Manifest Intertextuality and Readability in SLA Handbooks

Fatemeh Parham

Department of English Translation Studies, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract—It is argued that meaning has no originatory source and is the outcome of relationships between texts, or intertextuality, the manifest type of which is cued by concrete references to the works of others in direct or indirect forms. The present research, then, is an attempt to illustrate how intertextual networks are set up in SLA handbooks; manifest intertextuality is in the next phase mapped onto a diachronic axis to see if there is any meaningful pattern regulating intertextuality in the corpus of the study. The obtained results revealed a far greater reliance on contemporary works which may be justified in the light of the constant development of our knowledge of the field. Intertextuality is then examined in the framework of relevance theory to show the possible connections between the intertextual quality of a text and its readability. Since many SLA handbooks serve as textbooks for graduate students, the results of this study can help with measuring the degree of readability of handbooks and their optimality for given students.

Index Terms—manifest intertextuality, vertical intertextuality, SLA handbooks, comprehension

I. INTRODUCTION

It was once believed that a text had an independent meaning to be extracted by readers in a process of interpretation or reading. However, this view is radically challenged in contemporary literary and cultural theories which posit that a work of literature is built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works and hence lacks any kind of independent meaning; the act of reading, then, is plunging into a network of textual relations and the text has become an intertext (Allen, 2000).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Origins of Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a linguistic, artistic, literary and semiotic phenomenon whose presence can be traced even in ancient times. However, as a defined literary theoretical term, it can be said to have its origins in twentieth-century linguistics, particularly in the works of Saussure (Allen, 2000). Saussure emphasized the systematic features of language and established the relational nature of meaning and thus of texts and thereby promoted the notion of intertextuality. Intetextuality has also emerged from the work of Bakhtin (1986, p. 89, quoted in Fairclough, 1992/2006), who observes that all utterances, spoken and written, are demarcated by a change of speaker and are oriented retrospectively to the utterances of the previous speakers and prospectively to the anticipated utterances of the next speakers. Therefore, according to him, each utterance seems to be a link in the chain of speech communication. Both Saussaure and Bakhtin were concerned with the concept of intertextuality, but since neither actually employed the term, often Kristeva is credited with being the inventor of this term and the one who produced the first articulation of intertextual theory. She is influenced by both Bakhtinian and Saussurean models and has attempted to combine their insights and major theories (Allen, 2000).

Kristeva contends that a text is constructed out of already existent discourse and text producers do not create texts from their original minds; rather, they compile their texts from pre-existent texts; Kristeva insists that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they are constructed (Allen, 2000, p. 35). She (1986, p. 39 quoted in Fairclough, 1992/2006) further argues that intertextuality implies the 'insertion of history (society) into a text, meaning that the text absorbs and is built out of texts from the past and the insertion of text into history which denotes that the text responds to, reaccentuates and reworks past texts and thereby helps to make history and contributes to the wider processes of change and to anticipating and trying to shape subsequent texts.

B. Intertextuality Classified

Intertextuality is not a transparent concept and is defined variously by different scholars; thus, opting for a single overarching definition of the term appears to be a futile attempt. A more viable alternative seems to be a thorough look at differing binary and multiple classifications of the concept to enable us appreciate the nuances of this notion.

Horizontal Intertextuality vs. Vertical Intertextuality

Fairclough (1989, quoted in Hatim & Munday, 2004) describes intertextuality as the interaction of text with text and examines the two dimensions of intertextuality as distinguished by Kristeva: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal

intertextuality refers to intertextual relations of a dialogical nature between a text and those which precede and follow it in the chain of texts (Fairclough, 1992/2006); this type of intertextuality involves concrete reference to, or straight quotation from, other texts (Fairclough, 1989, quoted in Hatim & Munday, 2004). Vertical intertextuality, on the other hand, refers to the relations obtained between a text and other texts which form its immediate and distant contexts; these include the texts to which it is historically linked as well as those which are more or less contemporary with it. Therefore, intertextuality can move along a continuum from mere quoting to allusion; allusions or vertical intertextuality are more subtle than the essentially static quotative or horizontal type of intertextuality (Hatim & Munday, 2004).

Manifest Intertextuality vs. Constitutive Intertextuality

French discourse analysts (Authier-Révuz, 1982 and Maingueneau, 1987, quoted in Fairclough, 1992/2006) have made another distinction with regard to the concept of intertextuality – manifest versus constitutive – where the former is the case where specific other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text and are manifestly marked or cued by features on the surface of the text, such as quotation marks, whereas the latter, which Fairclough also calls interdiscursivity, refers to the configuration of discourse conventions – how a discourse type is constituted through a combination of elements of orders of discourse (Fairclough, 1992/2006).

Sequential, Embedded and Mixed Intertextuality

From a different perspective, one can distinguish between three modes of intertextuality, namely sequential, embedded and mixed (Fairclough, 1992/2006). Sequential intertextuality is observable when different types of text or discourse alternate within a text; when one discourse type is clearly contained within the matrix of another type, intertextuality is in an embedded mode; and mixed intertextuality refers to the cases where distinct types of text or discourse are merged in a more complex manner and they are not easily separable.

Transtextuality

Genette, (1997, p. 1, quoted in Allen, 2000) in his approach to poetics, has presented a particular alternative to the concept of intertextuality which he describes as transtextuality. Transtextuality refers to "all that sets a text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts". Genette has employed the concept of transtextuality to chart ways in which texts can be systematically interpreted and understood and he subdivides this cover term into five more specific categories the first of which is intertextuality. Hence, intertextuality is subsumed under the general concept of transtextuality and refers to the relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts and the actual presence of one text within another. In this classification, intertextuality is reduced to issues of quotation, plagiarism and allusion. This seems to be similar to what Fairclough calls manifest intertextuality. Architextuality is the second subdivision of transtextuality and embraces all general or transcendent categories from which singular texts emerge. It has to do with the reader's expectations, and thus their reception of a work; the architextual nature of texts includes generic, modal, thematic and figurative expectations about texts. When a text makes up a relation of commentary to another text, the relation between them is described by Genette as metatextuality; in other words, metatextuality unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it and sometimes even without naming it.

Paratextuality encompasses all those elements which lie on the threshold of the text and helps to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers. The paratext is the sum of the peritext and epitext where the former includes elements such as titles, chapter titles, prefaces and notes and the latter consists of elements outside the text like the interviews, publicity announcements, reviews by and addresses to critiques, private letters as well as other authorial and editorial discussions. In general, manifestations of paratextuality can be observed in the following: the design of the cover, the notice concerning the objectives of the series, the descriptions on the back cover, date of publication, established text intentions (how to read and how not to read), the size of the book, the type face chosen, the manner of naming of the author or the titles of works (thematic or rhematic), dedications, inscriptions, epigraphs and prefaces.

Hypertextuality is the last category subsumed under transtextuality and describes the relationship uniting a text B (hypertext) to an earlier text A (hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary.

C. Intertextuality and Postmodernism

It is generally contended that one of the signs of postmodern condition is the increased awareness of intertextuality where representations of the past and present are displayed together in blurred intertextual relations; in effect, through intertextuality, previously unconnected signs are juxtaposed to create new codes of meaning. (Barker, 2004)

D. Previous Studies on Intertextuality

In the context of language learning and teaching, intertextuality can be conceived of as being linked to language learner, language instructor and the textual material used (see Figure 1).
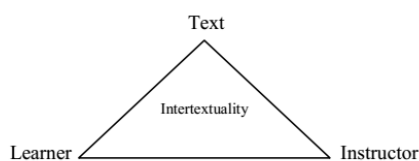
Figure 1 – Intertextuality in Language Learning and Teaching

The studies on intertextuality have each focused on one of these parameters. Intertextuality as a theoretical concept or a framework for the analysis of learner or instructor variables has been the subject of a large number of studies. Hartman (1992), for instance, has considered intertextuality as a postmodern framework to examine language learning environment. He has attempted to offer a reconceptualization of text, reader, author and context in the light of intertextuality. Similarly, Varelas and Pappas (2006) have explored the nature and evolution of intertextuality in classroom environments. Forman (2008) has used the notions of scaffolding and intertextuality as a framework to study bilingual language teaching. How intertextuality crystalizes in language communities or in classroom situations has been the focus of the study by Lemke (1992). Qi (2005) too has discussed the significance of intertextuality in foreign language teaching. He is in the belief that the recognition and analysis of the phenomenon of intertextuality can contribute to the improvement of students' linguistic and communicative competences.

A number of other studies have dealt with learner and instructor variable. For example, Short (1992) examines intertextuality within collaborative classroom learning environment and from the perspective of learner/instructor. When learner variables are concerned, a distinction can be made between developing productive skill vs. receptive skills. Manak (2011) examines the role of intertextuality in developing the learners' productive skill of writing. Similarly, Schulze and Ramirez (2007) have studied intertextuality in the context of language learning, focusing on the development of writing skills. They have examined how elementary English language learners use intertextuality as a resource when composing a text, or in other words as a means of developing their generic competence. In their study, they located instances of manifest intertextuality in the compositions of the subjects in order to understand to what extent they relied on intertextual resources. Their findings suggest strong reliance on intertextual resources. Another research focusing on learner and instructor variables is conducted by Voithofer (2006). He has dealt with intertextuality in online learning environments. The study by Boyd and Miller Maloof (2000) analyzes intertextuality in language classrooms by focusing on teacher-student oral discourse.

How learners apply intertextuality strategies to develop their writings and the relationship between intertextuality and the learners' understanding of a text has been the subject of research carried out by Chi (1995). Likewise, Abasi and Akbari (2008) explored the ways intertextuality can be employed to develop learners' writing skills. They also analyzed the borderline between intertextuality in the form of acceptable borrowing and plagiarism.

As was discussed, the studies on intertextuality in language teaching and learning context have mostly focused on the three parameters: intertextuality as a (theoretical) concept, language learner, and language instructor. There seems to be very few studies which examine intertextuality by focusing on text parameter. Moreover, the possible relationship between the degree of intertextuality of a text and its readability for the learner seems to be under-researched. The present undertaking, thus, attempts to explore intertextuality by focusing on textual materials and to analyze the relationship between the intertextual quality of a text and its readability.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study is an attempt to examine the intertextual networks in handbooks of second or foreign language acquisition. It endeavors to trace the intertextual thread running through these texts to find out how they are populated by the utterances of others and what implications these intertextual networks have for the comprehension of such texts.

A. Corpus

The corpus developed for this study consists of handbooks which are reference works that provide specific information on a subject, in this study, second language acquisition and learning. The researcher had access to a total of twenty handbooks each containing several chapters written by different researchers and scholars, all on SLA. For feasibility purposes, it was decided to limit the corpus of the study to two million words. Therefore, seven handbooks out of twenty were selected randomly, providing a corpus of 2,014,357 words. The selected handbooks are as follows:

1. The Handbook of Applied Linguistics (2004)
2. Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts (2011)
3. Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (2008)
4. Handbook of Language and Social Interaction (2005)
5. Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning (2009)
6. Handbook of Research on Computer-Enhanced Language Acquisition and Learning (2008)
7. Handbook of Research on E-Learning Methodologies for Language Acquisition (2009)

B. Data Collection

According to Fairclough (1992/2006), when the presence of other texts in the text under analysis is manifestly and explicitly cued, the text can be said to have manifest intertextual relations. The present study then, in quest of the degree of manifest intertextuality in SLA handbooks, has focused on such explicit cues, i.e. quotations. The indicators of a quotation are usually the name of an author/translator or the name of a book, plus the date of the publication of the work. Obviously, names could not be searched for. Thus, the dates of publication of other texts drawn upon in the texts under investigation were considered as the signal of an intertextual relation. However, the authors of different chapters of the handbooks had referred to other scholars in two distinct forms. In the first form, the authors had quoted the exact wording of other people which were cued by inverted commas (when the quoted text was short) or by an indented format and with a font size smaller than the main text (when the quoted text was long); these were considered as instances of direct quotations (DQ). Sometimes the authors had drawn on the ideas of other scholars, but instead of using their exact wording, presented them in their own paraphrase; these were considered as cases of indirect quotations (IDQ). The following excerpt is taken from the *Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (2004, p. 2) and contains examples of both direct and indirect quotations. Part One of the excerpt is an example of a direct quotation cued by inverted commas. Part Two is an instance of a direct quotation which is long and is typed in an indented format and with a font size smaller than the regular text. Finally, Part Three shows an instance of indirect quotation where the quoted text and the regular text are mixed. The citation at the end of this part indicates that it has drawn on the work of the scholar cited.

PART ONE: "Applied linguistics is not the recent development that is sometimes supposed, but derives from the involvement of linguists in America, particularly Leonard Bloomfield and Charles C. Fries, in specialized language-teaching programs during and immediately after the Second World War" (Howatt, 1984, p. 265). Within that tradition, applied linguistics has an honorable role:

PART TWO: if there is one single source which has been responsible for stimulating innovation and activity [in language teaching], it is (in one or other of its various guises) applied linguistics. It has not performed miracles, but as a focus of enquiry, critical self-examination, and new ideas, it has enriched the profession at least as much as it has irritated it. (Howatt, 1984, p. 226)

PART THREE: One important source of that enrichment has been the journal Language Learning, published from the University of Michigan, providing a chronicle of the development of applied linguistics over the past 50 years (Catford, 1998).

To collect the data, the electronic versions of the handbooks – in searchable PDF format – were used. Since both direct and indirect quotations were to be located, no particular software could prove helpful. Therefore, the data were collected manually. Dates could be spotted by numbers of almost invariably four digits, starting with 1 (like 1983, 1802, 1769) or with 2 (like 2010). Moreover, it is a common practice in book and paper writing to enclose dates in parentheses. Consequently, the researcher, using the 'find' option of Adobe Acrobat Program, first looked for all instances of parenthesis, i.e. (. The obtained results were checked one by one for two reasons: firstly, it was quite probable for parentheses to be used to indicate something other than quotations, e.g. to give additional explanation; such instances were excluded from the results. Secondly, to decide whether the quotation was of direct or indirect type, by looking for the signs of directness as mentioned above. In the absence of such signals, the quotation was taken as indirect. After a handbook was examined completely from the beginning to the end – with parenthesis as the search item, to make sure the dates which might not be enclosed in parentheses were not overlooked, a new round of search started, first with the keyword '1' and then with '2'. The researcher skipped the results that were enclosed in parentheses and took note of the rest. The instances of both direct and indirect quotations in all seven handbooks were recorded in Microsoft Excel sheets.

Having extracted the dates, the frequencies of each type of quotative references were calculated and tabulated separately for each handbook. These figures are presented in tables 1 to 7.

In the next phase of analysis, all instances of concrete reference were arranged in decades from the most recent (closest to the date of publication) to the oldest (most distant from the date of publication) and presented in separate charts for each handbook; this is to offer a temporal view of intertextuality (i.e. vertical intertextuality).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

I. Handbook 1

The Handbook of Applied Linguistics is published in 2004 by Blackwell Publishing and edited by Davies and Elder. It includes thirty-two chapters written by different scholars. From the total instances of quotations found in this handbook, 15.7% were of direct type and 84.3% were indirect. The chart following the table presents a diachronic display of the intertextual relations in this handbook, illustrating that the authors have relied mostly on contemporary works; that is to say, most references are to works published in the same decade or the two decades before the publication date (shown by a vertical dark arrow).

TABLE 1
THE HANDBOOK OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Total word count	Total Quotations	Instances of DQ	Instances of IDQ	Oldest Date	Date of Publication	Most Recent Date
374,577	2762	435	2327	1582	2004	2003

Figure 2 - Intertextual Relations in Handbook 1
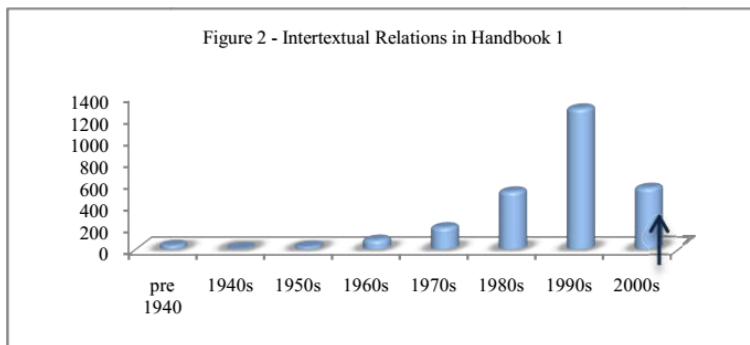
II. Handbook 2

Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts, edited by Lapp and Fisher, is published in 2011 with seven sections and 61 chapters, developed by different scholars. The number of quotative references in this handbook was the largest among all the books investigated in this study. Out of 3784 instances, 10% was direct references and 90% indirect. The graphic representation of intertextuality in this book shows that most of the references are to works published a decade before the release of this handbook. The date of the most recent and the oldest works referred to is given the following table (Table 2):

TABLE 2
HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Total word count	Total Quotations	Instances of DQ	Instances of IDQ	Oldest Date	Date of Publication	Most Recent Date
352,902	3784	379	3405	1739	2011	2010

Figure 3 - Intertextual Relations in Handbook 2
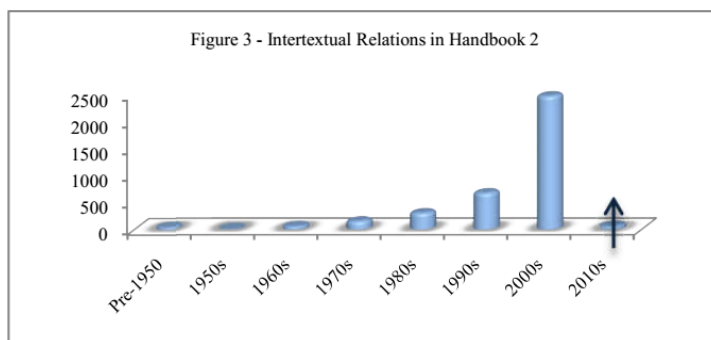
III. Handbook 3

Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition is published by Routledge in 2008 and is edited by Robinson and Ellis. The percentage of indirect quotations found in its 19 chapters which are arranged in three parts is the greatest in this corpus – compared to other handbooks (95.5%) (Table 3). And, as the graph indicates, although it draws upon works going back to about 200 years ago, most of the references are to recent works published in the last two decades.

TABLE 3
HANDBOOK OF COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Total word count	Total Quotations	Instances of DQ	Instances of IDQ	Oldest Date	Date of Publication	Most Recent Date
234,448	2288	102	2186	1836	2008	2008

Figure 4 - Intertextual Relations in Handbook 3
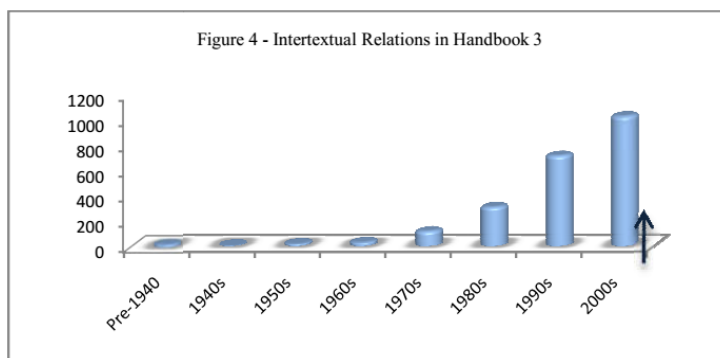
IV. Handbook 4

Handbook of Language and Social Interaction is a collection of 18 essays edited by Fitch and Sanders and published in 2005 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. As was the case with previous handbooks, a substantial proportion of its quotations is of indirect type (88.4%) with only 11.6% of instances being direct.

TABLE 4
HANDBOOK OF LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Total word count	Total Quotations	Instances of DQ	Instances of IDQ	Oldest Date	Date of Publication	Most Recent Date
243,359	2078	243	1835	1795	2005	2004

Figure 4 - Intertextual Relations of Handbook 4
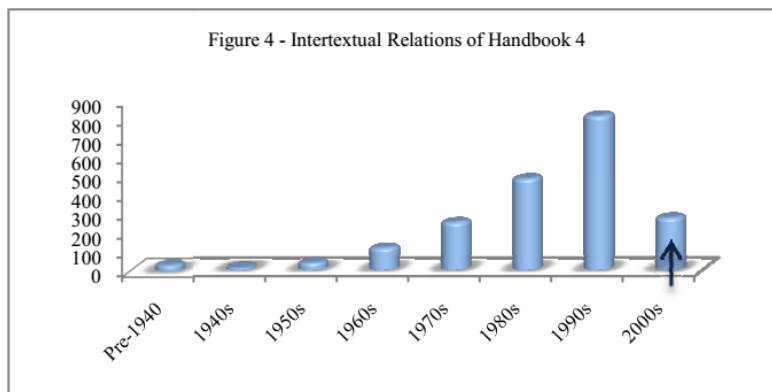
V. Handbook 5

Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning, edited by Knapp and Antos, is published in 2009. It has twenty-four chapters, sequenced in five sections, with 86.7 per cent of its references being indirect quotations and 13.3 per cent direct ones. The oldest work quoted in this collection goes back to about three hundred years ago (1693).

TABLE 5
HANDBOOK OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING

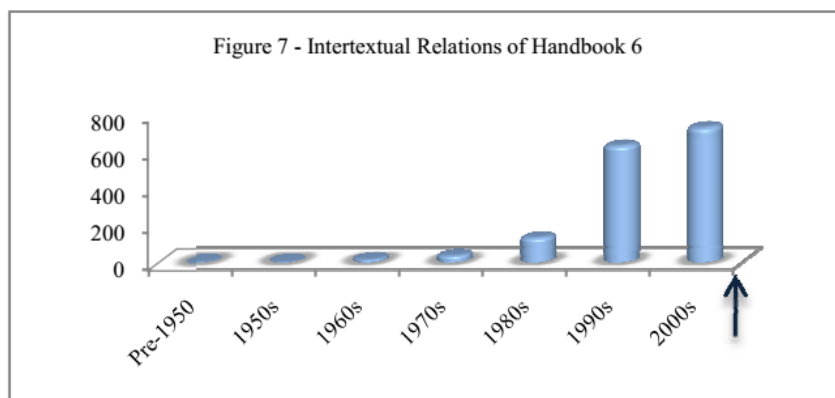| Total word count	Total Quotations	Instances of DQ	Instances of IDQ	Oldest Date	Date of Publication	Most Recent Date
287,053	2522	335	2187	1693	2009	2009

Figure 6 - Intertextual Relations of Handbook 5
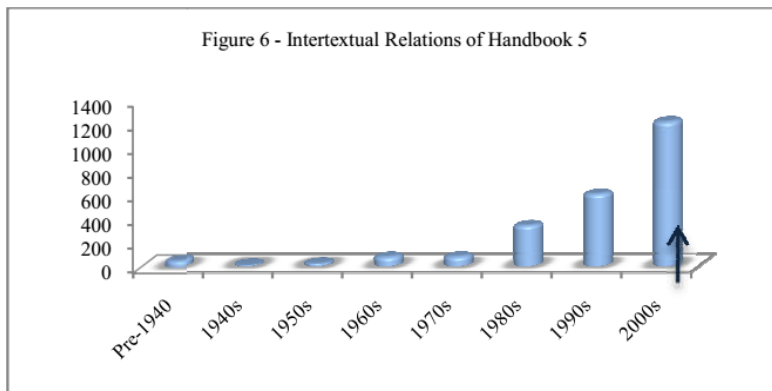
VI. Handbook 6

Handbook of Research on Computer-Enhanced Language Acquisition and Learning is a collection of thirty essays strung in six sections and edited by Zhang and Barber. The essays in this handbook contained 1587 cases of quotations of which 88.3% were indirect and 11.7% direct. Although it is published in 2008, it has made reference to a work published around half a century ago (1539), the oldest work referred to in the corpus of this study.

TABLE 6
HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON COMPUTER-ENHANCED LANGUAGE ACQUISITION & LEARNING

Total word count	Total Quotations	Instances of DQ	Instances of IDQ	Oldest Date	Date of Publication	Most Recent Date
254,255	1587	187	1400	1539	2008	2008

Figure 7 - Intertextual Relations of Handbook 6

VII. Handbook 7

Finally, *Handbook of Research on E-Learning Methodologies for Language Acquisition* is edited by Veiga Marriott and Torres and published in 2009. It consists of thirty-three chapters arranged in three sections with 1708 cases of reference to the works of other scholars. 215 cases (12.5%) were direct references and 1493 (87.5%) were indirect quotations.

TABLE 7
HANDBOOK RESEARCH ON E-LEARNING METHODOLOGIES FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Total word count	Total Quotations	Instances of DQ	Instances of IDQ	Oldest Date	Date of Publication	Most Recent Date
267,763	1708	215	1493	1885	2009	2008

Figure 8 - Intertextual Relations of Handbook 7
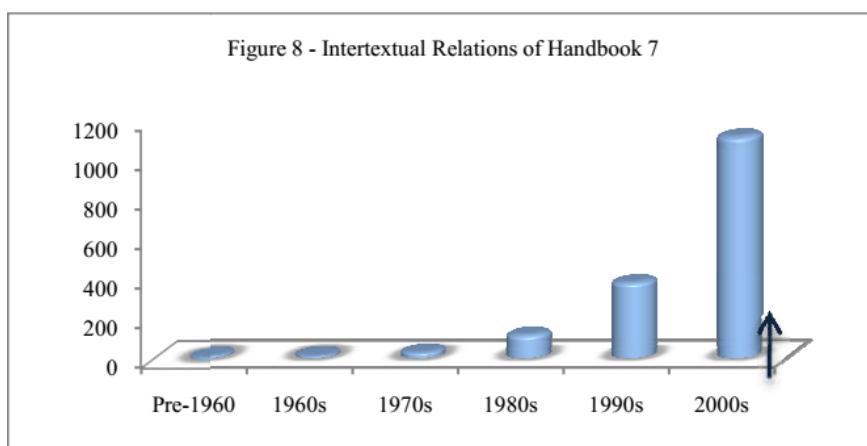
V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The thorough search of the corpus of this study – developed from seven recently published handbooks on SLA topics (including 217 chapters altogether) – resulted in the identification of 16,729 instances of quotative reference which were assumed to be signs of intertextuality.

Of all references found in the corpus, 11.3% was of direct type with 88.7% of instances being indirect quotations. Moreover, the oldest work referred to in the corpus was published about half a century ago, while the most recent work quoted was published in 2010 (Table 8).

TABLE 8
THE CORPUS

Total word count	Total Quotations	Percentage of DQ	Percentage of IDQ	Oldest Date	Most Recent Date
2,014,357	16,729	11.3%	88.7%	1539	2010

The following pie chart presents a historical display of the intertextual networks in the corpus. As the chart illustrates, about 50 per cent of the references in the corpus has been to contemporary works, published in 2000s. Next in line is the works of 1990s with 31 percent; the percentage of quotations in the preceding decades is constantly decreasing.

Figure 9 - Intertextuality in the corpus
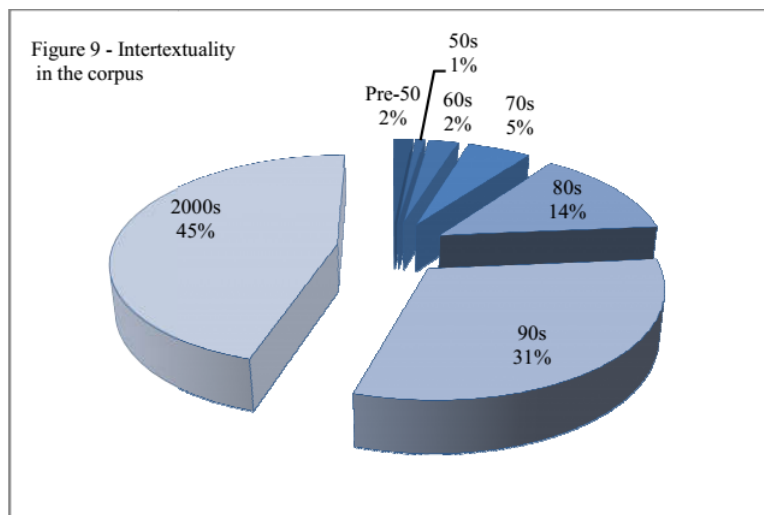
The corpus investigated in this research proved to be an elaborate and intricate network of intertextual relations which can probably regulate the degree of readability of these texts for their putative readership. Moreover, a diachronic analysis of manifest intertextuality in the corpus, marked by concrete references to other texts, revealed that mostly works contemporary with the text under analysis are drawn upon; in other words, there seems to be a direct relationship between the temporal distance and the instances of concrete quotative references: as we move backward to farther preceding decades, the number of references to other works diminishes. A cogent argument here seems to be that second language acquisition, as an interdisciplinary field and a sub-discipline of applied linguistics, has been steadily developing like other specialized fields, advancing our knowledge of the topic and resulting in more solid, critical and sophisticated understanding of this phenomenon; the generation of new, more viable knowledge may thus render the rudimentary understanding of the past somehow redundant and resulting in a limited number of references to such works.

Furthermore, we can look at intertexts (the handbooks in this study) in the framework of relevance theory proposed by Gutt. Gutt (2000, p. 32, quoted in Munday, 2012, p. 98) contends that a successful communication occurs when the communicator ensures that his information is well grasped by the receiver and this is achieved by making the stimuli optimally relevant. Optimal relevance in this theory involves a balance between the mental effort that the receiver puts into getting the communicator's message and the effect he derives (i.e. the understanding obtained). When communication of specialized knowledge through textbooks is concerned, to create such a balance, intertextuality should be taken into account. The more extensive the network of intertextual links in a textbook, the more effort the reader/student needs to make to decipher the text. In other words, intertextuality of a text affects its readability. Readability is defined as "the level of ease or difficulty with which text material can be understood by a particular reader who is reading that text for a specific purpose" (Pikulski, 2002, p. 1). Readability of a text depends on the characteristics of the text and its reader. In fact, the interaction between the text and the reader determines the readability of any piece of material for any individual reader (pikuski, 2002, p. 1). This interaction is to a large extent regulated by intertextuality.

The findings of this study have some pedagogical implications. Since in the Iranian academic context handbooks are sometimes taken to classes as the main textbook, teachers need to take into account that the readability of such texts depends to a large extend upon the degree of their intertextuality, and the results of the present undertaking revealed the studied handbooks to be highly intertextual. This means that teachers should use handbooks as textbooks with great caution; students' background knowledge should be assessed by teachers beforehand, for students' prior knowledge can greatly influence how well they understand the texts. Moreover, since most of references to the handbooks examined were to contemporary works, teachers working with these books as their textbook require to have up-to-date knowledge of the topics to be able to facilitate learning for the students. It should however be noted that a corpus of two million words is not large enough to enable us to make general claims. Further studies are needed to lend credence to the findings presented here.

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Fatemeh Parham has received her MA degree in Translation Studies and her PhD in TEFL from Allameh Tabataba'i University in 2009 and 2015, respectively.

At present, she is Assistant Professor at the department of English translation studies at Allameh Tabataba'i University. Some of her publications are: Trends in and Manifestations of Hybridity (Tehran, Iran: Translation Studies Quarterly, 2009), Signs of Hybridness in Texts Produced in Diaspora vs. Homeland (Tehran, Iran: Translation Studies Quarterly, 2009), Concrete Diaspora vs. Abstract Diaspora - Hybrid Texts: Translations and Original Writings (Mashhad, Iran: Journal of Translation and Language Studies, 2011). Her research interests include discourse analysis and socio-cultural issues in language learning and translation.