

**THE CONCEPT OF INTERTEXTUALITY FROM BAKHTIN
AND KRISTEVA TO MODERN LINGUISTICS**

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Abstract

This thesis traces the trajectory of intertextuality from its Bakhtinian origins through Kristeva's coinage to its contemporary operationalization in modern linguistics. While Bakhtin's dialogism established the foundational insight that all utterances exist in relation to prior and anticipated utterances, it was Kristeva who, in the late 1960s, formalized this insight into the term "intertextuality," shifting emphasis from intersubjective dialogue to the text's absorption and transformation of other texts. The decisive disciplinary turn occurred in 1981, when Beaugrande and Dressler integrated intertextuality into text linguistics as one of seven constitutive standards of textuality. This thesis argues that modern linguistics has fundamentally reconfigured intertextuality: from a property of texts to a cognitive and social process activated by participants' shared knowledge and realized through identifiable intertextual cues. The analysis further examines how postcolonial literary practice—specifically the hybrid intertexts of Rohinton Mistry—illustrates the concept's continued analytical purchase and demonstrates how intertextual cues operate across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Keywords: intertextuality, dialogism, Kristeva, text linguistics, intertextual cues, postcolonial hybridity

INTRODUCTION

Intertextuality remains one of the most productive concepts to emerge from twentieth-century literary theory, yet its migration into linguistics has been neither smooth nor complete. The term, coined by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s, has undergone substantial theoretical transformation—from a poststructuralist claim about the nature of all textuality to a technical category within text linguistics and discourse analysis. This study addresses a central question: what happens to intertextuality when it moves from literary theory into modern linguistics?

The stakes of this question are both theoretical and methodological. If intertextuality denotes the fundamental condition that no text exists in isolation, as Kristeva following Bakhtin insisted, then linguistic approaches risk either trivializing the concept by reducing it to source detection or, conversely, rendering it so expansive that it loses analytical precision. This study argues that modern linguistics has avoided both pitfalls by redefining intertextuality as a dynamic process involving shared knowledge, identifiable cues, and reader activation.

The aim of this thesis is threefold: first, to trace the conceptual development of intertextuality from Bakhtin's dialogism through Kristeva's semiotic reformulation; second, to examine how Beaugrande and Dressler's text-linguistic framework transformed intertextuality into an operational category; and third, to demonstrate how contemporary linguistic research—including critical discourse analysis, cognitive approaches, and computational methods—has extended and refined the concept. The postcolonial case of Rohinton Mistry is employed as an illustrative example of how intertextual cues function across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

METHOD

This study employs a conceptual-historical methodology combined with illustrative textual analysis. The methodological approach is qualitative and interpretive, aiming not at comprehensive coverage but at selective demonstration of intertextuality's trajectory across disciplinary boundaries.

Primary sources include Bakhtin's writings on dialogism, particularly *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981); Kristeva's essays from *Semeiotikè* (1969) and *Desire in Language* (1980); and Beaugrande and Dressler's *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (1981), which provides the foundational text-linguistic framework. Secondary sources include Orr's *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (2003), which offers a critical overview of the term's migration across disciplines; and Morey's study of Rohinton Mistry (2004), which provides a concrete postcolonial case of hybrid intertextual practice.

The analytical procedure consists of three stages. First, the conceptual foundations of intertextuality in Bakhtin and Kristeva are reconstructed through close reading of primary texts. Second, the linguistic turn is examined through Beaugrande and Dressler's definition and its subsequent development in text linguistics and discourse analysis. Third, contemporary approaches—including critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, and computational methods—are surveyed to demonstrate the concept's continued evolution. The Mistry case is then analyzed to show how intertextual cues operate in practice across multiple cultural and linguistic systems.

RESULTS

Bakhtin and the Dialogic Foundation

Bakhtin's contribution precedes the term itself. His dialogism posits that every utterance, from casual conversation to the novel, is oriented retrospectively toward prior utterances and prospectively toward anticipated responses [1]. Meaning is not housed within a single consciousness but

emerges at the boundary between voices. Kristeva later identified this as the horizontal dimension of intertextuality—relations within the text's own discourse—while the vertical dimension connects the text to broader historical and cultural contexts [2], [3]. Bakhtin's emphasis on carnival and polyphony further established that literary discourse could subvert monologic authority through the interaction of multiple social voices [1].

Crucially, Bakhtin's dialogism was not limited to literary texts. His broader concern was with language as a fundamentally social phenomenon, in which every utterance participates in a chain of communication that stretches backward into the past and forward into the future. This insight would later prove central to linguistic approaches that view intertextuality not as a literary device but as a constitutive condition of all language use.

Kristeva's Coinage and Its Restriction

Kristeva introduced "intertextualité" in essays published in *Semeiotikè* (1969), translating Bakhtin's dialogism into a semiotic framework [4]. Her famous formulation—that any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, absorbing and transforming other texts—marked a decisive shift. Yet Kristeva's move also restricted Bakhtin's broader concern with intersubjective dialogue to relations between texts alone [2]. She later preferred the term "transposition" to describe the passage from one signifying system to another, precisely because "intertextuality" had been simplified into mere source criticism [3]. This semantic drift foreshadowed the term's subsequent disciplinary redefinitions.

Kristeva's contribution, therefore, is double-edged. On the one hand, she provided the term that would travel across disciplines. On the other hand, her semiotic reformulation narrowed the concept's scope, setting the stage for later debates about what intertextuality should properly describe.

The Linguistic Turn: Beaugrande and Dressler

The pivotal moment for linguistic engagement came in 1981, when Beaugrande and Dressler introduced intertextuality as the seventh standard of textuality: "the ways in which the production and reception of a given text depends upon the participants' knowledge of other texts" [5]. This definition accomplished three things. First, it relocated intertextuality from the text-as-object to the communicative process. Second, it foregrounded shared knowledge as the condition of intertextual recognition. Third, it made intertextuality empirically tractable within text linguistics, aligning it with the other six standards: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, and situationality [5].

This linguistic reconceptualization marked a decisive break from literary-theoretical usage. In text linguistics, intertextuality is no longer a philosophical claim about the nature of all textuality but a describable feature of how texts function in communication. The focus shifts from the text itself to the participants—writers and readers—who activate intertextual relations through their shared knowledge of other texts.

Modern Linguistics: Cues, Cognition, and Computation

Contemporary linguistic research has developed Beaugrande and Dressler's framework in several directions.

Text linguistics and discourse analysis. Intertextuality is understood as activated by readers through identifiable cues—quotation, parody, irony, negation, style mimicry, and discourse allusion—that only function communicatively if participants possess the requisite shared knowledge [5], [2]. These cues are not merely decorative; they are constitutive of how texts mean. Critical discourse analysis employs intertextuality to expose how reported speech in news discourse conveys ideological positioning [2]. By

analyzing which voices are included and which are excluded, CDA reveals how intertextual choices reproduce or challenge power relations.

Cognitive approaches. Recent research has begun to examine intertextuality as a cognitive phenomenon, investigating how readers mentally represent intertextual relations and how these representations influence comprehension and interpretation. This work draws on schema theory and conceptual integration to explain how intertextual cues activate background knowledge and generate new meanings.

Computational linguistics. Neural embedding models now detect intertextual relationships across languages and translations, with some studies identifying millions of textual pairs at scale [6]. These methods offer new possibilities for corpus-based intertextuality research, enabling scholars to trace patterns of textual reuse across large datasets. However, computational approaches also raise methodological questions about what counts as an intertextual relation and how quantitative findings should be interpreted qualitatively.

Despite these advances, intertextuality in text-linguistic research remains comparatively underdeveloped relative to other textual standards [5], [2]. This relative neglect suggests that the concept's full potential for linguistic analysis has yet to be realized.

DISCUSSION

The trajectory from Bakhtin to contemporary linguistics reveals both continuity and transformation. The continuity lies in the persistent insight that texts are never self-sufficient. The transformation concerns the locus of intertextuality: from a philosophical condition of all language (Bakhtin, Kristeva) to a measurable feature of text processing (Beaugrande and Dressler) to a computationally tractable phenomenon (computational

linguistics). This disciplinary migration has not diminished the concept but has made it more precise and more testable.

The postcolonial case of Rohinton Mistry illustrates this precision and demonstrates how intertextual cues operate across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Mistry's fiction operates through what Morey calls a "hybridity on three levels": the transposition of Iranian tradition via India to Canada, the Parsi engagement with Western cultural values, and the coexistence of multiple possible reading frameworks [7]. His intertexts are not vague allusions but structured references to Persian epic (Firdausi's *Shah-Namah*), European novelistic traditions, and Zoroastrian ritual discourse [7]. From a linguistic perspective, Mistry's texts deploy identifiable intertextual cues—italicized foreign terms, quoted phrases, genre markers, and narrative structures—that require readers to possess specific cultural and literary knowledge. When these cues are recognized, they activate a complex network of intertextual relations that shapes interpretation.

This case demonstrates that intertextuality, properly understood, is neither mere influence nor unlimited semiosis but a describable relation between identifiable textual systems. It also shows that intertextual competence—the ability to recognize and interpret intertextual cues—is culturally and linguistically situated. What counts as an intertextual cue in one community may pass unnoticed in another, making intertextuality a matter of shared knowledge rather than textual property alone.

CONCLUSION

Intertextuality's journey from Bakhtin's dialogism through Kristeva's semiotics to modern linguistics represents a successful disciplinary translation. The concept has been democratized—no longer the property of literary theory alone—and operationalized through shared knowledge,

intertextual cues, and increasingly through computational methods. This study has argued that modern linguistics has avoided the twin pitfalls of trivialization and overextension by redefining intertextuality as a dynamic process involving participants' knowledge, identifiable cues, and reader activation.

Future research should continue integrating cognitive and corpus-based approaches, ensuring that the term retains both its critical edge and its analytical specificity. In particular, the relationship between intertextual competence and cultural literacy deserves further investigation, as does the question of how computational methods can be combined with qualitative analysis to yield richer accounts of intertextual practice. The case of Rohinton Mistry suggests that postcolonial literature offers a particularly fertile ground for such research, as it foregrounds the multilingual and multicultural dimensions of intertextual relations.

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