



INTERTEXTUALITY IN NEWSPAPER DISCOURSE (A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HYBRID MEDIA CONTEXTS)

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Abstract

Intertextuality is a key meaning-making mechanism in newspaper discourse, enabling texts to draw on prior cultural, political, and media narratives. With the emergence of digital journalism, the nature of intertextual practices has fundamentally changed, expanding from classical institutional references to multimodal, hyperlinked, and socially generated intertexts. This study conducts a comparative analysis of intertextuality in print and online newspapers within hybrid media contexts. A corpus of 60 articles from *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Xalq so'zi* (print), and their online counterparts (guardian.com, nytimes.com, xs.uz) was examined. Results show that online newspapers demonstrate higher intertextual density and greater reliance on digital mediatexts (hyperlinks, social-media posts, memes), whereas print newspapers rely predominantly on political, historical, and literary intertexts to establish authority. These findings reveal that hybrid media discourse not only transforms the form and function of intertextuality, but also reshapes journalistic strategies of persuasion, contextualization, and ideological framing.

Keywords: Intertextuality; newspaper discourse; hybrid media system; print and online journalism; digital mediatexts; critical discourse analysis; ideological framing; Uzbek and English press



INTRODUCTION

Newspaper discourse has long been recognized as a central arena of public communication, mediating political, social, and cultural narratives through structured linguistic and semiotic choices. One of the foundational mechanisms through which newspapers construct meaning is *intertextuality*, understood as the incorporation, transformation, or evocation of prior texts within a new communicative context [8]. In the media sphere, intertextuality operates not merely as a stylistic device, but as a powerful ideological instrument shaping how events are framed, legitimized, and interpreted.

Classical theoretical perspectives—most notably, Bakhtin’s dialogism and Barthes’s notion of textual plurality—view intertextuality as an intrinsic property of discourse. These ideas were later applied to media by Fairclough, who argued that news texts gain authority by embedding official documents, institutional voices, and culturally shared narratives. Van Dijk further emphasizes that intertextual references in news discourse serve as cognitive anchors guiding audience interpretation.

However, the rise of digital journalism has significantly transformed the landscape of intertextual practices. Online news platforms incorporate multimodal, interactive, and instantaneous forms of intertextuality—hyperlinks, social-media posts, comment threads, embedded videos, and algorithmically circulated mediatexts. This shift aligns with Chadwick’s conceptualization of the hybrid media system, in which digital and traditional media coexist, interact, and mutually reshape journalistic practices.

Despite the growth of research on digital journalism, there remains a lack of systematic comparative analysis of how intertextuality functions differently in print and online newspapers within hybrid media contexts. Given intertextuality’s substantial role in meaning-construction, persuasion, and ideological framing, examining its hybrid evolution is essential for understanding contemporary media discourse.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a systematic comparative analysis of intertextuality in traditional print newspapers and online newspapers, with particular attention to how hybrid media environments shape contemporary journalistic practices. By examining a corpus of print and digital news texts, the



study seeks to identify the dominant types of intertextuality used across these two formats, the functional roles such intertexts serve, and the broader discursive patterns through which they operate. Special emphasis is placed on uncovering the ideological implications of intertextual choices, since references to political statements, institutional documents, social-media posts, or viral mediatexts may exert different persuasive or legitimizing effects depending on the medium.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The concept of intertextuality originates in structuralist and post-structuralist literary theory. Kristeva famously defines every text as a “mosaic of quotations,” [8] building on Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism, according to which discourse is always oriented toward prior and anticipated utterances [2]. Barthes similarly argues that texts are woven from multiple cultural codes and prior discourses, displacing the “author” as the sole source of meaning [3]. Genette later systematizes transtextual relations by distinguishing intertextuality (quotation, allusion), paratextuality (titles, headlines, captions), metatextuality (commentary on other texts), hypertextuality (transformations, rewritings), and architextuality (generic frames) [7]. Allen synthesizes these approaches and emphasizes that intertextuality is not confined to literature, but is a general property of cultural communication [1]. On this basis, newspaper discourse can be viewed as a space in which political speeches, institutional documents, social-media posts, memes, and historical narratives are continuously invoked and recombined.

Within critical discourse analysis, intertextuality has become a central tool for examining media power. Fairclough treats intertextuality as a key mechanism through which fragments of other texts are selectively incorporated and recontextualized in ways that reproduce or challenge power relations, embedding institutional, political and expert voices as “common sense” [5;6]. Van Dijk’s work on news discourse shows that quotations, allusions and source choices are ideologically patterned: they foreground some actors and perspectives while marginalizing others, as part of a broader socio-cognitive process of meaning construction. Empirical studies of newspapers [9] demonstrate that genres such as editorials, reports and opinion pieces mobilize different constellations of quotations and allusions, while other research links recurrent intertextual



references to national identity, conflict framing and ideological polarization. In this line of work, intertextuality is seen not as value-neutral ornamentation, but as a mechanism of ideological reproduction and, at times, resistance.

The transition from print to digital journalism has further transformed how intertextuality operates. Online news is inherently hypertextual and multimodal: articles integrate internal and external hyperlinks, embedded videos, interactive elements and social-media content, creating dense networks of explicit intertextual connection. Research on journalistic hyperlinking shows that links function as citations, contextual expansions and evidential supports, while also contributing to the semantic architecture of online news texts. Social-media posts and viral memes have become routine intertexts, expanding the repertoire beyond traditional official documents and elite statements. At the level of media systems, Chadwick's (2013) notion of the hybrid media system highlights the interpenetration of "old" and "new" media logics, as news circulates across print, broadcast and digital platforms, being continuously reframed and re-intertextualized. Yet, despite these advances, there remains a clear gap: relatively few studies systematically compare intertextual practices in print and online newspapers within a single hybrid framework, or examine how digital affordances reshape the types, functions and ideological implications of intertextuality—especially in non-Anglophone contexts. The present study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of intertextuality in print and online newspaper discourse.

This study uses a small mixed-method design to compare intertextuality in print and online newspaper discourse.

Corpus. The data comprise 60 articles published between 2023–2025: 30 print texts (*The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Xalq so'zi*) and 30 online texts (guardian.com, nytimes.com, kun.uz, daryo.uz). Articles were purposively selected from political and public-affairs sections and had a minimum length of 600 words.

Analysis. Drawing on intertextual theory (Kristeva, Genette, Allen) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, Van Dijk), each article was manually coded for: (1) type of intertext (quotation, document, historical/literary reference, social-media item, meme, hyperlink); and (2) function (contextualization,



legitimization, evaluation, engagement). Descriptive counts were used to compare intertextual density and types across print and online texts, followed by close qualitative reading of selected examples to interpret their discursive and ideological implications.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In the comparative corpus, intertextual references appeared substantially more often in online texts than in print, with digital articles typically containing roughly twice as many intertexts per article. Even when covering similar topics (governance, political reform, media regulation), online stories tended to layer direct quotations, references to earlier coverage, hyperlinks and mentions of social-media reactions, whereas print versions usually relied on a few institutional and expert voices. This confirms that online news is structurally more open to intertextual expansion: hyperlinks, embedded content and the competition for clicks encourage journalists to multiply textual connections and include social-media and user-generated intertexts.

Across both English and Uzbek print newspapers, intertextuality was dominated by institutional and political references: presidential speeches, government documents, reports of international organizations and, in Anglophone contexts, historically canonical figures. A series of Uzbek print articles on public administration, for example, repeatedly cite President Mirziyoyev's slogan that "*Xalq davlat idoralariga emas, davlat idoralari xalqqa xizmat qilishi kerak*" ("It is not the people who should serve state bodies, but state bodies that should serve the people"), using this formula as a stable intertextual anchor for discussions of administrative reform. In British commentary pieces, references to Churchill's wartime speeches similarly elevate current political decisions by framing them as continuations of nationally "tested" historical lessons. In such cases, intertextuality functions primarily to legitimize and stabilize policy narratives by tying them to authoritative, leader-centred or historically prestigious discourses. In online newspapers, by contrast, digital mediatexts emerged as a central intertextual resource. Articles on *guardian.com* or *nytimes.com* frequently reference posts on X (formerly Twitter), platform debates or earlier viral content when framing political stories—for instance, describing how Elon Musk uses X



“as a platform to make aggressive interventions” in politics, which presupposes an entire background of tweets, memes and online controversies as intertext. Uzbek newspaper outlets, including the online edition of *Xalq so‘zi* (xs.uz), similarly describe certain policy initiatives or public controversies as “qizg‘in muhokama qilinmoqda” (hotly debated) or note that they “ijtimoiy tarmoqlarda keng muhokama qilindi” (were widely discussed on social media). For instance, coverage of proposed tax reforms and high-profile judicial decisions on xs.uz explicitly states that these issues have been intensively debated in social networks, signalling that the story is embedded in a wider network of online commentary and citizen reaction. These brief formulations act as meta-intertexts, importing the perceived “voice of the people” into the article. Here intertextuality serves less to anchor authority and more to dramatize events, display public reaction and enhance engagement.

Overall, the comparison shows that print intertextuality is vertical and institution-centred, foregrounding authority, continuity and ideological anchoring, whereas online intertextuality is horizontal and network-centred, foregrounding affect, immediacy and participation. At the same time, the two formats operate within a hybrid media system: print outlets increasingly summarize online debates, while online outlets routinely cite official speeches and documents. For journalists, intertextuality thus becomes a strategic resource that, in print, stabilizes meaning through reference to established texts, and, online, keeps stories open and dynamic by linking them to ongoing digital conversations. This suggests that intertextuality is not only more frequent in online articles, but also more flexible and participatory in function, reflecting the broader shift from one-to-many broadcasting to many-to-many, platform-mediated communication.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined intertextuality in newspaper discourse through a comparative analysis of print and online texts within hybrid media contexts. Based on articles from English- and Uzbek-language outlets, the study showed that online news systematically displays higher intertextual density and a broader range of intertexts than print, indicating that digital environments structurally favour expanded textual connectivity.



The comparison revealed a functional contrast between formats. In print newspapers, intertextuality is largely vertical and institution-centred, drawing on presidential speeches, government documents, international reports and canonical historical figures to legitimize policies and anchor current events in authoritative narratives. In online newspapers, intertextuality is more horizontal and network-centred: hyperlinks, social-media posts, viral memes and platform debates are used to dramatize events, foreground public reaction and enhance immediacy and participation. Thus, print intertextuality tends to stabilize meaning, whereas online intertextuality keeps stories open, contested and dynamically embedded in ongoing digital conversations.

At a broader level, the findings confirm that newspaper discourse today operates within a hybrid media system. Print outlets increasingly respond to online debates, while online outlets still rely on traditional institutional intertexts. Intertextuality therefore emerges as a strategic resource through which journalists negotiate between older authority-based news logics and newer platform-based logics of visibility and engagement. Although limited in scope, the study underscores that any contemporary account of newspaper discourse must treat intertextuality as a central, medium-sensitive mechanism of meaning-making and ideological framing in hybrid media environments.

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