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Title	The Minimal English Test : Its Correlation with the TOEIC Bridge : A Preliminary Study
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Citation	[岐阜大学地域科学部研究報告] vol.[17] p.[65]-[70]
Issue Date	2005-09-30
Rights	
Version	岐阜大学地域科学部 (Faculty of Regional Studies, Gifu University)
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12099/4591">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12099/4591</a>

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# **The Minimal English Test: Its Correlation with the TOEIC Bridge: A Preliminary Study\***

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(Received May 27, 2005)

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the correlation between the scores of the Minimal English Test (MET) developed by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003) and the scores of the TOEIC Bridge (TB) developed by the Educational Testing Service. Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003) showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the scores of the MET and the scores the College Entrance Examination (English Part) 2002 administered by the College Entrance Examination Center ( $r = .68$ ,  $p < .05$ , and  $n = 154$ ).<sup>1</sup> (We will call the College Entrance Examination (English Part) 2002 the Center Test (CT) 2002 hereafter.) The MET is a 5 minute test which requires the test taker to fill correct English words into blank spaces of the given sentences written on one A4 paper, while listening to the CD providing the sentences. On the other hand, the CT 2002 contains questions about pronunciation, grammar, reordering of paragraphs, and reading comprehension, but does not contain questions about listening comprehension. It takes 80 minutes to complete the CT 2002. This indicates that two independent tests with quite different characteristics measure the same parts of one's English proficiency to a certain degree. If this is so, one may predict that the scores of the MET will have a correlation with the scores of another totally different type of English test to some degree.

In this paper, we choose the TOEIC Bridge as a type of English test totally different from the MET, and investigate the correlation between the MET and the TB. In the present research, we collected data from 96 subjects at the Faculty of Education of Gifu University. As a result of a correlation analysis, it turned out that the scores of the MET had a moderate correlation with the total scores of the TB ( $r = .51$ ). It is also shown that the scores of the MET more strongly correlated with the total scores of the TB than did the scores of each of the five parts of the test.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of the present research. Section 3 analyzes the data, and Section 4 concludes the paper.

## **2. This Study**

Section 2.1 provides information about the participants. Section 2.2 gives an overview of the materials. Finally, Section 2.3 provides the procedure of the research.

### **2.1. Participants**

In this survey, the samples were obtained from freshmen of the Faculty of Education at Gifu University. The total number of participants was 96.

### **2.2. Materials**

### 2.2.1. The Minimal English Test (MET)

The MET is a simple test which requires the test taker to supply a correct English word with four letters or fewer into each of the 72 blank spaces for the given sentences written on one piece of A4 paper while listening to the sentences on a CD. The MET is based on Lessons 1 and 2 of the textbook for college freshmen written by Sakamoto, Furuya, and Hubenthal (2001) and the CD that accompanies it.<sup>2</sup> The textbook contains essays on the modern society of the United States. The sentences on the CD last about five minutes at a speed of 125 words per minute. The MET is shown below.

#### The Minimal English Test

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Score: \_\_\_\_\_ /72

Please write an English word with four letters or fewer into each blank, while listening to the CD.

1. The majority of people have at least one pet at ( ) time in their ( ).
2. Sometimes the relationship between a pet ( ) or cat and its owner is ( ) close
3. that ( ) begin to resemble ( ) other in their appearance and behavior.
4. On the other ( ), owners of unusual pets ( ) as tigers or snakes
5. sometimes ( ) to protect themselves ( ) their own pets.
6. Thirty years ( ) the idea of an inanimate ( ) first arose.
7. This was the pet ( ), which became a craze ( ) the United States and
8. spread ( ) other countries as ( ).
9. People ( ) large sums of money for ordinary rocks and assigned ( ) names.
10. They tied a leash around the rock and pulled ( ) down the street just ( ) a dog.
11. The rock owners ( ) talked ( ) their pet rocks.
12. Now ( ) we have entered the computer age, ( ) have virtual pets.
13. The Japanese Tamagotchi---( ) imaginary chicken ( )---
14. ( ) the precursor of ( ) virtual pets.
15. Now there ( ) an ever-increasing number of such virtual ( )
16. which mostly young people are adopting ( ) their ( ).
17. And ( ) your virtual pet ( ),
18. you ( ) reserve a permanent resting place ( ) the Internet in a virtual pet cemetery.
19. Sports are big business. Whereas Babe Ruth, the ( ) famous athlete of ( ) day,
20. was well-known ( ) earning as ( ) as the President of the United States, the average
21. salary ( ) today's professional baseball players is ( ) times that of the President.
22. ( ) a handful of sports superstars earn 100 times ( ) through their contracts
23. ( ) manufacturers of clothing, ( ), and sports equipment.
24. But every generation produces ( ) or two legendary athletes ( ) rewrite
25. the record books, and whose ability and achievements ( ) remembered ( ) generations.
26. ( ) the current generation Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan are two ( ) legendary
27. figures, ( ) of whom ( ) achieved almost mythical status.
28. The ( ) that a large number of professional athletes ( ) huge incomes
29. has ( ) to increased competition throughout ( ) sports world.
30. Parents ( ) their children to sports training camps ( ) an early age.
31. Such ( ) typically practice three to ( ) hours a day,
32. ( ) weekend ( ) during their school vacations
33. in order ( ) better their chances of eventually obtaining ( ) well-paid position
34. on a professional ( ) when they grow ( ).
35. As for the ( ) young aspirants who do ( ) succeed,
36. one wonders if they ( ) regret having ( ) their childhood.

### 2.2.2. The TOEIC Bridge (TB)

The TB is a test developed by the non-profit test-developing organization Educational Testing Service, which has developed the TOEIC, and is suitable for those whose TOEIC score would be less than 450 points. Therefore, the TB is designed for beginner and intermediate level learners of English as a second language. In this research, we used a sample test of the TB in The Chauncey Group International (2002).

The TB, just like the TOEIC, consists of two sections, Listening and Reading, and each section contains 50 questions. The test taker answers the 100 questions within 1 hour by marking his/her answer on the answer sheet. The Listening and Reading sections are divided into subsections, as shown below.

### The Composition of the TB

#### Listening Section (25 minutes, 50 questions)

- Part I There are 15 questions. The test taker will see a picture in the test and he/she will hear four short statements. He/She chooses one statement out of the four which most accurately describes the picture.
- Part II There are 20 questions. The test taker will hear a question or statement followed by three responses. He/She chooses the best response to each question or statement.
- Part III There are 15 questions. The test taker will hear a short talk or a conversation and he/she will read a question followed by four answers. He/She chooses the best answer to each question.

#### Reading Section (35 minutes, 50 questions)

- Part IV There are 30 questions. The questions are incomplete sentences. There are four words or phrases under each question. The test taker chooses the one word or phrase that best completes the sentence.
- Part V There are 20 questions. The questions are based on reading materials such as novels, letters, forms, and advertisements. The test taker chooses the one best answer to each question out of the four.

As for scoring, the TB uses an equation, taking into consideration the comparative difficulty of the questions of each TB. Therefore, in scoring, test takers' raw scores are not used but they are transformed into certain points based on an equation. The actual evaluation scale of the TB is shown below.

### The Evaluation Scale of the TOEIC Bridge

	Minimal Points	Maximal Points
Listening Section	10	90
Reading Section	10	90
Total	20	180

In this paper, however, we do not use the actual evaluation scale of the TB, as we do not know the actual transformation equation. Instead, we use the test takers' raw scores and the evaluation scale shown below.

### The Evaluation Scale for the Present Research

	Minimal Points	Maximal Points
Listening Section	0	50
Reading Section	0	50
Total	0	100

### 2.3. Procedure

This survey was conducted at Gifu University in May of 2004. The TB and the MET were administered in this order. First, the TB was conducted following the instructions provided by The Chauncey Group International (2002). Second, the MET was conducted in the following procedure. The test taker was verbally given the following instructions in Japanese before the test.

1. Write an English word with four letters or fewer into the blank spaces, while listening to the CD.
2. The CD lasts about five minutes.
3. There is about a three-second interval between Line 18 and Line 19.

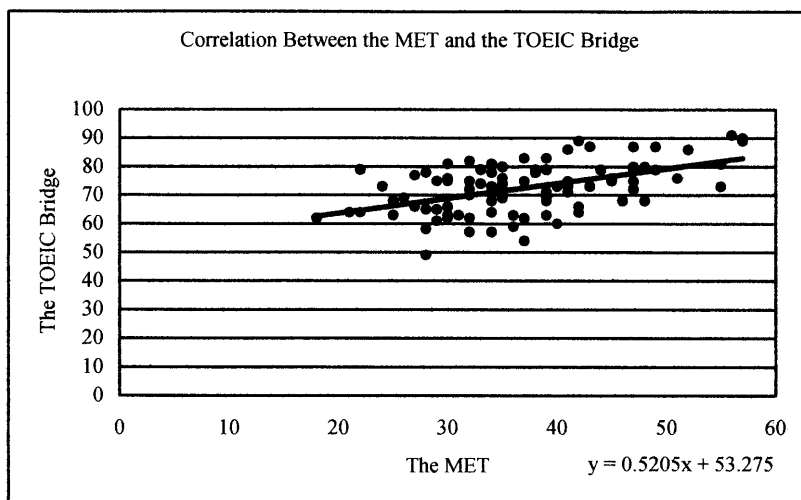
### 3. Analysis

We analyzed the data (the scores of the MET and the total scores of the TB) by a simple regression analysis (correlation analysis) using Microsoft Excel. The level of statistical significance was  $p < .05$ . The results are shown below.

<b>Regression Statistics</b>	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.514992
R Square	0.265217
Adjusted R Square	0.2574
Standard Error	7.447683
Observations	96
P-value	7.95E-08

The results of this analysis are more clearly represented by the following graph.

### The Correlation Between the MET and the TOEIC Bridge



We then examined whether the MET correlated with each of the five parts of the TB. The MET showed a moderate correlation only with Part V of the TB, which is designed to measure the test taker's reading comprehension, as shown below.

### Correlation Coefficients Between the MET and Each Part of the TOEIC Bridge

Test Type 1	Test Type 2	Correlation Coefficient (R)	P-value
MET	TB Part I	0.369504	0.000211
	TB Part II	0.314406	0.00181
	TB Part III	0.341425	0.000663
	TB Part IV	0.339136	1.93E-05
	TB Part V	0.41052	3.74E-05
	TB Total	0.514992	7.95E-08

The above chart clearly indicates that although the scores of the Part V of the TB had a statistically significant correlation with the scores of the MET ( $r = .41$ ), it is the total scores of the TB that had the highest statistically significant correlation with the scores of the MET ( $r = .51$ ).

## **4. Conclusion**

The MET, developed by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003), turned out to have a statistically significant correlation with the total scores of the TB ( $r = .51$ ,  $p = 7.95E-08$ , and  $n = 96$ ). Therefore, the prediction was confirmed that the scores of the MET would have a correlation with the scores of another totally different type of English test to some degree.

It was also shown that the scores of the MET had a higher correlation with the total scores of the TB than the scores of each of the five parts of the TB. This suggests that what the MET measures may not be simply listening comprehension or reading comprehension, but total proficiency in English. Of course, in order to prove this to be true, it will be necessary to investigate the relationship between the MET and other standard tests designed to measure total proficiency in English. By obtaining data that

show a high correlation between the MET and other standard tests, it will be possible to prove the pedagogical significance of the MET. We leave this for future research.

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## Notes

1. We follow Yanai (1998) in interpreting values of correlation coefficients. She assumes the following correspondence between correlation coefficients and their characteristics.

Correlation Coefficients	Characteristics
$0 \leq r <  0.2 $	almost no correlation
$ 0.2  \leq r <  0.4 $	weak correlation
$ 0.4  \leq r <  0.7 $	moderate correlation
$ 0.7  \leq r <  0.9 $	strong correlation
$ 0.9  \leq r <  1.0 $	extremely strong correlation

2. The MET used in this study is the one based on Sakamoto, Furuya, and Hubenthal (2001). One might wonder if other versions of the MET could be made based on other materials under certain conditions. Maki (2004) made other versions of the MET based on Ishiguro (2002), a practice book for listening and reading of English, and we are now investigating whether these new versions of the MET will have the same effect as the original version of the MET. Therefore, at this point, there is no clear answer to the question posed above.