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Cloze Test and C-test Revisited: The Effect of Genre Familiarity on Second Language Reading Test Performance

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Abstract

The current study tries to investigate the particular role familiarity with the genre of the text plays in EFL learners' performance on two types of tests, i.e. cloze test and C-test. It also attempts to determine whether C-test is a measure of language proficiency like cloze test. The participants of the study were fifty-one intermediate undergraduate students majoring in English Literature at the University of Isfahan. In two sessions, the participants took a battery of measures (a) two newly developed cloze tests of familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres, and (b)

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two newly developed C-tests of familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres. The results of data analysis revealed that familiarity with genre has a significant impact on the performance of EFL learners on both cloze test and C-test. The results further disclosed that there is a significant correlation between cloze test, as a measure of language proficiency, and C-test with the same genre.

Keywords: Cloze test; C-test; Genre; Literary genre; Political genre

Introduction

One of the major issues in the field of language testing is to investigate the factors that affect performance on language tests. There are many factors besides testees' English language ability which affect test results. As outlined by Bachman (1990), such factors are communicative language ability, test method facets, test takers' attributes and random factors. For instance, 'The nature of input' is one of the test method facets that has a role in test performance. Bachman argues that, "if the language of the input in a test is characteristic of a genre that is unfamiliar to the testees, it would be hypothesized that tasks that depend on the interpretation of that input would be relatively difficult" (p.139).

Various studies on text characteristics and text organization of reading comprehension tests (e.g. Bachman, 1990; Fountas & Pinell, 2001; Kobayashi, 2002, 2004; Paltridge, 1996) show that students' performance on reading comprehension tests could be sensitive to the different genres used in the tests. Although researchers have attributed an important role to genre, relatively little is known about the effect of genre familiarity on L2 reading test performance. As such, the current study tries to investigate the particular role, familiarity with the genre of the text plays in EFL learners' performance on two types of tests, i.e. cloze test and C-test. The study also attempts to determine whether C-test is a measure of language proficiency like cloze test.

Theoretical Background

Cloze Test and C-test

Cloze test has been with us for over fifty years. The term cloze was first introduced by Taylor (1953) who took it from the Gestalt concept of closure, which refers to

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the tendency of individuals to complete a pattern once they have grasped its overall significance. Cohen (1980), while considering cloze as an integrative valid measurement, states: "A cloze test in its form is a passage from which after every certain number of words a word is deleted" (p.91).

The term cloze is derived from 'Gestalt psychology' that substantiates a holistic view of perceiving the phenomena in the world. Oller (1972) attempted to explain the theoretical underpinning of cloze procedure by stating that: "Gestalt psychology forms the theoretical basis of cloze procedure; in the cloze technique, blanks are placed in prose where words in the text have been deleted" (p. 153).

The expectancy grammar forms one of the theoretical bases of the cloze procedure and it is based on the Expectancy Theory. Oller (1973) defined expectancy grammar as "a convenient label for psychologically real internalized grammar of normal language learners in general and second language learners in particular" (p.4). Elsewhere, he asserts, "it is possible to predict what would come next in any given sequence of elements in normal use of language, and such a phenomenon is at work in both receptive and productive modes of language performance" (Oller, 1979, p.151). According to this theory, examinees use their knowledge of internalized grammar to make accurate guesses about what elements of language have occurred in a text and what may occur next.

To further shed light on the issue of cloze procedure as a measure of language proficiency, a review of the related studies on this matter would seem warranted. Concerning the integrative perspective of testing, cloze test has lain in the foreground of research due to its prominent position among integrative tests and its wider adoption for proficiency assessment. Research on the construct validity of cloze test has focused on its ability to measure language proficiency (Chavez-Oller, Chihara, Weaver, & Oller, 1985; Jonz,1990), item difficulty (Abraham & Chapelle, 1992; Kobayashi, 2002), text topic (Alderson & Urquhart, 1985), and trait structure (Bachman, 1982). The criterion-related validity of cloze test has been approached in terms of its correlation with discrete-point tests. Researchers taking this approach have compared the performance on cloze test with that of a well-established independent measure of language proficiency, particularly the TOEFL. Their studies have indicated a wide range of correlation coefficients (Bachman, 1985).

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What cloze test really measures has been the subject of debate in 70s and 80s. The question is whether cloze test measures comprehension that ranges beyond the context immediately surrounding a cloze deletion. Some researchers have found cloze to be insensitive to such long-range constraint and, in addition, have found it to be unreliable (Alderson, 1979, 1980; Klein-Braley, 1983). These researchers contend that the act of restoring words to context involves mostly 'lower-order' linguistic ability and does not reflect the activation or application of higher-order cognitive processes.

Nevertheless, other researchers (Bachman, 1982, 1985; Jonz, 1990) find cloze to be stable, reliable, and sensitive to comprehension processes at various levels. The cloze procedure, they assert, challenges universal processing mechanisms at all levels from word recognition through concept building; therefore, responding to cloze tests must necessarily involve a great deal of higher-order language processing. Specifically, Bachman (1982, 1985) demonstrates that cloze scores reflect not merely lower-order phrase-processing, but complex skills ranging along a hierarchy of lower- to higher-order human language processing capacities. The findings of Jonz'study also supports those of previous studies by revealing that the cloze procedure is sensitive to constraints on response ranging well beyond the level of local syntax, and that the kinds of language knowledge required to complete cloze tests is virtually the same from one test to the next.

In spite of the many advantages of cloze test, it can be criticized on several grounds (see Klein-Braley, 1997; Klein-Braley & Raatz, 1984 for further information). The criticisms leveled against cloze test paved the way for the emergence of C-test as an alternative to this kind of test.

C-test is an adaptation of the cloze technique which was developed in Germany by Raatz and Klein-Braley (1981). C-test was developed to compensate for the shortcomings of the cloze procedure. It was claimed to be a justified replacement for the cloze test from both theoretical and psychometric perspectives. C-test, it is believed, owes its overall format and appearance to the cloze test. As Klein-Braley (1997) clearly states:

> … the C in the name C-Test was chosen specifically as an abbreviation of the word 'cloze' in order to indicate the relationship between the two test procedures. The C-test was an

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> attempt to retain the positive aspects of cloze tests but to remedy their technical defects. (p. 63)

C-test is based on the same theoretical principles as those of cloze test which were discussed before. Therefore, just a few words on the specific characteristics of C-test would suffice here. For example, the 'rule of 2' provides a specific procedure, and it is the defining feature of C-testing. As Klein-Braley and Raatz (1984) explain:

> A C-Test consists of a number of short texts (usually five or six) to which...the "rule of 2" has been applied. Beginning in the second sentence the second half of every second word is deleted until the required number of mutilations is reached. (p. 136)

There are some features of C-test, which compensate for the disadvantages of cloze test and result in a better measuring instrument. Grotjahn (1987, p. 220) reviews the advantages of C-test over cloze test, and argues for its "objectivity, reliability, representativeness, variety in content", etc. However, Klein-Braley (1997) maintains that C-test is not an all-purpose diagnostic/ proficiency/achievement/aptitude test. It has limited use and should be used under the supervision of test experts who should evaluate the suitability of the C-test for the target group before using the results to make any important decisions.

Moreover, C-test has been praised for its high reliability and validity indices, ease of construction, administration and scoring (e.g. Connelly, 1997; Dornyei & Katona, 1992; Klein-Braley, 1997; Klein-Braley & Raatz, 1984). Nonetheless, there are a few flaws that cast a shadow on its merits: lack of face validity (Hood, 1990; Jafarpur, 1995), poor item discrimination (Cleary, 1988; Kamimoto, 1993; Sigott & Korbel, 1996), and more importantly, unclear construct validity (Grotjahn, 1986; Jafarpur, 1995; Kamimoto, 1992).

The most controversial issue about C-testing, as related to the purpose of this study, is what it really measures. Chappelle and Abraham (1990) maintain that due to the shorter segment of text and the importance of clue in the immediate environment, C-testing most likely results in tests of more grammatical and less textual proficiency. Dornyei and Katona (1992), on the other hand, consider the C-test as a highly integrative test claiming that the only area it is less efficient in is

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testing grammar, for deletions are not at the sentence but at the word level. In contrast, there are researchers who have found indications of micro-level processing in the C-test (e.g. Cohen et al., 1984; Kamimoto, 1992) with almost no trace of macro-level processing. Cohen et al. (1984) maintain that because half the word is given in each mutilation, the examinees who do not understand the macro-context could still mobilize their vocabulary skills to fill in the appropriate discourse connectors without indulging in higher-level processing. In the same vein, Kamimoto states that C-test tends to measure vocabulary and grammatical proficiency and this tendency lies in the deletion procedure of C-test. Babaii and Ansari's investigation (2001) reveals that C-test can measure both macro- and micro- level features of language and is a reliable and valid procedure that mirrors the reduced redundancy principle. Following this study, Babaii and Jalali Moghaddam (2006) indicate that employing texts with more syntactic complexity and abstraction, along with eliminating clues with respect to the number of missing letters, can result in more difficult test tasks which, in turn, seem to encourage more frequent use of macro- level processing on the part of the test takers. Finding high correlations between the scores on a German C-test and TestDaF (Test of German as a Foreign Language), Eckes and Grotjahn (2006) also concluded that C-test is a highly reliable instrument, which measures the same general dimension as the four TestDaF sections: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Using Rasch analysis to examine the reliability and concurrent validity of the measure**,** Lee-Ellis (2009) also investigated the development and validation of C-Test in Korean context. The Rasch analysis demonstrated excellent reliability and validity indices, and the results revealed the potential of C-Test as a quick proficiency indicator.

The Effect of Genre as an Aspect of Test Method

As to the term genre, the variable under study, Hyland (2002) states that although analysts have a consensus on its nature, they disagree on the emphasis they put on the role of the text or context, that is, they do not have an agreement on whether the role of the texts in social communities is more important or the way in which those texts are organized to reflect the nature and construct of these communities. The most influential definition of genre in the field of language teaching and applied linguistics is the one provided by Swales (1990) that, "A genre comprises a class of communicative events, members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale of the genre" (p.58).

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Paltridge (2001) by doing a series of studies indicates that genre is crucial in English for Specific Purposes and the entire field of English language teaching and testing. Paltridge'studies demonstrate how genre-based systems can be developed and suggest ways in which genre can be applied to language assessment, i.e. genre-based assessment.

As Paltridge (2001, p.104) argues, this type of assessment has several advantages over traditional forms, including a better awareness by the learners of the "purpose, structure, and grammatical characteristics of genre in a way that helps them deal with the unfamiliar content and vocabulary in the testing material".

The results of Paltridge (2001)'studies are consistent with what Johns (1997) argues about the role of genre in reading comprehension; that is, "if students can learn to view the various features of texts as purposeful rather than arbitrary, as situated and generic rather than autonomous, then they can begin to see how texts fit into a broader social context …." (p. 93).

As Lee (2001) asserts, knowledge about genre, text type, register and discourse can help test makers to make informed selections from the mass of text available. Besides, Ranalli (2002) by considering a number of studies on text selection for cloze (e.g. Klein-Braley & Raatz, 1984; Kobayashi, 2002; Sasaki, 2000) concludes that language variety, content, degree of cohesion and scheme familiarity are the important variables that should be considered in selecting texts for any reduced redundancy test. Meanwhile, Ranalli, by researching different scoring procedures on cloze, holds that the items of reduced redundancy tests should not contradict each other on the basis of these variables.

Bachman (1990) argues that particular types of language tests (e.g., multiple choice, cloze, dictation) themselves constitute genres and these activate certain expectations in test takers familiar with them, thus facilitating the task of test taking for these individuals, while making the task more difficult for the test takers not familiar with the particular type. In line with this argument, with reference to the role of genre of the texts in the language tests, Paltridge (2001, p.57) argues that in language testing, genre plays an undeniable role since "students need an understanding of the socio-cultural context and setting of a genre, as well as the relationship between themselves and the audience(s) of their texts".

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Following Bachman (1990), Kobayashi (2002, 2004) by doing a series of studies on test organization and response format supports the method facets in reading comprehension tests. Kobayashi (2004) argues that there is a systematic relationship between the students' test performance and the effects of the nature of the input and the nature of the expected response on reading comprehension tests. It is also stressed that, "it is extremely important for language testers, or anyone who makes judgments on the basis of test results, to pay attention to the test methods used when they produce their assessment instruments or interpret test scores" (Kobayashi, 2004, p.8).

According to Paltridge (2001), the study of genre is important in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and in the entire field of English language teaching and testing. The genre-based assessment demonstrates how the learner will perform in the target language in a real world situation, in particular "where a learner's target performance needs can be identified with some degree of certainty" (p.104).

Therefore, in order to contribute to this line of research, the present study with a causal-comparative design was conducted which will be described and delineated below.

Purpose and Research Questions of the Study

Investigating the factors that influence performance on language tests has been the focus of much research in the area of language testing. When test performance is affected by the elements external to the test takers' language ability, the validity of score interpretation is jeopardized. According to Bachman (1990), it is important for testers to be aware of these factors and their influences and, if possible, minimize them so there would be less doubt about the real performance of the test takers. As Yi'an (1998) asserts, "a language test-taker's performance is a function of two constant variables: his/her language ability and test methods" (p.21).

As was previously indicated, there are contrasting views concerning what C-test really measures. The reason for the inclusion of C-test as a measure in this study was to investigate whether or not it can assess the testee's language proficiency like cloze test. Regarding the claim concerning the effect of genre familiarity as a test method on test performance, this study aimed at finding out whether familiarity with genre can affect cloze test and C-test results. The discussion of the problem

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under scrutiny resulted in a number of questions which were stated into a number of hypotheses as follows:

1. There is no significant difference between the performance of EFL learners on cloze tests with familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres.

2. There is no significant difference between the performance of EFL learners on C-tests with familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres.

3. There is no significant correlation between cloze test and C-test with familiar genre.

4. There is no significant correlation between cloze test and C-test with unfamiliar genre.

Method

Participants

The population from which the participants of the present study were selected included senior university students majoring in English Literature at the University of Isfahan. The rationale behind selecting English literature students was that due to the requirements of their field of study, these students had to pass specific literary courses such as novel, literary criticism, English poetry, drama etc., and were thus familiar with the literary genre.

For ensuring the homogeneity of the participants in terms of reading skill, the reading section of IBT (version 2006) was administered and 60 students whose scores were one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as intermediate level students. However, 9 students were excluded from further data analysis because they did not complete all the required tasks, and therefore, only 51 participants were retained.

Materials

For the purpose of data collection, a number of instruments were utilized as delineated below:

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Internet-based TOEFL (IBT).
The reading section of IBT (version 2006) was administered both to assure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their reading ability and as a criterion to validate the newly developed cloze tests and C-tests. The rationale behind choosing this test was that since IBT seems to be academic, it is appropriate for university context.

Teacher- made cloze test.
Two teacher-made cloze tests with two different genres (literary versus political) were developed for the purpose of the study (see Appendix A).

The texts for cloze test passages were selected from BBC Political Archive (2005) and Critical Commentary and Textual Commentary (Malcolm & Ransom, 1993). In order to ensure the content validity of the texts, they were given to experts from English department and Political Science department at the University of Isfahan to be reviewed and judged. The selected passages enjoyed nearly equal readability indices, utilizing the Flesch Reading Ease Score (FRES). The estimated average Flesch Reading Ease for the texts was 40, which is more challenging than average difficulty level. In order to decide on the readability index of the texts, five passages were randomly selected from the textbooks studied by the students. The readability index of the passages was then calculated using Flesch Reading Ease Score (FRES) and the average served as the index for the selection of the texts. The tests were constructed by deleting every 7th word from the two passages and leaving the first and last lines intact.

The applied scoring method was exact word method. This scoring method was chosen because it has been observed to correlate highly with other scoring methods, for example, the acceptable word scoring method (Alderson, 1979).

Teacher-made C-test.
Two teacher-made C-tests with two different genres (literary versus political) were prepared for the purpose of the study (see Appendix B).

Two C-tests comprising fourteen short texts, each with 20 mutilations, were constructed Based on Klein-Braley (1997). The fourteen excerpts were taken from BBC Political Archive (2005) and Critical Commentary and Textual Commentary (Malcolm & Ransom, 1993). Expert judgment was then asked for to ensure the

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content validity of the texts. The estimated average Flesch reading ease for the texts was 40, which is more challenging than average difficulty level. In order to decide on the readability index of the texts, like what was done for the cloze test, five passages were randomly selected from the textbooks studied by the participants. The readability index of the passages was then calculated and the average served as the index for the selection of the texts.

The 20 deletions in each passage began in the second sentence by deleting the second half of every second word and leaving the last sentence intact. Any one-letter words like 'a' was not deleted and left uncounted in the deletion sequence. After the last deletion, the text continued up to a natural break. In constructing the C-tests, consideration was made in arranging the texts in an ascending order of difficulty, starting with a confidence-building text. This was done by applying the measure of text difficulty, i.e. Flesch Reading Ease Score (FRES). The applied scoring method was exact word method.

Procedures

Pilot study.

A pilot study was run in order to: 1) determine the characteristics of the items in the newly developed tests (teacher-made cloze tests and C-tests) to modify or discard items if necessary; 2) estimate the reliability of the newly developed tests; 3) validate the newly developed tests, and 4) estimate the amount of time needed to answer the tests. To this aim, a sample group of 20 intermediate senior participants enjoying characteristics similar to the target group were chosen to take part in this phase of the study.

First, the reading section of IBT (version 2006), consisting of 33 items, was administered to the participants. The estimated internal consistency measures (KR-21) of this test was computed as 0.81.

The participants were then given the newly developed cloze tests, which consisted of two texts with two different genres, i.e. literary and political. As a result of pretesting, some of the items which were recognized as non-functional were deleted and replaced with some other ones. Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive statistics of each test used in the piloting phase.

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Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the cloze tests

Cloze test	Mean	Variance	KR-21	K
(literary)	17.65	32.34	0.77	30
(political)	15.8	30.27	0.75	30

The computed KR-21 revealed that both tests enjoyed high reliability values (Table 1). In order to empirically validate the newly developed tests, the standard test chosen as the criterion for the validation process of these tests was the reading section of IBT. Tables 2 and 3, respectively, show the correlation coefficients between the scores on the two cloze tests and IBT. As illustrated in the following Tables, the correlation coefficients are 0.92 and 0.88 respectively indicating that there is a high correlation between these two newly developed tests and IBT, thus guarantying their criterion-related validity.

Table 2
Correlation between the scores on the cloze test (literary) and IBT

		IBT	Cloze (literary)
IBT	Pearson Correlation	1	.925(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3
Correlation between the scores on the cloze test (political) and IBT

		IBT	cloze (political)
IBT	Pearson Correlation	1	.888(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

After the cloze tests, the participants took the newly developed C- tests of literary and political genres. The early version of the newly developed C-tests consisted of 14 texts. As a result of pretesting, some of the items which were recognized as non-functional were deleted and replaced with some other ones.

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Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate the descriptive statistics of each test (subtests) used in the piloting phase.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics of the C-test (literary genre) and its subtests (early version)

Subtest	Mean	Variance	KR-21	IF	*K*
1	10.4	25.4	.80	.52*	20*
2	11.7	26.4	.81	.58*	20*
3	12	29.1	.83	.60*	20*
4	6.3	22.45	.80	.31	20
5	12.2	27.7	.82	.61*	20*
6	6.5	23.83	.81	.32	20
7	11.3	28.4	.82	.56*	20*
C-test	57.7	187.27	.86	.57	100

*Subtests comprising the final version of the C-test are asterisked.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics of the C-test (political genre) and its subtests (early version)

Subtest	Mean	Variance	KR-21	IF	*K*
1	12.3	28	.83	.61*	20*
2	9.2	25.5	.80	.46*	20*
3	6.1	19.6	.78	.30	20
4	11	27.2	.81	.55*	20*
5	9.7	21.3	.76	.48*	20*
6	6.5	19.2	.77	.32	20
7	10.3	24.7	.79	.51*	20*
C-test	52.65	145.08	.82	.52	100

*Subtests comprising the final version of the C-test are asterisked.

The internal consistency measures (KR-21) of the individual tests (sub-tests) revealed that all of them enjoyed high reliability values (Tables 4 and 5). In fact, item characteristic indices functioned as a criterion for selecting ten subtests (10×20 = 200 test items) constituting the final version of the C-tests which consisted of only those subtests which enjoyed an Item Facility (IF) index above 0.32. To establish the empirical validity of the C-tests (final versions), the Pearson

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product-moment correlation coefficient between the final versions of the C-test (k = 200) and TOEFL was computed.

Table 6
Correlation between the scores on the C-test (literary) and IBT

		IBT	**C-test (literary)**
IBT	Pearson Correlation	1	.873(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7
Correlation between the scores on the C-test (political) and IBT

		IBT	**C-test (political)**
IBT	Pearson Correlation	1	.837(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in Tables 6 and 7, the correlation coefficients are 0.87 and 0.83 for literary and political C-tests respectively indicating that there is a high correlation between these two tests and IBT, thus confirming their criterion validity.

Main study.

Data collection of the main study was carried out in three sessions. During the first session, the reading section of IBT (version 2006) was administered to the participants for the sake of homogenizing them in terms of language proficiency. The time allocation, according to the instruction provided in the book, was 33 minutes. To score the test, correct points were added up to a total sum and incorrect ones were ignored. There was no negative point for the wrong answers or for the unanswered items.

Having obtained IBT results, decision was made as to choose those participants whose score range fell one standard deviation above and below the mean. Fifty one

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students met this homogeneity criterion and were thus selected to serve as the participants of the study.

The second session was conducted one week later, during which the participants were given the two cloze tests of literary (k=30) and political (k=30) genres. The students were also given detailed instruction on how to take the tests. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the second session lasted for 35 minutes and the scoring procedure was the same as IBT.

During the third session (a week later), the participants took the two C-tests of literary (k=100) and political (k=100) genre. The time allocation, set to be 40 minutes, was considered an appropriate time based on the findings of the pilot study. The same scoring procedure as that of IBT and the cloze tests was applied to the C-tests.

Results

The Effect of Genre Familiarity on Cloze Test

In order to investigate the first hypothesis, paired-samples t-test was run to compare the performance of the subjects on the two tests, that is, cloze tests with familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres. The descriptive statistics displayed in Table 8, indicate that the mean scores on the cloze tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres are 18.50 and 16.70 respectively. Therefore, it seems that the subjects performed better on the cloze test with familiar, i.e. literary genre.

Table 8
Descriptive statistics for the cloze tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	**Cloze (literary)**	18.5098	51	5.48588
	Cloze (political)	16.7059	51	5.29639

As Figure 1 clearly shows, the overall mean of the cloze test with familiar genre, i.e. literary is significantly higher than that of the cloze test with unfamiliar genre, i.e. political.

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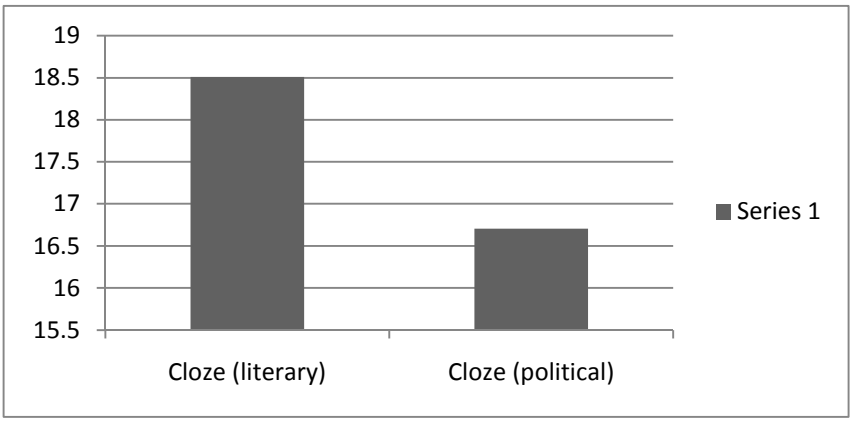

Figure 1: Mean comparison between the cloze tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres

The results obtained from paired samples t-test are demonstrated in Table 9, the mean difference between the two variables is 1.80. The illustrated t-value for this t-test is 5.06 and the significance value is 0.000 (2-tailed). Since the t-value is significant at 0.000 (less than 0.05), the two variables, i.e. familiar genre (M = 18.50, SD = 5.48) and unfamiliar genre (M = 16.70, SD = 5.29) differ significantly in terms of their effect on test performance. The effect size index was also estimated to be .33 which indicates a large effect according to Cohen et al. (1988).

Table 9
Paired-samples t-test for the cloze tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres

Paired Differences							**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
		Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**				
					Lower	**Upper**			
Pair 1	Cloze(literary) Cloze(political)	1.80	2.54	.356	1.08	2.51	5.06	50	.000

Based on the results obtained in Table 9, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the performance of the subjects on cloze tests with

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familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres. Thus, the first null hypothesis is rejected. This would support the claim that the type of genre has a significant effect on the performance of EFL learners on cloze test. While the effect of test method was kept at minimum, the genre which was familiar to the subjects helped them to a large extent.

The Effect of Genre Familiarity on C-test

In order to investigate the second hypothesis, a paired-samples t-test was run to compare the performance of the subjects on the C-tests with familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres. The descriptive statistics displayed in Table 10 indicates that the mean scores on the C-tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres are 59.70 and 54.23 respectively. Therefore, it can be inferred that the subjects performed better on the C-test with familiar literary genre.

Table 10
Descriptive statistics for the C-tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres

		Mean	**N**	**Std. Deviation**
Pair 1	**C-test (literary)**	59.7059	51	13.27146
	C-test (political)	54.2353	51	11.87702

As Figure 2 clearly shows, the overall mean of the C-test with familiar genre, i.e. literary is noticeably higher than that of the C-test with unfamiliar genre, i.e. political.

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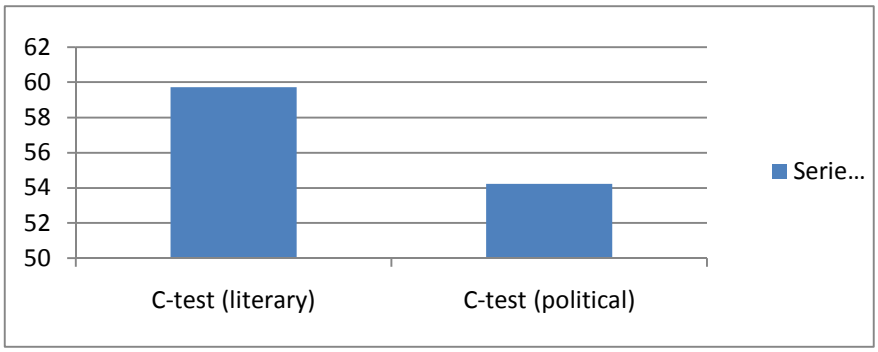

Figure 2: Mean comparison between the C-tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres

The results obtained from the paired samples t-test are demonstrated in Table 11. The mean difference between the two variables is 5.47. The obtained t-value for this t-test is 4.86 and the significance value is 0.000 *(2-tailed)*. This indicates that the two variables, i.e. familiar genre (M = 59.70, SD = 13.27) and unfamiliar genre (M = 54.23, SD = 11.87) differ significantly in terms of their effect on test performance. The effect size was also estimated to be .32 which indicates a large effect according to Cohen et al. (1988).

Table 11
Paired-samples t-test for the C-tests with familiar and unfamiliar genres

Paired Differences							**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
		Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**				
					Lower	**Upper**			
Pair 1	C-test(literary) C-test(political)	5.47	8.038	1.125	3.209	7.731	4.86	50	.000

Based on the results illustrated in the above table, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the performance of the subjects on C-tests with

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familiar (literary) and unfamiliar (political) genres. Thus, the second null hypothesis is rejected and it can be claimed that the type of genre has a significant effect on the performance of EFL learners on C-test.

Relationship between Cloze Test and C-test with Familiar Genre

In order to analyze the third hypothesis, Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated to probe the relationship between cloze test and C-test with familiar genre, i.e. literary. As displayed in Table 12, the Pearson correlation coefficient was estimated to be .80.

Table 12
Pearson correlation between the cloze test and C-test with familiar genre

		Cloze (literary)	C-test (literary)
Cloze (literary)	Pearson Correlation	1	.800(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	51	51

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As depicted in Table 12, it can be concluded that the third hypothesis (no significant correlation between cloze test and C-test with familiar genre) is also rejected. That is to say, there is a significant correlation between cloze test and C-test with familiar genre.

Relationship between Cloze Test and C-test with Unfamiliar Genre

To investigate the fourth hypothesis, Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated to probe the relationship between cloze test and C-test with unfamiliar genre, i.e. politics. As displayed in Table 13, the Pearson correlation coefficient was estimated to be .77.

Based on the results shown in Table 13, it can be concluded that the fourth hypothesis (no significant correlation between cloze test and C-test with unfamiliar genre) is also rejected. That is, there exists a significant correlation between cloze test and C-test with unfamiliar genre.

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Table 13
Pearson Correlation between the cloze-test and C-test with unfamiliar genre

		Cloze (literary)	C-test (literary)
Cloze (literary)	Pearson Correlation	1	.774 (**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	51	51

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

This study aimed at investigating whether familiarity with genre could affect EFL learners' performance on two types of tests, that is, cloze test and C-test. Attempts were also made to determine whether C-test is a measure of language proficiency like cloze test. As a result of the data analysis, a number of findings emerged which are discussed in this section.

The first hypothesis proposed that genre familiarity has no effect on the performance of EFL learners on cloze test. However, the statistical measures proved the opposite, thus rejecting this hypothesis. In other words, analyses demonstrated that EFL learners outperformed on the cloze test with familiar genre (Table 9).

The second hypothesis predicted no effects of the familiarity with genre on EFL learners' performance on C-test. This hypothesis was also rejected since the results showed that when the genre is familiar to the students, they have much more comprehension of what they read than when the genre of the text is unfamiliar (Table 11).

The findings indicate that EFL learners' familiarity with genre has a significant impact on their performance on both cloze test and C-test. These findings validate Bachman's (1990) model of language ability, which was the main inspiration for this study, empirically. In fact, this study focused on 'the nature of input' as one of the five categories of method facets by manipulating genre. The results confirm Bachman's (1990) hypothesis that if the language of the input in a test is

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characteristic of a genre that is unfamiliar to the testees, tasks that depend on the interpretation of that input would be relatively difficult.

The findings are also consistent with those of Paltridge (1996) asserting, "learners' awareness of the purpose and structure of the genre can help them in dealing with the unfamiliar content and vocabulary in the testing materials" (p.104).

The obtained findings support the beneficial role of background knowledge (content familiarity) in test performance. As far as the effect of content familiarity on test performance is concerned, the findings confirm several studies which provide evidence in support of the hypothesized interaction between students' major fields and text content across different methods. Alderson and Urquhart (1983, 1985) reviewed three studies and reported that academic background can play an important role in test performance. They concluded that when the learners were familiar with the content area, they were able to answer direct and overview questions with equal ease; when this familiarity with the content area was lacking, they could still answer direct questions, but their ability to answer overview questions greatly decreased. Similarly, Afghari and Tavakoli (2004) captured the same findings regarding the effect of content familiarity on test performance. It was concluded that when students were familiar with the content of the test, they performed better than when they took the test with unfamiliar content.

The third and fourth hypotheses of the present study were made in reply to the research questions which aimed to uncover the relationship between cloze test and C-test across the same genre. However, the obtained results led to the rejection of both.

These findings suggest that there is a significant correlation between cloze test, as a measure of language proficiency (Bachman, 1982, 1985; Jonz, 1990), and C-test with both familiar and unfamiliar genres. Therefore, the findings confirm those researchers who recognized C-test as a measure of language proficiency rather than measures of specific skills (Babaii & Ansari, 2001; Dornyei & Katona, 1992; Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006; Lee-Ellis, 2009).

For instance, Dornyei and Katona (1992), in their work on an English C-test, pointed out that C-test is a highly integrative measuring instrument, working well

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in samples of various difficulty and homogeneity levels and also a reliable and valid measure of general language proficiency. Babaii and Ansari (2001) verified that C-test can measure both micro- and macro- level features of language. That is, C-test can tap various aspects of language proficiency to varying degrees. This, according to Babaii and Ansari, can be assumed to be a step forward towards establishing C-test's construct validity. Finally, the high correlations between cloze test and C-test obtained in this study lend support to the recent findings by Lee-Ellis (2009). In the light of applying Rasch measurement, Lee-Ellis demonstrated that C-test is not only reliable and valid, but also a quick measure for assessing students' proficiency as well.

Conclusion

In sum, the results of the present study revealed that genre familiarity has a significant effect on the performance of EFL learners on both cloze test and C-test. The results also indicated that there is a significant correlation between cloze test, as a measure of language proficiency and C-test with both familiar and unfamiliar genres. Therefore, the findings lend support to the claim that C-test is a measure of language proficiency rather than of specific skills or components. This finding can possibly further support the hypothesis that C-test can be an integrative test.

Moreover, the findings of this study could have some implications for test-makers and EFL teachers. First, the effect of familiarity with the genre of the text on EFL learners' performance on the two types of tests, i.e. cloze test and C-test was established in the present study based on empirical evidence. The findings suggest that it is important for test-makers to consider genre familiarity as a method facet and try to minimize the influence of this intervening factor to provide a more accurate and meaningful measure of learners' language abilities. This is particularly urgent when test results are used to make major decisions for educational purposes, for example, university entrance exams.

The second implication is centered in the finding that C-test is a measure of language proficiency like cloze test. In spite of the many advantages of C-test, it is a neglected language proficiency test in Iran. According to Dornyei and Katona (1992), C-test is an excellent testing method as it provides a good and quick assessment of general language proficiency. Klein-Braley (1994) also assert that C-test is one of the most versatile test types and can be adapted to many different

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purposes and incorporated into everyday teaching and testing activities. Therefore, it is highly recommended that test-makers utilize C-test along with cloze test in different language proficiency tests.

Like many other scientific works, this study also suffers from a number of limitations which could potentially impede the generalization of the findings of the study. First, this study investigated only one level of proficiency, the intermediate level, thus not allowing generalization across a broader range of proficiency levels. The result may change when learners of higher or lower language proficiencies are considered. Second, fifty-one students participated in this study. Larger samples, hence more representative of the larger population, may yield more conclusive and reliable results. Finally, it is difficult to evaluate and generalize the findings in research which involves human samples. One can hardly claim that all the variables have been controlled throughout the study since some uncontrollable variables such as fatigue, unwillingness to participate etc. may have affected the obtained results.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Cloze Tests

Name: …….

Direction: Read the passages, then write the words that best fill the blanks in both grammar and meaning.

Passage A.

A legislature is a type of representative deliberative assembly with the power to create and change laws. The law created by a legislature ……. called legislation. Legislatures are known by ……. names, the most common being parliament ……. congress, although these terms also have ……. specific meanings.

The main job of ……. legislature is to make and amend ……. . In parliamentary systems of government, the ……. is formally supreme and appoints the ……. . In presidential systems of government, the ……. is considered a power branch which ……. equal to and independent of the ……. . In addition to enacting laws, legislatures ……. have exclusive authority to raise taxes ……. adopt the budget and other money ……. .

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The primary components of a legislature ……. one or more *chambers* or *houses*: ……. that debate and vote upon bills. ……. legislature with only one house is ……. unicameral. A bicameral legislature possesses two ……. chambers, usually described as an upper ……. and a lower house, which often ……. in duties, powers, and the methods ……. for the selection of members.

In ……. parliamentary systems, the lower house is ……. more powerful house while the upper ……. is merely a chamber of advice ……. review. However, in presidential systems, the ……. of the two houses are often ……. or equal. In federations, it is ……. for the upper house to represent ……. component states. For this purpose the upper house may either contain the delegates of state governments, or be elected according to a formula that grants equal representation to states with smaller populations.

Passage B.

Orwell is significant for his unwavering commitment, both as a man and as an artist, to personal freedom and social justice. His unpretentious self-examination and his ability ……. perceive the social effects of political ……. inspired Irving Hove to call him ……. greatest moral force in English letters ……. the last several decades. Foremost among ……. work is his novel Nineteen Eighty-Four; ……. society it presents has become the ……. for modern political repression. Orwell was ……. in a lower-middle class family that ……. to provide him a decent education.

……. mother managed to find him a place, ……. reduced rates, in a well-known preparatory ……. where, despite his intellectual accomplishment, he ……. demanded because of his low social ……. . In his essay "Such, Such Were ……. Joys" Orwell explained the guilt and ……. he felt throughout his school years ……. how those experiences fostered his extreme ……. to social victimization.

After attending Eton ……. scholarship, Orwell enlisted in the Indian Imperial ……. . Stationed in Burma, he encountered the ……. realities of colonial rule; his reactions ……. clearly evoked in the essays "Shooting an Elephant" ……. "A Hanging".

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Disgusted with colonial life, ……. left the police after five years, ……. to become a writer. His first ……., Down and Out in Paris and London, ……. was based on a year he spent ……. self-imposed poverty, sympathetically examines the life ……. the poor. While writing this book, …….discovered that the lower classes of society are exploited much like colonial subjects.

Appendix B: C- Tests

Name :……

Directions: The following tests have been developed by removing the second half of every second word in a text. You are supposed to reconstruct the texts. The number of dashes represents the number of deleted letters. Example:

My name is Tom. I'm t-- oldest ch--- in m- family. I ha- - a sister a-- two brot----.

Your job is to complete the text as:

My name is Tom I'm the oldest child in my family. I have a sister and two brothers.

Passage 1

As the discord between and among India, Pakistan and Kashmir continues, it can readily be argued that Kashmiri officials have grown tiresome of the perpetual battle. Much o- the ong- - - - concern i- focused up- - the nuc- - - - bomb te- - - that ha- - taken pl- - - between t- - ever-feuding In- - - and Paki- - - - ; indeed, t- - world he- - its bre- - - when In- - - conducted sev- - - - nuclear bo- - tests la- - year. N- - to b- outdone, Pakistan retaliated by detonating its own nuclear bomb test just a few days later. As a result of this blatant show of force between two nations that have a long history of discord, national leaders all across the globe imposed sanctions to clearly state their opposition to such terrorist acts. However, Kashmir has forever been powerless to assert its desires.

Passage 2

Winds of change blow through Egypt politics."Political conge- - - - - " is t- - phrase Egyp- - - - - are us- - - to desc- - - - a deepening stan- - - - between t- - opposition a- - the gover- - - - - . The oppos- - - - - is n- - strong eno- - - to br- - -

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down t- - government. B- - the gover- - - - - wary o- a possible intern- - - - - - - outcry can- - - quash t- - opposition by force. On the day parliament approved a change to the constitution to allow Egyptians to choose their president in a direct vote for the first time in their history, the opposition movement called a news conference to denounce the proposed amendment.

Passage 3

It is easy to understand where the misconception that all Irish politics revolves around the national question comes from. For a st- - - that i- the is- - - in Ir- - - politics th- - gains mo- - international cove- - - - and atte- - - - - . It i- also indub- - - - - - true th- - those par- - - - that a- - most prom- - - - - , internationally, d- originate i- that clea- - - - . However th- - ignores t- - reality th- - there are a number of Irish political parties who do not originate in this cleavage, such as Labor, and that the national question is one of the more issues in modern national Irish politics.

Passage 4

The big powers have for long made efforts to interlink their economies in a bid to forge a more enhanced spirit of cooperation and shun exaggerated differences among them. By do- - - so, th- - - countries a- - compelled t- strive f- - convergence a- - collaboration sim- - - because t- - likelihood o- threats t- economic inte- - - - - automatically res- - - - in giv- - - top prio- - - - to multil - - - - - - interests. Su- - patterns a- - often se- - both i- the deve- - - - - and developing countries. Great powers have essentially divided the world among themselves and infiltrate the developing states by "directing" their economic affairs.

Passage 5

Iranian expatriates are a prosperous lot, a community that the nation can be proud of. Ironically, t- - more th- - three mil - - - - non-resident Iran - - - - live mos - - - in t - - United Sta - - -, a country wi - - which t - - Islamic Repu - - - - has n - diplomatic rela - - - - -.

After t - - Islamic Revol - - - - - of 1979, th - - - was a - exodus o - Iranians t - the We - -. This inf - - - was further compounded by the Iraqi-imposed war in 1980.

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History tells us that in the aftermath of any revolution or in the case of war, the mass movement of people, particularly from among the affluent sections of the society, like the business and the ruling classes, is a natural consequence.

Passage 6

There are elaborate references to Rilke's *"The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge"* in Sadeq Hedayat's *"The Blind Owl"* (*"Buf-e Kur"*).

Like Ri- - -, Hedayat w- - an intr- - - - - and a sens- - - - - man w- - was mu- - concerned wi- - the pa- - and wi- - mysticism, lonel- - - - -, fear a- - death. H-, too, wr- - - his no- - -, *"Buf-e Kur"*, i- journal fo- - with fi- - - person narr- - - - -. His no- - - is a ta- -told by a man who is physically and mentally ill, writing only "for his shadow." Among the similarities, the most striking one is the "prose poetry" of both books. Hedayat's *"Buf-e Kur"*, too, is poetic and rhythmic.

Passage 7

Even though Hafiz's odes defy classification, they can be loosely divided into four types:

1. Lyrics i- which t- - dominant th- - - is hu- - - love a- - real (a- opposed t- symbolic) wi- -.

2. Odes wh- - - deal prim- - - - - with myst- - - - love a- - with wi- -, rose, lo- - -, etc. a- symbols.

3. Po- - - in wh- - - Hafiz ma- - - quick shi- - - from o- - theme, images, or allusions to another. The odes in this group have multiple themes and luxuriant images.

4. Finally, there are the poems that contain a relatively large dosage of sociopolitical undertones.

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Passage 8

Shāhnāmé is an enormous poetic opus written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi around 1000 AD and is the national epic of Iran. Aside fr- - its lite- - - - importance, t- - Shāhnāmeh h- - been piv- - - - for revi- - - - the Per- - - - language subse- - - - - to t- - massive infl- - - - - of Ara- - -. This volum- - - - - work refl- - - - Greater Ir- -'s history, cult- - - - values, anc- - - - religions, a- - profound se- - - of natio - - - - -. Ferdowsi comp- - - - - the Shâhnameh when national independence had been compromised. While there are memorable heroes and heroines of the classical type in this work, the real, ongoing hero is Iran itself.

Passage 9

Expressionism was a cultural movement originating in Germany at the start of the 20th-century as a reaction to positivism and other artistic movements such as naturalism and impressionism. It sou- - - to exp- - - - the mea- - - - of "be- - - alive" a- - emotional exper- - - - - rather th- - physical rea- - - - . It i- the tend- - - - of a- artist t- distort rea- - - - for a- emotional eff - - - ; it i- a subjective a- - form. Expres- - - - - - - is exhi- - - - - in ma- - art fo- - - , including painting, literature, theatre, film, architecture and music. The term often implies emotional angst. In a general sense, painters such as Matthias Grünewald and El Greco can be called expressionist, though in practice, the term is applied mainly to 20th century works.

Passage 10

Hafiz is by universal consent the supreme master of the art of the Persian GHAZAL – a literary form generally equated with the lyric;though perhaps the sonnet is in some repects a closer equivalent.When i- is consi- - - - - that lite- - - - critics o- undoubted auth- - - - - have esti- - - - - Persian poe- - - as a- important contri- - - - - - to t- - art o- self-expression i- metre a- - rhyme, i- may b- readily conc- - - - that Ha- - - is a po- - eminently wo- - - study; a- - it may without undue optimism be conjectured that as a master of asplendid artform he can still teach useful lessons to all who are interested in the evolution of poetic expression.

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