A Comparative Analysis of Reading Comprehension Tests of Iranian Universities' Entrance Examinations (UEE)

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to investigate and evaluate the reading comprehension section of Iranian UEEs from 2004 to 2013. So the corpus of the current study included the reading passages of all groups (Math and physics, Natural science, Humanities, and Art) and tried to evaluate and compare the following items of the passages: text domain, test rubric (instruction), number of sentences, types of sentences, and types of reading comprehension questions. After collecting data, the findings of the study were outlined based on two methods: qualitative and quantitative. After running SPSS software, the statistical results revealed that the compatibility and the relationships among the variables in test rubric and test format used in the passages were significant, whereas the other variables of the current study such as test domain, number of reading questions, types of sentences, and types of reading comprehension questions did not follow the significant compatibility; moreover, on the basis of Flesch Reading Ease formula the

results indicated that the most frequent passages were in plain English and fairly difficult levels with 33.33 percent. It must be added that just 11.66 percent of the passages were in difficult level, and 13.33 percent of the Iranian UEEs reading passages were in fairly easy level. It is worth mentioning that there were no places for very easy and very difficult levels of readability among the passages; ultimately, by evaluating eleven items of reading comprehension tests on the basis of Cronbach's alpha, the results showed that the comprehension tests were reliable and valid.

Keywords: Iranian UEEs, compatibility, consistency, test rubric, sentence types, question types, text domain.

1. Introduction

1.1 Definition and types of reading skill

As Chastain (1988,p.216) asserts, "reading is the construction of the meaning of texts", meaning that it is an active and strategic process, in which the reader's skill and knowledge interact with the characteristics of the text such as genre, the wording and structure of the text. Moreover, Richards and Schmidt (2002) state that in the L2 process, reading is a complex process consisting of numerous processes which strongly influence each other. The perception of letters, the rapid identification of words, the detection of the function and meaning of the different words within a sentence, the connection of the consecutive sentences, the construction of the sentences to a meaningful and coherent whole, and the integration of the information with prior knowledge are important processes. Schellings, Aarnoutse and Leeuwe (2006, p.4) state that "the rapid identification of words, construction and integration of meaning constitute the core of the reading process". In other words, reading skill takes place on two levels: on the level of word identification and on the level of the comprehension of sentences and text. On the basis of these definitions and trends in reading skill, it is obvious that according to the purpose of reading activity, there can be different forms of reading.

Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992) have outlined reading activity as the following list:

• Silent reading: reading which can be done silently by EFL readers
• Oral reading: reading which can be done with or without understanding of the content.

• Literal comprehension: reading in order to understand, remember, or recall the information explicitly contained in a passage.

• Inferential comprehension: reading in order to find information which is not explicitly stated in a passage, using the readers' experience and intuition, and by inferring.

• Critical or evaluative comprehension: reading in order to compare information in a passage with the readers' own knowledge and values.

• Appreciative comprehension: reading in order to gain an emotional or other kind of valued response from a passage (p.306).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Iranian University Entrance exam known as Konkur is a standardized test used as one of the means to gain admission to higher education in Iran. In this sole criterion for student selection, there are twenty five English tests (60%) that relate to reading comprehension, so we can claim that the percentage of the reading test is really considerable for candidates. More than one million and three hundred thousand males and females from different cultures and languages, urban and rural areas compete to enter universities and the only criterion is their scores in this test. Therefore, the result of the test may have a permanent and deep effect on examinees' morale and their future destiny. We can assert that this point of the universities' entrance examination has been rarely regarded and analyzed in the research. In fact there is paucity in this field and this study is an attempt to carry out a study on the analysis of the reading part of entrance examination of universities in Iran to detect item bias, consistency and relation between the candidates' fields and the text types (in this case scientific and general texts) due to the value of the examination on their lives and future jobs. The main aim of this study is to determine and analyze the reading text types and their consistency in contents and items.

1.3 Objective of the study

The main objective of the current study is to identify, categorize and analyze the reading texts of Iranian Universities' Entrance Examinations (UEE) from four fields of study, namely Math and Physics, Natural science, Humanities, and Art groups and see whether there is any com-

patibility among the items of reading tests of these groups through a ten year period of time or not. Moreover, this study aims to investigate the domain and pattern of the reading texts of the entrance examinations.

1.4 Significance of the study

The results of the present study will be significant since through understanding the content of the texts, forms of the reading comprehension questions in the universities' entrance examination, and their consistency during a period of the time we can come to a better decision-making. All in all, the results will be remedial and helpful not only for the candidates, but also for the EFL teachers in Iran to prepare their students for the entrance examinations and make more effective lesson plans for their classroom activities. Furthermore, the results of this study can present a functional framework and strategy in reading comprehension for the students which can lead students to distinguish effective strategies from ineffective ones to answer reading texts in universities' entrance examination. Moreover, Iranian EFL instructors can apply these findings to develop more effective instructional methods for students in order to assist them cope with difficulty in reading authentic English expository texts and achieve high grades in reading comprehension of those texts. Findings of this study may also be useful for the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading skill in UEE

There are many reasons why getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teacher's job in the classroom. Firstly, most of the learners want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study purpose, or simply for pleasure. In reading process if a reader follows the texts that are interesting for him/her, this activity not only satisfies him/her but also promotes his/her writing skill as a productive skill. Reading text provides good models for English writing. In other words, reading a text not only improves the EFL learners' comprehension performance, but also the learners can improve their writing

through the structural reading texts. When we teach the skill of writing, we will need to show students models of what we are encouraging them to do. Moreover, reading texts provides opportunities to study language: vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the way we construct sentences, stimulate discussion, excite imaginative responses and be the springboard for well-rounded, fascinating lessons (Bagheri, Rahimi, and Riasati, 2011).

Reading as a receptive skill is one of the most fundamental one in the process of L2. To access the main point and the whole message of a text, some strategies can be used. Richards and Schmidt (2002) believe that a successful L2 reader is one who is able to keep main ideas in mind, try to guess the unknown words contextually and re-read parts of a text which is not clear or the meaning is ambiguous for him/her. Furthermore, a skillful reader should be able to discriminate main idea of a passage, understand sequence and try to have an inference. It is worth mentioning that comparing and predicting contents of a reading text are two other parts of a process that all in all must occur simultaneously as a complicated interaction between reader and text, in concert with it, in the process of reading comprehension, employing functional and useful strategies to enhance readers' performance is a crucial facet of TEFL.

2.2 Teaching of L2 and UEE

In Iran, English is taught as a foreign language and is practiced within a context restricted environment, in which the textbook and classroom teacher play the main roles. Previously, English education in Iran formally started from second grade in junior high schools, but now it begins from the sixth grade of primary school. All schools at different levels follow the same curriculum standards. The Ministry of Education (ME) compiles, develops and publishes textbooks and teaching materials for nation-wide public and private high schools.

Traditionally, language testing researchers have focused their attentions on inherent issues in tests. But recently some researchers have turned to some other facets in assessment process. Some studies attempt to investigate the effect and relationship between the methods of teaching and the empirical investigation of the wash back phenomenon

which is not limited to the test itself. It depends on other teachers and contextual factors which may be different from context to context; According to Ostovar Namaghi (as cited in Ghorbani, 2008) there are three forces controlling and leading teachers' work in the Iranian educational context:

First, since teachers cannot choose a textbook which is in line with their students' needs, the input is controlled by the prescribed curriculum. Second, the output is controlled by the mandated national testing scheme so that teachers cannot develop tests which have a positive wash back on teaching and learning. And third, since high score is culturally equal to higher achievement, the process of teaching and learning is controlled by the grade pressure from students, parents and school principals (p.61).

Many students at pre-university and academic senior high schools assume that the purpose of English teaching and learning is preparation for the UEE and they should prepare them for the UEE since the UEE influences students' future careers and lives. Chastain (1998) believes that EFL/ESL teachers often use the word reading and assessment of it to refer to two entirely different processes. In one case, they have in mind an activity in which students read aloud from the printed page; in the other case, they mean an activity in which students read a passage for comprehension test. Both activities are valuable when used at the right time and for the right purpose, but the teachers must be aware of the characteristics and the objectives of each part before incorporating them in classroom activities.

Athari, Sharif, Nematbakhsh, and Babamohammadi (2009) in a descriptive study on a group of medical science fresh students evaluate the relationship between these students' university entrance examination ranks and their critical thinking levels. This study was done at Isfahan University. It must be mentioned that the findings of the study indicate that there is no considerable relationship between these fresh students' university entrance examination rank and their critical thinking level. At the very end, this study recommends a pedagogical point and states that it seems necessary to promote the Iranian university students' critical thinking skills through university courses.

2.3 Drawback of UEE

In Iran, as many countries where a university entrance exam is the sole criterion for student selection, limited space and resources have restricted many talented and enthusiastic applicants seeking access to higher education. Consequently, the phenomenon of the university entrance exam has caused discontent and conflict. In June each year, high school graduates in Iran take a centralized nation-wide university entrance exam, called the Konkur, seeking a place in one of the public universities. The competition is fierce, the exam content is rigorous, and the seats at universities limited. In recent years, although the government has responded to demands for improved access and to a rapid increase in the rising number of applicants by enlarging the capacity of universities and creating Azad University, public universities are still only able to accept the minority of all applicants. Konkur is a comprehensive, 4-5hour multiple-choice exam that covers all subjects taught in Iranian high schools-from math and science to Islamic studies and foreign language. The exam is so stringent that normally students spend a year preparing for it.

According to Kamyab as cited in Salehi and Yunus (2012) UEE and its result and influence play as a barrier among the applicants from social and psychological perspectives. He states that most of the applicants who fail in the UEE get anxious, boredom and hopeless. This study asserts that this social and psychological issue can lead the Iranian students to a vast "brain drain".

Salehi and Yunus (2012) assert that most of the parents talk to their children about the importance of the UEE and provide them with a suitable environment to study better. A group of parents even turn off radio and TV at home for their children's sake and remind them of the UEE date. Parents also believe that their children can be more successful in the society if they pass this major exam. Therefore, they directly or indirectly make their children anxious.

As Ghazanfari (2009) states the drawbacks and weak points of UEE in Iran are so much more than its advantages and benefits. He believes that this wide-nation test is really stressful not only for the applicants but also for their parents and family members. The result of this ma-

jor test can affect the applicants' motivation. In other words, they will be frustrated and demotivated if they fail in UEE. Finally this study mentions that there can be a negative competition among the students before exam administration, since it is a competitive examination in nature.

2.4 Influential factors in UEE

Farhadi (2005) believes that among the four language skills, reading comprehension has always been the main concern of Iranian ESP instructors and they regard reading comprehension as the most important skill. Their reason is that comprehension of English text is an important tool for obtaining information about the newest development in technology and science in different fields of science. Moreover, the ability to comprehend English also provides Iranian students with better opportunities to get knowledge and skill to compete in communication and job in social and professional settings.

There are various perspectives about text genre, but from Haji Maibodi's point of view (2008) it is a factor related to reading comprehension: a text genre is a type of written or spoken discourse and texts are classified on the basis of the intent of the communication. In general, genre research aims to group texts according to type, and to identify and describe features which texts of a particular genre have in common. Text genres are narrative, expository, descriptive, argumentative, compare and contrast, and they can be informative, entertaining and persuasive, depending on the intent of the author and the goal of the reader.

According to Fatehirad (2011), examination of reading strategies provides useful understanding and insights about the nature of reading comprehension. However, most Iranian university students have been found to have an insufficient competence in reading academic texts. The applicants who fail in Iranian UEE in English course can be under the influence of various factors such as: target language proficiency, familiarity with the content and level of their ability in reading comprehension.

On the basis of a study by Kitao and Kitao (2006) on Japanese UEE, there are different factors affecting the validity and reliability of a test,

among these, the level of difficulty of the vocabulary of the texts and the readability of the reading comprehension passages of the entrance examinations are really considerable and must be regarded by both test-takers and test-designers. In this study, they state that Japanese applicants enter universities through written processes, moreover there is a center exam which evaluates the students' performance in grammar, vocabulary and reading ability. This study states that most of the applicants have problems with the reading comprehension tests due to level of difficulty of the vocabulary and readability of the texts.

Barati an Ahmadi (2010) believe that gender DIF is related to item content. This study was an attempt to look into the relationship between the gender and text types in reading comprehension examination. The findings of the study have indicated some interesting points in this field. The study indicates that females outperform males on items related to human relations, human rights, and on items referring to stereotypical female activities, whereas males tend to perform better on items related to computation and items containing symbols. This study adds that test format can have considerable effect role on test-takers' performance in different levels. They assert that males generally perform better than females on multiple choice items while females perform better on essay-type. Moreover, females outperform in qualitative abilities such as vocabulary and grammar. This study indicates that females are more reluctant to guess multiple-choice items than boys, while boys overestimate their likelihood of success and hence take risks unknowingly. Carlton and Harris (1992) suggest that reading comprehension is differentially easier for females, whereas males are better performers on antonyms and analogies and that women are likely to perform better on items with more contexts.

To sum up, we can assert that UEE all over the world as a widespread assessment has a problematic potential which can be debatable from various facets. These disputable aspects come from the relationship and compatibility of the contents of the UEE and the applicants' prior knowledge, bias rate, considering the gender of the candidates as a considerable factor. From another view, the purposes and drawbacks of UEE in our country are also noticeable and can play an influential role in this

process. Finally, it seems that UEE in different countries has its own effects, but the point that we should regard is the effects of this wide-nation examination in Iran. These effects can be investigated from the pedagogical and psychological perspectives not only in selecting and accepting the Iranian students at state universities, but also in designing the reading comprehension tests.

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus of the study
The main corpus of the current study includes the reading passages of Iranian Universities' Entrance Examinations (IUEE). In order to administer this study, the reading texts of four fields of Iranian high schools, namely Math and Physics, Natural science, Humanities, and Art were chosen. These reading texts belonged to Iranian University Entrance Examinations (IUEE) from 2004 to 2013(1383-1392), during ten years.

3.2 Procedure of data collection
The researchers collected data from the reading parts of State University Entrance Examination of Iranian Sanjesh Organization. This organization is in charge of preparing and administering the important examinations held in the country such as the university entrance exam for high school graduates, university entrance exams for MA candidates, etc. The organization provides the anonymous answer sheet for every applicant of every field of study (Math and Physics, Natural science, Humanities, and Art).

To collect sufficient data for the present study, after gathering all the reading texts of Iranian State University Entrance Examinations through 2004-2013, they were classified and put in to the defined rows of Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Items of reading sections

Year	Text domain (general& scientific)	Test instruction	Number of reading comprehension test items	Number of text sentences	Types of sentences	Types of reading comprehension questions
2004						
2005						
2006						
2007						
2008						
2009						
2010						
2011						
2012						
2013						

Table 3.1 aimed to investigate the contents of the reading texts and their compatibility with the candidates' fields. It must be mentioned that the following categories were considered in the study separately for every field in every year:

Year: This column of the table indicates the year UEE was administered.

Text domain (general or scientific): Text type or domain of the text is essential not only for the candidates, but also for the teachers and the test-designers of UEE and the present study attempted to identify the general or scientific one.

Test Rubric in the reading parts: The instruction of a wide-nation examination like UEE is definitely considerable. This point must be regarded in any sub-category such as reading comprehension part of Iranian UEE).

Consistency: In evaluating the candidates' ability, consistency in form and content is really effective and must be regarded by the test-designers in UEE, since the students use the previous year entrance examination as a scale to evaluate their abilities and their levels of preparation. Thus the researchers have tried to count and analyze types

of the sentences (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) and also types of reading comprehension questions (inferential, referential, specific detail, supporting idea, main idea, title, and tone) for each passage per year.

3.3 Readability level of text

Readability is an influential factor which must be considered in the processes of designing a reading passage and evaluating a text, to do so, in the present study Flesch Reading Ease has been employed on the basis of the following formula:

206.833-1.015(ASL)-84.6(ASW)=RE

The Flesch Reading Ease score is interpreted as follows:

Table 3.2: Flesch Reading Ease

Flesch Reading Ease Score	Readability Level	Education Level
$0-29$	Very difficult	College Graduates
$30-49$	Difficult	College
$50-59$	Fairly difficult	Senior High School, A-level
$60-69$	Plain English	13 to 15 year-olds
$70-79$	Fairly easy	12 year-olds
$80-89$	Easy	11 year-olds.
$90-100$	Very easy	10 year-olds

3.4 Data analysis

The present study has aimed to measure the length of given passages in reading part and present any compatibility among the UEE reading passages through ten years (2004-2013). In the test domain vein, the current study has attempted to analyze the Iranian UEE passages in general and scientific perspectives. The test rubric is another trend in the present study which has aimed to make clear the instructions used in the UEE in a decade. The two other trends in the current study have concerned with the numbers and types of sentences in the reading passages of the Iranian UEE, and the current study has tried to investigate

the number of questions and type of reading comprehension tests and the last but not the least point of the study has tried to investigate difficulty levels of the reading tests. The collected data of the current study is a sample of triangulation method, meaning that the findings of the current study have been divided into two parts:

a) qualitative interpretation of the findings and

b) quantitative statistic of the collected data through Chi-square method, Flesch Reading Ease, and Cronbach's alpha.

Thus, the researcher has followed a mixed method in conducting the current study and completing the fourth chapter. The present study has attempted to evaluate the reading part of the Iranian university entrance examination (UEE) from four fields of study, namely Math and Physics, Natural Science, Humanities, and Art groups. This study has tried to evaluate the number of text words, test domain, test rubric, number of text sentences, type of sentences, number of questions, and types of reading comprehension test items.

4. Results and Discussion

Four groups of UEE (Math and Physics, Natural science, Humanities, and Art) have been compared to each other. The results obtained from each of the research instruments have been presented in this chapter.

Table 4.1 Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
group * consistency	60	100.0%	0	.0%	60	100.0%
group * year	60	100.0%	0	.0%	60	100.0%
group * domain	60	100.0%	0	.0%	60	100.0%
group * Format	60	100.0%	0	.0%	60	100.0%
group * words	60	100.0%	0	.0%	60	100.0%
group * Instruction	60	100.0%	0	.0%	60	100.0%

Table 4.1 is an attempt to display a general overview of the findings in quantitative step. Thus these items (consistency of the contents, the text

domains, the test format, number of text words, and test instruction) have been presented and analyzed respectively.

Table 4.2: Statistical representation of number of reading comprehension test questions

	Number of reading comprehension test items/questions			Total
	five items	eight items	ten items	
Frequency	20	8	32	60
Percentage	33.33	13.3	53.3	100.0

As Table 4.2 indicates, we have the same order in answering reading texts during these ten years, meaning that all the groups at first had one text with five multiple-choice questions. After 2008, every group answered two passages with ten questions and in2007 four passages had four multiple choice questions; we see that from every passage one test has been eliminated. It must be mentioned that in 2011 one of the passages in math and physics group had six questions and the other passage has four questions. We can assert that more than half of the reading part of the UEE has been designed on the basis of two passages with ten questions (53.3 percent), the second highest frequency refers to one passage with five questions (33.3 percent), while two passages with eight questions are the third place (13.4 percent).

Table 4.3: Frequency of Number of reading comprehension test items/questions in Chi-Square test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.000[a]	6	1.000
Likelihood Ratio	.000	6	1.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000	1	1.000
N of Valid Cases	60		

Table 4.3indicates that p value; Sig. (2-sided) is more than 0.05, meaning that there is no significant relationship among the given variables.

Table 4.4: Statistical representation of text domains

Group		General	Scientific	Total
Math & physics	Frequency	13	2	15
	Percentage	86.66	13.33	100.00
Natural science	Frequency	14	1	15
	Percentage	93.33	6.66	100.00
Humanities	Frequency	12	3	15
	Percentage	80.00	20.00	100.00
Art	Frequency	11	4	15
	Percentage	73.33	26.66	100.00

Table 4.4 presents that the current study has tried to evaluate the reading passages of UEE in two domains, namely general and scientific. The statistical description indicates that the highest frequency of text domains belongs to general passages with 83.33%, while the scientific domain with 16.67% is in the second place. This statistical fact has been represented and emphasized in Table 4.24.

Table 4.5: Frequency of the text domains in Chi-Square test

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.655[a]	3	.884
Likelihood Ratio	.596	3	.897
Linear-by-Linear Association	.386	1	.534
N of Valid Cases	60		

The output of Table 4.5 displays that there is no significant relationship between the given variables, meaning that the P value is more than 0.05 (.884).

Table 4.6: Statistical representation of the test format

			Format Multiple-choice	Total
group	Math	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
	Humanities	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
	art	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
	natural sciences	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	60	60
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%

As Table 4.6 displays, due to a constant format, there is no statistical computation to represent the frequency of this item in this study.

One of the variables in the current study which has been considered and statistically measured was number of words used in every passage during these ten years. To do so, eleven groups have been designed and categorized. These groups have tried to show the most and the least frequency of the reading passages with different word numbers. Moreover, to have a precise statistical result of this fact, through SPSS software Pearson Chi-Square has been applied and Table 4.7 shows the frequency:

Table 4.7: Statistical representation of number of text words

Percentage	Frequency	Number of words	Percentage	Frequency	Number of words	Percentage	Frequency	Number of words
1.7	1	207	1.7	1	248	1.7	1	144
1.7	1	175	1.7	1	121	3.3	2	226
1.7	1	210	1.7	1	212	1.7	1	240
1.7	1	192	3.3	2	150	1.7	1	219
1.7	1	251	3.3	2	158	1.7	1	183
1.7	1	217	1.7	1	263	3.3	2	258
1.7	1	171	1.7	1	198	1.7	1	192
1.7	1	221	1.7	1	137	1.7	1	330
1.7	1	243	1.7	1	126	1.7	1	227
1.7	1	266	1.7	1	127	1.7	1	176
1.7	1	285	1.7	1	208	1.7	1	220
1.7	1	283	1.7	1	237	1.7	1	191
1.7	1	249	1.7	1	204	1.7	1	264
1.7	1	250	1.7	1	184	1.7	1	173
*			1.7	1	301	1.7	1	128
*			1.7	1	140	1.7	1	292
*			1.7	1	253	1.7	1	239
100.00	60	Total	1.7	1	222	3.3	2	143
			1.7	1	135	3.3	2	166

Table 4.8: Frequency of number of text words in Chi-Square test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	168.000[a]	159	.297
Likelihood Ratio	158.038	159	.507
Linear-by-Linear Association	52.921	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	60		

On the basis of Table 4.8, we can assert that there is no significant relationship among the given variables; in other words, this output is not significant enough to consider it as an influential one, since P value in Table 4.28is more than 0.05 percent.

Table 4.9: Statistical representation of test instruction

			Instruction *choose the best answer among the 4 offered items*	Total
Group	Math	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
	humanities	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
	Art	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
	natural sciences	Count	15	15
		% within group	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	60	60
		% within Instruction	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	100.0%	100.0%

As Table 4.9 indicates, there is no change in the instruction of the Iranian UEEs in reading part during these ten years and due to this constancy, there is no statistical computation which is apparently noticeable in Table 4.10:

Table 4.10: Chi-Square test of Frequency of test instruction

	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	.[a]
N of Valid Cases	60

Table 4.11: A general representation of reading comprehension
sentence types in four groups

Sentence types	Frequency	Percentage
Complex	216	34.123222
Compound-complex	175	27.6461295
Simple	149	23.5387045
Compound	93	14.691943
Total	633	100.00

Table 4.11, and Figure 1 display the types of sentences used in the Iranian UEEs during ten years. They indicate that complex sentences with the frequency of 216 (34%) has the highest frequency and compound-complex sentence with the frequency of 175(28%) is in the second place, and simple sentence with the frequency of 149(23%) is in the third stand, while the least frequency belongs to compound sentence with the frequency of 93(15%).

Table 4.12: Test Statistics of types of sentences in four groups

	complex	Compound-complex	simple	compound
Chi-Square	25.650[a]	18.300[b]	9.000[c]	12.000[d]
Df	12	10	9	7
Asymp. Sig.	012.	050.	437.	101.
a. 13 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 3.1.				
b. 11 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 3.6.				
c. 10 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 4.0.				
d. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 5.0.				

Table4.12 indicates that there is no significant relationship between two variables of types of sentences i.e. the simple sentence and compound sentence during ten years, since P value is more than.05, Asymp. Sig.¿0.05 On the other hand, there is a meaningful and significant relationship between two variables of types of sentences i.e. complex and compound-complex during ten years ,since P value is less than 0.05, Asymp. $Sig. < 0.05$

Table 4.13: Types of reading comprehension tests in four groups

Types of questions	Frequency	percentage
Supporting idea	83	28.81944
Inferential	82	28.47222
Specific(details)	33	11.458333
Voc. In-context	26	9.0277777
Main idea	23	7.9861111
Referential	20	6.944444
Title	14	4.861111
Tone	7	2.430333
Total	288	100.00

As Table 4.13, Figure2, and Figure3 indicate that in general, supporting idea with the frequency of 83 (29%) is in the first place and inferential question with the frequency of 82 (28.5%) is in the second place. Furthermore, specific (detail) with the frequency of 33(11.5%), vocabulary in-context with the frequency of 26(9%) , main idea with the frequency of 23(8%), and referential question with the frequency of 20(7%) are in third to sixth places, respectively. The considerable point in the findings of the present study that must be regarded is the title question with the frequency of 14(5%) and tone with the frequency of 7(2%) are in the last places. The results indicate that the last item, namely tone, is a new form of the reading comprehension question, meaning that this form of the question has been used in the last four years in the Iranian UEEs.

Table 4.14: Test Statistics of types of reading comprehension questions in four groups

	specific	supportingidea	Refrential	voc	mainidea	inferential	tone	Title
Chi-Square	18.600[a]	30.500[b]	31.400[a]	8.150[c]	13.550[c]	12.200[b]	48.650[c]	6.400[d]
Df	3	5	3	2	2	5	2	1
Asymp. Sig.	000.	000.	000.	017.	001.	032.	000.	011.
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 10.0.								
b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 6.7.								
c. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 13.3.								
d. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is .20.0								

Table 4.14 is the output of running SPSS software that displays there is meaningful and significant relationship among the given variables, meaning that the relationships among the types of the question used in the Iranian UEEs are significant, since P value is less than .05. Asymp. $Sig. < 0.05$

Table 4.15: Readability level of the passages

Flesch Reading Ease Score	Readability Level	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 29	Very difficult	0	0.00
30 - 49	Difficult	7	11.66
50 - 59	Fairly difficult	20	33.33
60 - 69	Plain English	20	33.33
70 – 79	Fairly easy	8	13.33
80 - 89	Easy	5	8.33
90 – 100	Very easy	0	0.00
Total		60	100.00

The content of Table 4.15 which has been designed on the basis of Flesch Reading Ease formula shows the readability level of the reading passages given in the Iranian UEEs. The results indicate that plain English and

fairly difficult with 33.33 percent are the most frequent ones. It must be added that just 11.66 percent of the passages are in difficult level, and 13.33 percent of the Iranian UEEs reading passages are in fairly easy level. It is worth mentioning that there are no places for very easy and very difficult levels of readability among the passages.

Table 4.16: Reliability (case processing summary)

		N	%
Cases	Valid	۶۰	۹.۵
	Excluded[a]	۵۷۳	۹۰.۵
	Total	۶۳۳	۱۰۰.۰
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Table 4.17: Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.890	11

Table 4.18: Item-Total Statistics by Cronbach's alpha

Table4.18: *Item-Total Statistics by Cronbach's alpha*				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Types of the sentences in Math and Physics group	16.55	35.235	.000	.899
Types of reading comprehension questions in Math and Physics group	15.17	21.395	.970	.855
Types of the sentences in Natural Science group	16.53	34.795	.277	.897
Types of reading comprehension questions in Natural Science group	15.38	22.376	.968	.853
Types of sentences in Humanities group	16.28	30.851	.845	.876
Types of reading comprehension question in Humanities group	15.47	24.423	.958	.853
Types of sentences in Art group	16.55	35.235	.000	.899
Types of reading comprehension questions in Art group	15.65	25.113	.967	.853
A general representation of reading comprehension sentence types in four groups	16.55	35.235	.000	.899
Types of reading comprehension tests in four groups	16.55	35.235	.000	.899
Readability level of the passages	14.82	23.949	.933	.855

According to Table 4.16 , 4.17, and 4.18, Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a measure of reliability; furthermore, the number of test items, item interrelatedness and dimensionality affect the value of alpha. Cronbach's alpha will generally increase when the correlations between the items increase. MohsenTavakol, Reg Dennick(2011) assert that it is mandatory that assessors and researchers should estimate this quantity to add validity and accuracy to the interpretation of their data. The result of this research shows that the value of alpha is .89; meaning that this value is desirable to indicate the reliability and validity of the test.

4.1 Discussion

In this section, the reported results have been discussed, compared with each other, and consequently the research questions were answered and the hypotheses have been evaluated to find out which one can be confirmed or disconfirmed on the basis of the findings of the current study.

Broadly speaking there were some considerable and somehow disputable points in the studies. Some of these points were talking about the item bias or differential item function (DIF) (Mohammad pour & Abdul Ghafar, 2009), while Salehi and Yunus (2012) talked about the relationship between the Iranian candidates' learning at pre-university and the UEE; moreover, Ghorbani (2008) elaborated the wash back effect on Iranian UEE, and Mohammadi (2010) highlighted the drawback of UEE in Iran. Ghorbani (2008) added the effective factors in EFL teachers' activity. Finally, Farhadi (2005) and Barati and Ahmadi (2010) indicated the nature of reading text as a main concern among the Iranian UEE candidates. There is a great consistency in domain of reading comprehension part in Math and Physics group.

On the basis of the findings of the current study, by evaluating and analyzing the findings of four items (text domain, test instruction, and consistency of test) this researcher has reached some considerable points. In instruction section we see that during these ten years we had the same direction for reading comprehension part, no matter there was one

passage or there were two passages. The collected data indicates that until 2009, the Iranian UEE candidates just answered one passage with five multiple-choices test items, while between 2009 to 2012 they were given two passages with ten multiple-choices questions (five questions in each passage), Once more, in 2013 the UEE's candidates have faced another change in reading comprehension part, meaning that in this year they have two passages, but the numbers of the reading questions have been reduced to eight which could be problematic for the candidates. Also, it must be mentioned that in 2011 one of the passages in math and physics group had six questions and the other passage has four questions.

The domains of the UEE for Iranian candidates are also considerable. There were two types of the texts regarded as general and scientific ones. During these ten years there were 60 reading passages (15 passages for each group). With regard to these passages, just ten reading passages belong to the scientific domain, whereas the rest of them (50 passages) are general English. Thus we can assert that this finding in test domain can draw an insight for the Iranian candidates in UEE to prepare themselves so much better.

According to the findings of this study, there was no clear compatibility among the candidates' majors and types of the sentences during ten years. The general representation of sentence types proves that the complex sentence had the most frequency of sentence types and compound sentence had the least frequency of sentence types during ten years, although it can be seen that in Humanities group the simple sentence had the most frequency of sentence types. The findings indicate that there was no compatibility among the candidates' majors and types of reading comprehension questions. The study has proved that in the general representation of question types, supporting idea was in the first place and inferential question was in the second place. Furthermore, specific (detail), vocabulary in-context, main idea and referential question types were in third to sixth places, The considerable point in the findings of the present study must be regarded is the title question and tone were in the last places . The results indicate that the last item, namely tone, is a new form of the reading comprehension question, meaning that this

form of the question has used in the last four years in the Iranian UEEs. The findings of this study show that the greatest number of reading comprehension question was inferential question and the smallest number of question was tone in Math and Physics group. Furthermore, the supporting idea question had the highest frequency and the tone question had the lowest frequency in Natural Science group. It can be seen that the inferential question and supporting idea question were in the first place and the tone question was in the last place in Humanities group. Also, inferential question had the highest frequency and main idea question had the lowest frequency in Art group.

5. Conclusions

Evaluation of UEE can be considered from various points of views. Taking university entrance examination differs from county to county .Moreover, this is a matter in Iran, too.

Thus, it is clear that there is a deep relationship between teaching methods and preparation for UEE. Ostovar Namaghi (as cited in Ghorbani, 2008) asserts that in preparing candidates Iranian EFL teachers do not have enough choices in syllabuses and this point affects their teaching processes and EFL learners' performance has been affected by wash back.

The studies like Ghorbani (2008); Salehi and Yunus (2012) and yildrim (2010) claim that UEE has its own drawbacks. These drawbacks refer to psychological, social, economic and even educational ones among Iranian candidates. Furthermore, Mohammadi (2009) and Kitao and Kitao (2006) state that almost in every county we see a sort of UEE, but the forms and purposes are really different which causes bias or depression among candidates.

The reported findings from the previous studies mentioned in literature review and the findings of the current study indicate that UEE is a complicated process and it seems that there is a need to regard some points in preparing the candidates for UEEs in Iran. These points can be outlined as form and content, meaning that the items like test instruction and number of questions all in all are the forms of a test and it is necessary for EFL teachers in Iran to transfer their knowledge to the

students. The other trend is the content of reading comprehension part of Iranian UEE. In other words, an EFL teacher should know kinds of sentences and comprehension tests and prepare the candidates for the UEE.

Broadly speaking, on the basis of the qualitative and quantitative findings, it can be claimed that in some cases the candidates experienced a kind of consistency and compatibility in the format of the reading part of Iranian UEE, but there are some parts in UEE which have been changed repetitively. As the results of the present study indicated, the Iranian candidates answered just one passage with five questions until 2008, while after 2008 to the present time we see that there are two passages with ten questions even though in 2013 they answered two passages with eight reading comprehension questions. In other words, there is great consistency in number of test items in every passage, meaning that during these ten years, five multiple-choice questions have been designed for every reading text except in 2007 that there is one passage with four tests and also in 2013 there are two passages with four multiple-choice questions for every reading comprehension passage. On the other hand, Math and Physics group in 2011 has one passage with six tests and one passage with four tests. From another perspective, in sentence types, it is worth mentioning that complex sentence is in the first rank, while compound sentence is in the last rank. So, these findings can be very practical and effective for the candidates to know about them and prepare themselves on the basis of this format.

In evaluating the reading comprehension question types of Iranian UEE, it can be claimed that supporting idea has the highest frequency and tone has the lowest frequency. This kind of question, "tone question", was a new form of question that the candidates after 2009 have experienced in UEEs, while before that there were no forms of it in reading comprehension part.

To sum up, we can assert that this incompatibility in designing the reading part of Iranian UEEs is really problematic for the Iranian candidates and the EFL teachers should prepare the candidates for entrance examination.

On the basis of Flesch Reading Ease formula, the results indicate

that the most frequent passages are in plain English and fairly difficult levels with 33.33 percent. It must be added that just 11.66 percent of the passages are in difficult level, and 13.33 percent of the Iranian UEEs reading passages are in fairly easy level. It is worth mentioning that there are no places for very easy and very difficult levels of readability among the passages; ultimately, the value of Cronbach's alpha (0.89) indicates good reliability and as mentioned before, this quantity adds validity and accuracy to the interpretation of data.

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