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Title	The Minimal English Test: Its Correlation with the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2009( 本文(Fulltext) )
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Citation	[岐阜大学地域科学部研究報告] no.[26] p.[35]-[42]
Issue Date	2010
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URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12099/31067">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12099/31067</a>

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## The Minimal English Test: Its Correlation with the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2009\*

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(Received November 30, 2009)

### 1. Introduction

This paper investigates 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) 2009, administered by the University Entrance Examination Center. We call the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2009 the Center Test (CT) 2009 hereafter.

Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003) showed a statistically significant relatively strong correlation between the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2002 ( $r=.68$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=154$ ).<sup>1</sup> Maki, Ito, Miyamoto, Oku, Uchibori, and Ueda (2004) also showed a statistically significant strong 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 a statistically significant strong 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 a statistically significant moderate correlation between the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2005 ( $r=.61$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=600$ ).

Then, 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 moderate 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 strong 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  $n=895$ ). Then, Maki, Kasai, Goto, Hasebe, Ishikawa, Yoshimura, Kuroshita, Umezawa, Oku, Miyamoto, Hamasaki, Ueda, Nagasue, Kasai, and Dunton (2009) showed (1) that the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2008 had a relatively strong correlation ( $r=.65$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=563$ ); (2) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2008 had a moderate

correlation ( $r=.59$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=563$ ); (3) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2008 had a relatively strong correlation ( $r=.67$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=563$ ).

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 freshmen at eight universities in Japan. Data were collected from 877 subjects. As a result of a series of correlation analyses, it turned out (1) that like the results of the surveys from 2002 to 2007, and unlike the results of the survey in 2008, the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2009 had a moderate correlation ( $r=.592$ ,  $p<.05$ ), which was the highest among the three correlation coefficients (the one with the total scores, the one with the scores on the reading section, and the one with the scores on the listening section); (2) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2009 had a moderate correlation ( $r=.533$ ,  $p<.05$ ); and (3) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2007 had a moderate correlation ( $r=.589$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

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) 2009 (CT 2009)) 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) 2009 (CT 2009).

### **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) 2009: \_\_\_\_\_/200

The Score on the Listening Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2009: \_\_\_\_\_/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 2009.
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) 2009 (CT 2009)**

The University Entrance Examination Center (2009) provides the summary of the CT 2009 results below.

*The Reading Section of the CT 2009*

Observations	500,297
Full mark	200
Number of questions	50
Average score	115.02
Standard deviation	37.54
Time limit	80 minutes
Date	January 17th, 2009

*The Listening Section of the CT 2009*

Observations	494,342
Full mark	50
Number of questions	25
Average score	24.03
Standard deviation	9.65
Time limit	30 minutes
Date	January 17th, 2009

The reading section of the CT 2009, contains questions about pronunciation, grammar, reordering of sentences, and reading comprehension, and the listening section of the CT 2009, contains questions about listening comprehension.

### 3. Data and Analysis

#### 3.1 Data

The MET was administered at eight institutions during the period from mid April to the end of May of 2009. The total number of the data was 877.

#### 3.2 Analysis

We analyzed the data (the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2009) 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 2009*

Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.592
R Square	0.350
Adjusted R Square	0.349
Standard Error	25.907
Observations	877
P-value	6.05E-84

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2009*

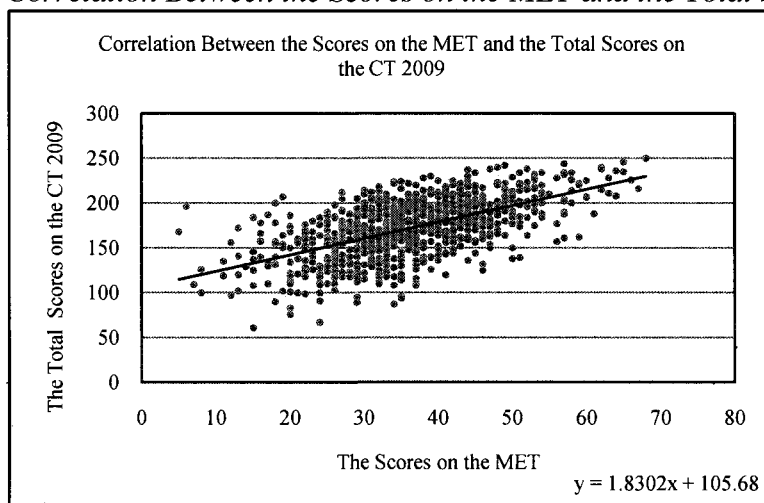
Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.533
R Square	0.284
Adjusted R Square	0.283
Standard Error	22.155
Observations	877
P-value	1.58E-65

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2009*

Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.589
R Square	0.346
Adjusted R Square	0.346
Standard Error	6.945
Observations	877
P-value	6.84E-83

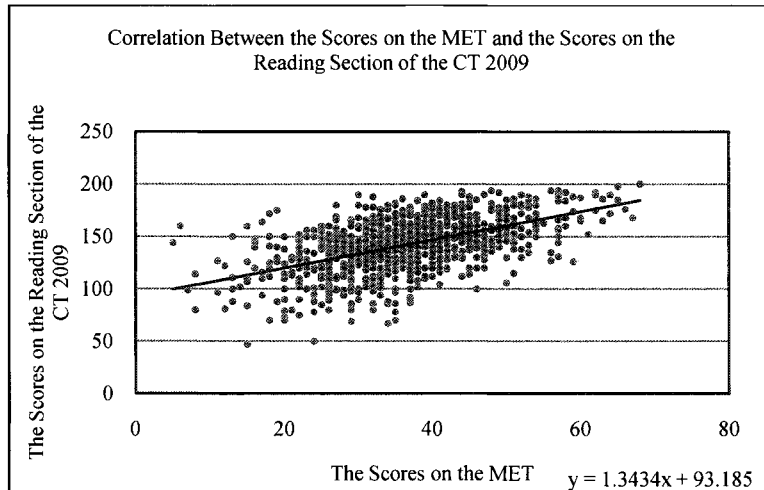
The results of these analyses are more clearly represented by the following graphs.

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Total Scores on the CT 2009*



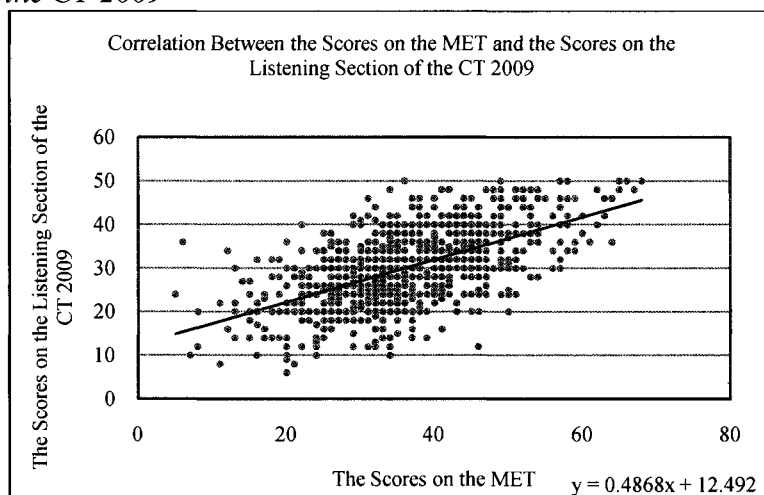
The regression line is  $y = 1.83x + 105.68$ .

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2009*



The regression line is  $y = 1.34x + 93.19$ .

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2009*



The regression line is  $y = .49x + 12.49$ .

#### 4. Results

As the above analyses show, it turned out (1) that the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2009 had a moderate correlation ( $r=.592$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=877$ ), which was the highest among the three correlation coefficients (the one with the total scores, the one with the scores on the reading section, and the one with the scores on the listening section); (2) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2009 had a moderate correlation ( $r=.533$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=877$ ); and (3) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2009 had a moderate correlation ( $r=.589$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $n=877$ ).

#### 5. Conclusion

To conclude, we have found that like the results of the surveys from 2002 to 2007, and unlike the results of the survey in 2008, the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2009 had the highest correlation coefficient ( $r=.592$ ,  $p<.05$ ) among the three



correlation coefficients (the one with the total scores, the one with the scores on the reading section, and the one with the scores on the listening section). This indicates that the MET does not simply measure reading comprehension or 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 2009, reveals that the correlation coefficients between the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT are more or less consistent (from .59 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 2009*

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)	$y = 2.25x + 104.43$
2009	877	.533 (Reading)	$y = 1.34x + 93.19$
		.589 (Listening)	$y = .49x + 12.49$
		.592 (Reading and Listening)	$y = 1.83x + 105.68$

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

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## Note

\* We are grateful to Yuko Nagao, Norio Nakamura, Yoko Sugiyama, and Ying-Ling Yang for cooperating to help collect data.

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