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The Minimal English Test: Its Correlation with the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008*

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the correlation between the scores on the Minimal English Test (MET) developed by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003), and the scores on the Japanese University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008, administered by the University Entrance Examination Center. We call the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008 the Center Test (CT) 2008 hereafter.

Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003) showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2002 ($r=.68$, $p<.05$, and $n=154$). Maki, Ito, Miyamoto, Oku, Uchibori, and Ueda (2004) also showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2003 ($r=.72$, $p<.05$, and $n=629$). Maki, von Fragstein, Morishima, Tsuruta, Ito, Miyamoto, Oku, Uchibori, Date, and Tagawa (2005) showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2004 ($r=.72$, $p<.05$, and $n=657$). Maki, Kasai, Goto, Morita, Yumoto, Ochi, Oku, and Date (2006) showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2005 ($r=.61$, $p<.05$, and $n=600$).

Furthermore, listening comprehension was added to the CT 2006 for the first time in the history of the CT, and Maki, Kasai, Goto, Ito, Miyamoto, and Oku (2007) showed (1) that the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2006 had a relatively high correlation ($r=.62$, $p<.05$, and $n=610$); (2) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2006 had a moderate correlation ($r=.59$, $p<.05$, and $n=610$); (3) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2006 had a moderate correlation ($r=.55$, $p<.05$, and $n=610$). Also, Maki, Kasai, Goto, Okada, Takahashi, Hasebe, Imamaki, Ishikawa, Ito, Oku, Yumoto, Miyamoto, Ochi, Hamasaki, Ueda, Nagasue, Kasai, and Dunton (2008) showed (1) that the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2007 had a relatively high correlation ($r=.66$, $p<.05$, and $n=895$); (2) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2007 had a moderate correlation ($r=.62$, $p<.05$, and $n=895$); (3) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2007 had a moderate correlation ($r=.61$, $p<.05$, and $n=895$).

The present research is then a continuation of the research program started by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003). In this study, we collected sets of data from the students at Aichi University of Education, Akita University, Gifu University, Hokkaido University, Osaka University, and The University of Kitakyushu. Data were collected from 563 subjects. As a result of a series of correlation analyses, it turned out that unlike the results of the past surveys, there was a different tendency among the three

correlations between the scores on the MET and the scores on the parts (total, reading, and listening) of the CT 2008: (1) the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2008 had the highest correlation ($r=.67$, $p<.05$); (2) the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2008 had the second highest correlation ($r=.65$, $p<.05$); and (3) the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2008 had the lowest correlation ($r=.60$, $p<0.5$).

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of the materials (the Minimal English Test (MET) and the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008 (CT 2008)) to be employed in this research. Section 3 analyzes the data, and Section 4 reports the results. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Materials

Section 2.1 gives an overview of the Minimal English Test (MET) developed by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003), and Section 2.2 gives an overview of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008 (CT 2008).

2.1 The Minimal English Test (MET)

The MET is a simple test which requires the test taker to write a correct English word with 4 letters or fewer into each of the 72 blank spaces of the given sentences, written on one piece A4 paper, while listening to the CD on which the sentences are recorded. The MET is based on Lessons 1 and 2 of the textbook for university 1st year students written by Kawana and Walker (2002) and the CD that accompanies it. The contents of the textbook are essays on the modern society of the United States. The CD lasts about 5 minutes with a speed of 125 words per minute. The MET is shown below.

The Minimal English Test

Name: _____ Date: Month____Day____Year_____ Score: _____/72

The Score on the Reading Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008:_____/200
The Score on the Listening Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008:_____/50

Please fill an English word with 4 letters or fewer into each blank space, 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.

The test taker is verbally given the following 4 instructions in advance.

1.   Write the score of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) that you took in 2008.

2.   Fill an English word with 4 letters or fewer into each of the blank spaces, while listening to the CD.

3.   The CD lasts about 5 minutes.

4.   There is about a three-second interval between Line 18 and Line 19.

After the above instructions are given, the volume of the CD is checked, and the MET is administered.

2.2 The University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2008 (CT 2008)

The University Entrance Examination Center (2008) provides the summary of the CT 2008 results below.

The Reading Section of the CT 2008

Observations	497,101
Full mark	200
Number of questions	50
Average score	125.26
Standard deviation	39.28
Time limit	80 minutes
Date	January 19th, 2008

The Listening Section of the CT 2008

Observations	490,853
Full mark	50
Number of questions	25
Average score	29.45
Standard deviation	8.72
Time limit	30 minutes
Date	January 19th, 2008

The reading section of the CT 2008, contains questions about pronunciation, grammar, reordering of sentences, and reading comprehension, and the listening section of the CT 2008, contains questions about listening comprehension.

3. Data and Analysis

3.1 Data

The MET was administered at the following institutions during the period from mid April to the end of May of 2008: Aichi University of Education, Akita University, Gifu University, Hokkaido University, Osaka University, and The University of Kitakyushu. The total number of the data was 563, as shown below.

Institution	Number of the Data
Aichi University of Education	30
Akita University	67
Gifu University	239
Hokkaido University	15
Osaka University	18
The University of Kitakyushu	194
Total	563

3.2 Analysis

We analyzed the data (the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2008) by a simple regression analysis (correlation analysis). The results are shown below.

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Total Scores on the CT 2008

Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.653939
R Square	0.427637
Adjusted R Square	0.426616
Standard Error	27.27388
Observations	563
P-value	6.91E-76

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2008
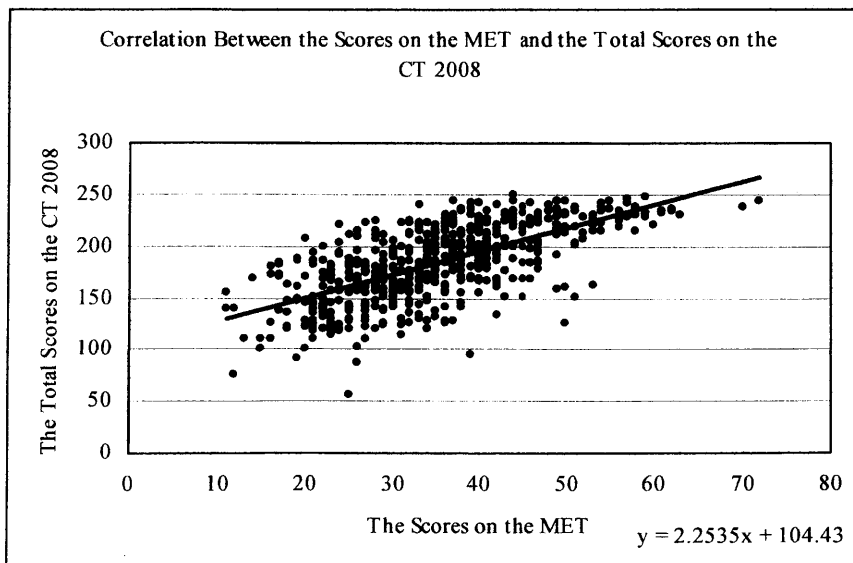
Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.59853
R Square	0.358239
Adjusted R Square	0.357095
Standard Error	24.22725
Observations	563
P-value	5.21E-56

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2008

| Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.674262
R Square	0.454629
Adjusted R Square	0.453657
Standard Error	5.995211
Observations	563
P-value	6.91E-76

The results of these analyses are more clearly represented by the following graphs.

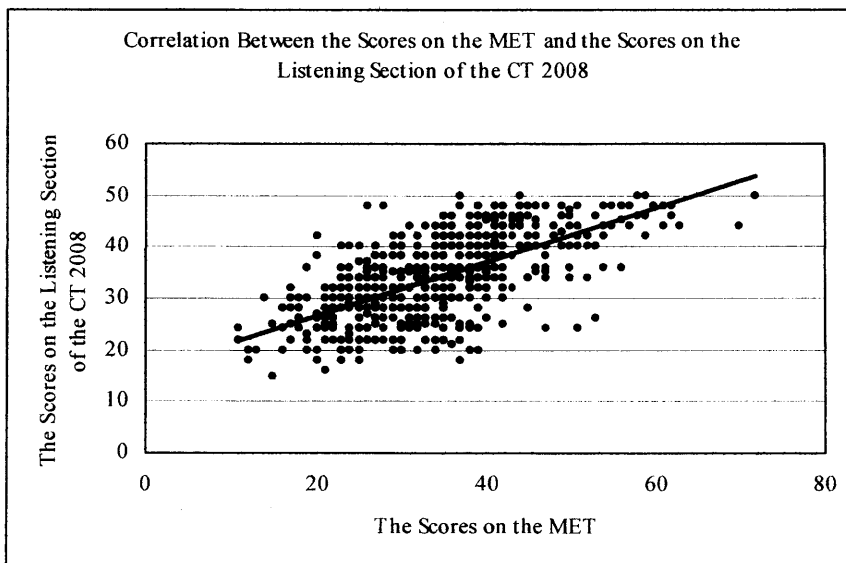*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Total Scores on the CT 2008*

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Total Scores on the CT 2008

$y = 2.2535x + 104.43$

The regression line is $y = 2.25x + 104.43$.

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Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2008

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2008
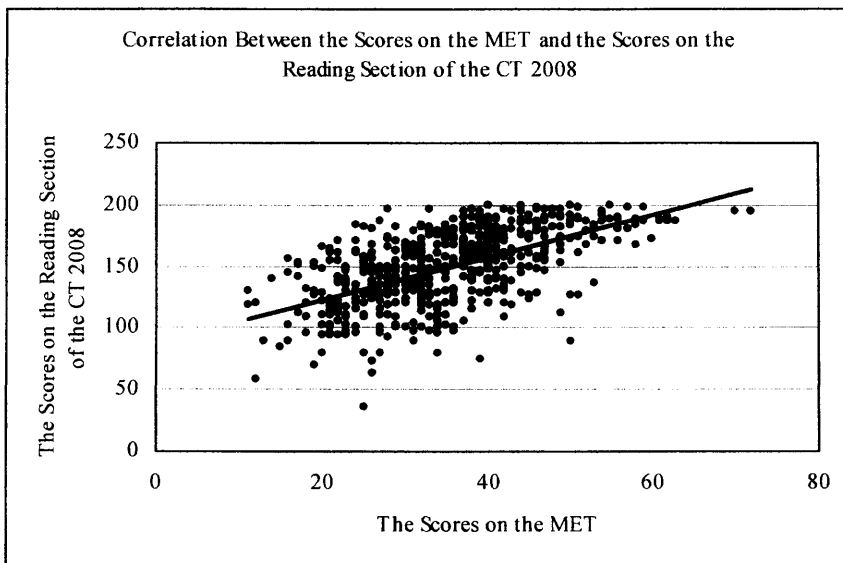
The regression line is y = 1.73x + 88.22.

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2008

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2008

The regression line is y = .52x + 16.2.

4. Results

As the above analyses show, it turned out that (1) the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2008 had the highest correlation ($r=.67$, $p<.05$); (2) the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2008 had the second highest correlation ($r=.65$, $p<.05$); and (3) the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2008 had the lowest correlation ($r=.60$, $p<0.5$).

5. Conclusion

To conclude, we have found that unlike the results of the past surveys, there was a different tendency among the three correlations between the scores on the MET and the scores on the parts (total, reading, and listening) of the CT 2008: (1) the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2008 had the highest correlation (r=.67, p<.05); (2) the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2008 had the second highest correlation (r=.65, p<.05); and (3) the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2008 had the lowest correlation (r=.60, p<0.5).

At our present stage of understanding, we cannot provide any explicit explanation for the different tendency observed in the present study. However, the fact that there was little difference between the correlation coefficient between the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2008 (r=.67) and the correlation coefficient between the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2008 (r=.65) seems to suggest that contrary to its appearance, the MET does not simply measure listening comprehension, but it measures a more general English proficiency, including reading comprehension and listening comprehension.

Also, a comparison of the results of the analyses of the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT from 2002 to 2008, reveals that the correlation coefficients between the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT are more or less consistent (from .61 to .72). See the following chart.

Results of the Analyses of the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the CT from 2002 to 2008

Year	Observations	Correlation Coefficient (R)	Regression Line
2002	154	.68 (Reading)	y = 1.53x + 82.13
2003	629	.72 (Reading)	y = 2.39x + 67.62
2004	657	.72 (Reading)	y = 2.18x + 75.95
2005	600	.61 (Reading)	y = 2.09x + 66.06
2006	610	.59 (Reading)	y = 1.49x + 101.55
		.55 (Listening)	y = .33x + 29.34
		.62 (Reading and Listening)	y = 1.82x + 130.89
2007	895	.62 (Reading)	y = 1.41x + 109.21
		.61 (Listening)	y = .40x + 23.97
		.66 (Reading and Listening)	y = 1.80x + 133.18
2008	563	.60 (Reading)	y = 1.73x + 88.22
		.67 (Listening)	y = .52x + 16.2
		.65 (Reading and Listening)	y = 2.25x + 104.43

We will continue to conduct this line of research in order to uncover the genuine nature of the MET.

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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
$0.0 \leq r < |0.2|$	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