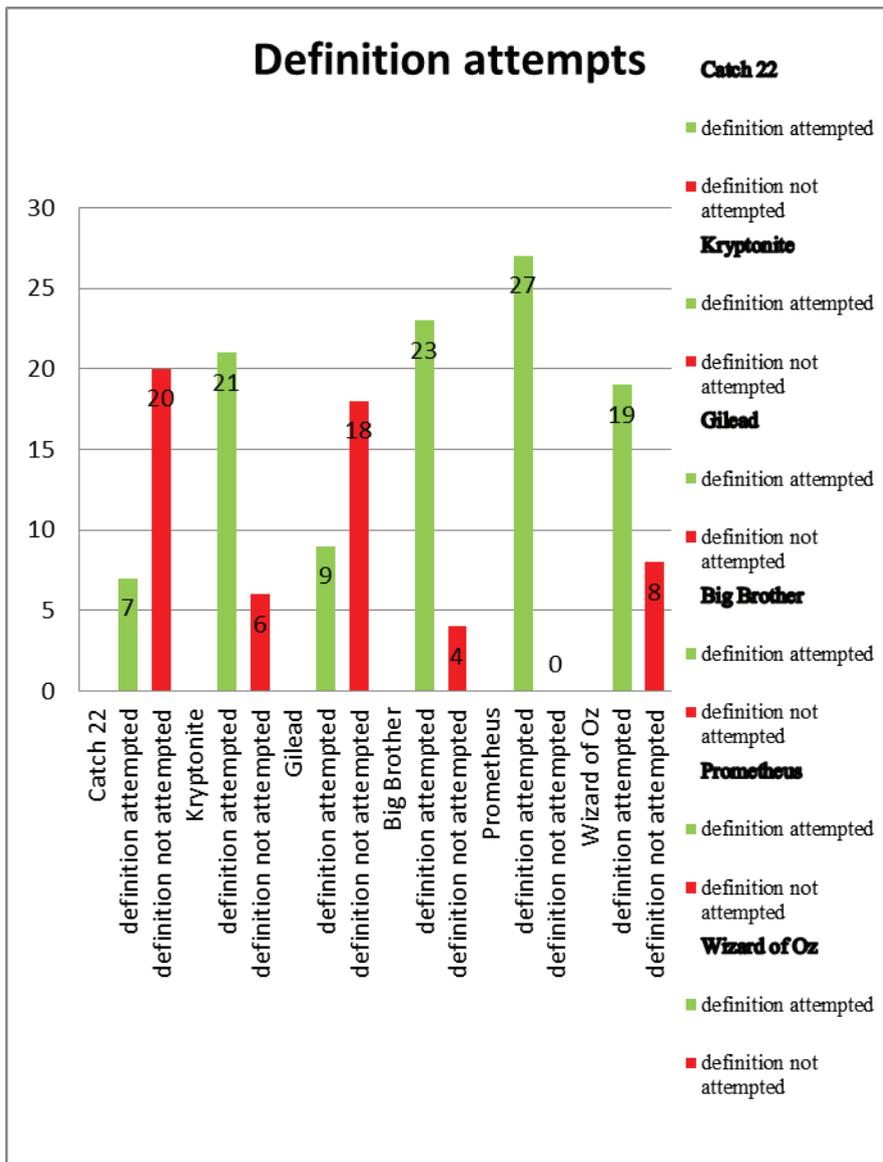


Figure 4. Definition results by examples.

In terms of replacement attempts, the general trend remained the same (the more recognized examples received more attempts at replacement), the only exception is the *Wizard of Oz* example, which the respondents overall

were less willing to substitute (44% replacement attempts). Detailed information is provided in Figure 5.

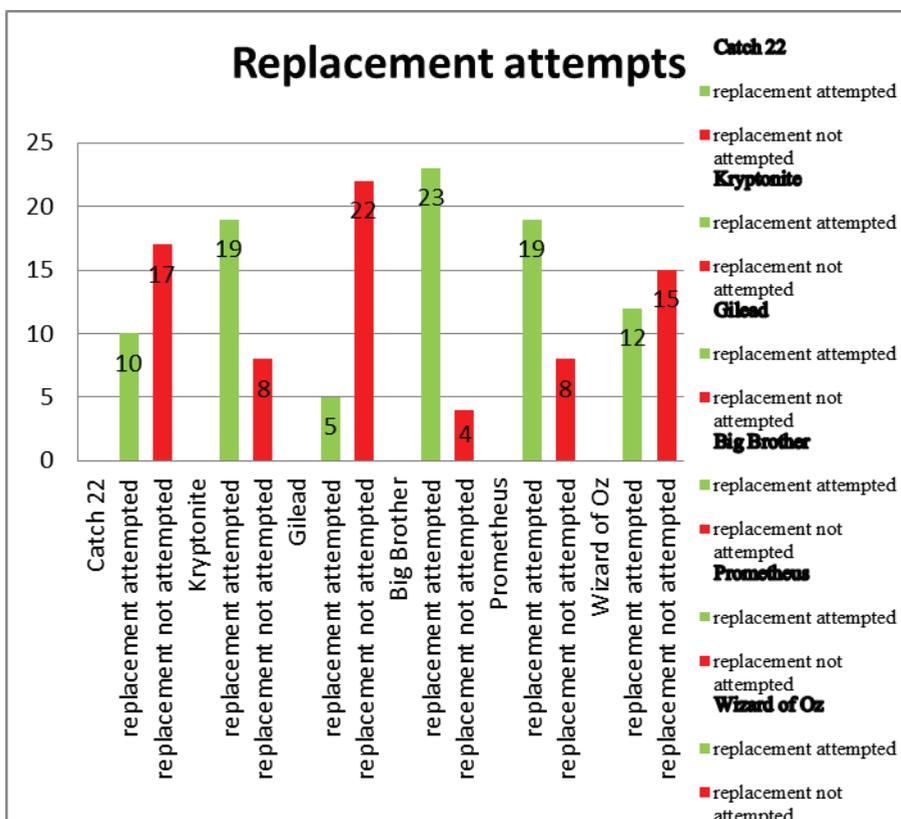


Figure 5: Replacement results by examples.

In this part of our paper, we generally described the results of the survey. This article’s focus is on the quantitative results of the surveys: (1) total results including cumulative data on all responses, (2) results split by each example. It should be noted that the research includes the qualitative data from the responses, however, those results are beyond the scope of the current article’s focus.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Interpretation of total results

As can be seen from Table 1, even though about 60% of the responses were treated as “recognized” there are deviations from this number in the definition attempted section (65%) and replacement attempted section (54%). Hence, the respondents were defining 5% more fragments than they recognized as intertextual and replacing 6% fewer segments than what they recognized as intertextuality. However, these data do not fully represent the results, because when we look specifically at the responses, we can find many instances when even though the answer to the first question was affirmative, there were no attempts to either define or replace the phenomenon. Similarly, when respondents answered negatively, they sometimes still tried to define and/or replace the intertextual segment. This was the reason why we provided more detailed information in Tables 2 and 3, as well as Figures 1 and 2.

Within these results (Figure 1 and Figure 2), we can see certain trends that emerged from the quantitative analysis of the responses. The green and the red categories reconfirm the respective answers to the first question (‘yes’ to recognition + attempt to define/replace, or ‘no’ to recognition + no attempt to define/replace). The blue category shows incongruence between the “yes” answers and attempts to define/replace, while the yellow category similarly shows incongruence between the “no” answers and attempts to define/replace. We can observe that the trend within “no” results is consistent for both definition and replacement results (25% + 15%), however, within the “yes” results we can see a drop in the green category by 10% and respectively an increase in the blue category between definition and replacement results. Thus, we can claim that the respondents that recognize intertextual references are more likely to define them than try to replace them within the same fragment. As has been mentioned in the literature review section, there have been attempts by scholars to provide a theoretical explanation for how utterances with intertextual fragments are perceived by readers. The explanation that is given most often is that in actual speech interlocutors construct *ad hoc* concepts that help them interpret such an utterance. Then, through multiple forward and backward inferences, the meaning that satisfies the recipient’s expectation of relevance is achieved by the recipient (Velykoroda, 2012: 140; Wilson & Sperber, 2000: 244). The results presented in Figures 1 and 2 show that, within the recognition affirmative responses, 10% more respondents tried to define (hence, understand/interpret) an intertextual segment than to replace this segment with a synonym (marked in green (50% vs. 40%) and blue (10% vs. 20%) colors in the figures). No other categories which we defined from the survey results

demonstrated such significant fluctuations. In fact, the blue category doubled in the replacement responses. The trend to less often replace than define a recognized phenomenon indicates that even though the respondents attempt to interpret an intertextual segment, they seem to treat it as somewhat irreplaceable in this given context. This could be the result of the status of precedent-related phenomena as paragons or model linguistic expressions of certain ideas or concepts when other synonymous forms seem inferior to what is expressed by the precedent-related phenomenon.

## 5.2. Interpretation of results by citations

The results of each citation give a better insight into how the respondents treated each intertextual reference. As has been mentioned in the methodology section of the article, we intended to choose intertextual references that would come from the most diverse sources. One observation that comes to mind after looking at the results is that there is not necessarily any significant relation between the chronological “age” of a phenomenon and its recognition or attempts at defining/replacing (see Figures 3, 4, 5). Clearly, even though *Prometheus* is chronologically the oldest one both in terms of when it first appeared and when it first entered the English language and the native language of the respondents, it is recognized and defined/replaced within the same frames as the other more recognized and defined/replaced phenomena: *Big Brother*, *Kryptonite*, *Wizard of Oz*. However, the two examples which scored fewer affirmative responses in recognition (*catch-22* and *Gilead*) are both newer than the other four examples. Yet, one important thing to consider here is the native language cultural awareness of the respondents. All of the respondents are homogeneous in terms of language, culture, and age. Consequently, in their native culture, Ukrainian, none of the examples were popularly known until at least the early 1990s, as before that time their country was behind the “Iron Curtain” and all Western cultural artifacts (except for *Prometheus*) were banned or heavily censored (consider even the plagiarized version of the *Wizard of Oz* which was known in the culture as *the Wizard of the Emerald City*). This means that the difference in the age of the precedent-related phenomena should not be a decisive factor, as *Big Brother* (from 1948) or *Gilead* (1985) or the other examples entered their culture only after 1991.

Furthermore, the age of the respondents is another important factor that could have influenced their answer choices. As has been mentioned above, all of the respondents are representatives of Gen Z. While their knowledge of some particular phenomenon might seem vague, their exposure to them is possible. Gen Z is characterized by a high level of digital nativeness, and various examples brought by the researchers could have been recognized because of their usage in present-time digital environments, not necessarily

literary works from the past. However, it is worth noting that due to Ukraine's political and historical background, having been part of the Soviet Union before 1991, we suspect that this particular student population might have been only recently exposed to the examples used in this study to test intertextuality.

Since we have removed chronological age as a factor influencing the recognizability of the phenomenon, we would like to claim that this recognizability may have an indirect relation to their age. The earlier a phenomenon becomes precedent-related, the more likely it is to be used in other secondary discourses and the more likely the speakers are going to be exposed to it in these discourses. For instance, *Kryptonite* is used in many contemporary films, and even though the speakers may not have been exposed to the original stories about Superman, they must have read it in secondary works of art or seen it in the digital world. The same goes for the other examples (e.g., TV show *Big Brother*, a more modern film, or theatrical versions of *The Wizard of Oz*). It is obvious that the respondents must have encountered most of these phenomena, not necessarily in their original form, but through secondary instances of their use.

Now we would like to interpret the results across the examples and describe more specifically the tendencies we have observed.

The overall trend that seems to emerge from the results could be formulated as follows: (1) the less often recognized phenomena (*Gilead* and *catch-22*) are less commonly defined than claimed to be recognized; (2) the more often recognized phenomena (*Prometheus*, *Big Brother*, *Kryptonite*) are more commonly defined than claimed to be recognized; (3) overall the trend is to attempt less often to replace a precedent-related phenomenon irrespective of whether they are more or less commonly recognized.

The definition question deals more with whether the respondent knows the phenomenon, whether he/she has heard of it and is able to interpret it in or outside of this context. The replacement question deals more with whether the respondent is able to interpret this specific unit in the context where it is naturally used. In other words, definition dealt more with the speaker's background knowledge, while replacement dealt more with their willingness and/or whether they have sufficient interpretative resources to search for a plausible meaning in this specific context. Here, our observation has been that both, more recognized examples (*Prometheus*, *Wizard of Oz*), and less recognized examples (*Gilead*, *Kryptonite*), are more often defined, but less often replaced. One example (*Big Brother*) showed no variation between definition and replacement attempts. Only one example (*catch-22*) showed a reverse pattern – it was less often defined, however more often replaced. Also, one example (*Wizard of Oz*) was both more commonly recognized and defined, however, only 44% of the respondents attempted to replace it. The

domination of definitions over replacements is an indication of the speakers' trend to search for the meaning of the precedent-related phenomenon, however unwillingness to replace it, because the precedent-related phenomenon is already the best word that is used in the context, and any substitutions may seem inferior to what is used in the original utterance.

One other implication is that the recognition question is not a very reliable indicator of whether the readers are aware of intertextuality. Hypothetically, when a participant is asked about intertextuality, he or she may tend to think they see it, though when it comes to explaining this segment, they are either unable or unwilling to do so. And a reverse pattern has been noticed for situations when the recipients claim not to see intertextuality: they may nevertheless still be able to interpret it and attempt to arrive at a plausible understanding of the utterance. This is reflected in the "blue" and "yellow" sections in Figures 1 and 2 (in total 25% in recognition vs. definition results and 35% in recognition vs. replacement results).

## 6. Conclusions

In this study, we attempted to broaden a given limited interest to readers' perspectives of intertextuality by surveying 27 Ukrainian Gen Z respondents. In particular, we were interested whether readers can recognize, interpret, substitute the reference, or fail to do so. In the scenario that the reader failed to connect the reference with another text, we wanted to know if they can still make sense of the content. The findings of the study suggest that the participants who recognized the reference were also usually able to define (84%) and replace (66%) them. However, we also noticed that replacement occurred less frequently than the definition of the phenomenon. This could be due to the fact that the participants viewed examples as self-sufficient, or model and, therefore, hard to substitute. It is also evident from the data that the readers who claim to recognize the phenomenon oftentimes could not provide the definition (16%) or replacement (34%). However, some of those who did not recognize intertextuality were still attempting to provide a definition (38%) or replace (37%) it. This finding supports our second hypothesis "even when they are not recognized as references to other texts, readers are still capable of attempting to interpret them within the given context."

As regards the first hypothesis, we intended to understand whether intertextual references are necessarily regarded as such. According to the results of the survey, we can see that among the respondents who did not recognize intertextual references, still 38% tried to define and 39% tried to replace them in the context. A thorough qualitative analysis should be conducted within these responses to see whether these attempts at definition and replacement have produced results that are similar to the conventional

meaning of these references. Currently, within the given numbers we see that despite claiming not to recognize intertextual references in segments from media texts, nearly 40% of the respondents are able to provide either definitions or replacements. This suggests that intertextual references are not necessarily recognized as such, but their meaning may still be known to the recipient.

One additional finding that has emerged from the research was the discrepancy between recognitions vs. definitions (10%) and recognitions vs. replacements (20%) results in the affirmative recognition category. One possible explanation could be that the respondents had recognized a “wrong” segment as intertextual. However, a significant increase in failed replacements compared to failed definitions (from 10% to 20%) may be an indication that the respondents are better aware of the meaning of an intertextual reference than they are willing to replace it in this context. This is an indication of the status of precedent-related phenomena as paragons or model linguistic expressions in a certain cultural community. In other words, there are twice as many speakers who try to define a phenomenon than those who are ready to substitute it with another expression. This could be due to the fact that any kind of rephrasing would be inferior to the idea expressed in a certain context with a precedent-related phenomenon.

The overall results suggest that even a non-native speaking community generally tends to claim to recognize (60%), define (65%), and replace (54%) intertextual references. An interesting trend is becoming evident in the interpretation of precedent-related phenomena by each example. There seem to be significantly better recognized, more often defined, and more commonly replaced phenomena. The highest scores were shown by phenomena originating from classical literature, children's literature, popular culture, while more modern literary sources may give lower results. Overall, despite minor deviations, more commonly recognized phenomena (*Kryptonite*, *Big Brother*, *Prometheus*, *Wizard of Oz*) received more definition and replacement attempts, while less commonly recognized phenomena (*catch-22*, *Gilead*) received fewer attempts at definition and replacement.

This particular article focused on the quantitative results of the collected data. We are further looking into the qualitative data to find patterns that would shed light on the peculiarities of participants' definition attempts as well as provide us with a more nuanced look at each particular example and its understanding by the participant. Further, a more detailed qualitative study will focus on the specific answers provided by speakers, and we will compare them to what is the “intended” meaning of a precedent-related phenomenon and then see to what extent the respondents are able to “properly” interpret such utterances in media discourse. The combination of the qualitative and quantitative results will enable the researchers to provide

a holistic overview of the study with concrete steps and application to the pedagogical field.

## 7. Limitations

It is important to acknowledge major limitations that can further lead to future research directions. One of the limitations was the population of the study and the number of participants. All of the participants were non-native speakers of English. It would be productive to replicate this study with a native speaker population or with other non-native speaking communities of similar age groups and educational backgrounds to get their perspective on intertextuality in media discourse. The number of participants was another limiting factor, and more participants should be recruited if conducting a similar study to draw more generalizable conclusions. As our study looked at Gen Z students, it would be beneficial to look at a different generation of participants and see whether their results differ and in what ways. Lastly, our study included precedent-related phenomena from one particular media discourse source – *Time* magazine. Future studies can include other printed, or digital media to find out whether there are any differences across content or intended audiences of the venues in terms of their representation of intertextuality. Lastly, we are aware that when the respondents give an affirmative recognition answer, they may in fact recognize a wrong segment as intertextual. This may have some impact on our results, however, as has been stated above, the recognition question has turned out to be not a very reliable indicator of whether the readers are actually aware of intertextuality. This is going to be the subject of future papers that will look in more detail into the qualitative results of the survey, as such responses will fall in the same category as “wrong” (or unintended by the author) definitions and/or replacements.

Finally, intertextuality in media discourse can be used as a way to increase critical thinking, develop media literacy, check the background knowledge of the students; it can be utilized in second language classrooms, the field of composition, and applied linguistics to teach about peculiarities of languages and discourses. This study is an attempt to provide empirical data on how intertextuality is perceived by readers of media texts. Further research should be conducted to obtain qualitative results of this study, and most importantly, to test these results in other environments.

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