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The Minimal English Test: Its Correlation with the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010*

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1. Introduction

Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003) developed the original version of the Minimal English Test (MET), 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, while listening to the CD. Since then, the Maki Group has found statistically significant correlations between the scores on the MET, a 5-minute English test, and the scores on the English Section of the University Entrance Examinations in Japan from 2002 to 2009 ($.59 \leq r \leq .72$). See Maki (2010) and Goto, Maki, and Kasai (2010) for the details of the MET.

However, no explanation has been provided for the question why the target words were 4 letters or fewer. To avoid this problem, we developed a new version of the MET, where every 6th word was a target word, and examined the correlation between the scores on a new version of the MET and the scores on the Japanese University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010, administered by the University Entrance Examination Center. We call the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010 the Center Test (CT) 2010 hereafter.

Maki, Sarenqimuge, Yoshimura, Makino, Hasebe, Goto, Ito, Yumoto, Oku, Hamasaki, Ueda, Nagasue, Kasai, Munakata, and Dunton (2010) was the first to investigate the correlation between the scores on the new version of the MET and the scores on the CT (CT 2009), and found a moderate correlation between the scores on the new version of the MET and the total scores on the CT 2009 ($n=518$, $r=.57$, $p<.05$). In this study, we collected sets of data from the freshmen at six universities in Japan. Data were collected from 1188 subjects. As a result of a series of correlation analyses, it turned out (1) that the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2010 had a moderate correlation ($r=.53$, $p<.05$), 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 2010 had a moderate correlation ($r=.48$, $p<.05$); and (3) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2010 had a moderate correlation ($r=.52$, $p<.05$).[1]

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of the materials (the new version of the Minimal English Test (MET) and the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010 (CT 2010)) 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 new version of the new version of the Minimal English Test (MET), and Section 2.2. gives an overview of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010 (CT 2010).

2.1. The Minimal English Test (MET): A Revised Version

The revised version of the Minimal English Test, developed by Maki, Sarenqimuge, Yoshimura, Makino, Hasebe, Goto, Ito, Yumoto, Oku, Hamasaki, Ueda, Nagasue, Kasai, Munakata, and Dunton (2010), 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, exactly like the original MET. The revised MET was designed along the rules in (1).

(1)   Rules
        a.   Every 6th word is left blank in the revised MET.
        b.   Japanese words, years, and unpronounced words in parentheses are ignored.

Rule (1a) guarantees that the revised MET has the form of a cloze test, where every 6th word is left blank, no matter how many letters the word may consist of. In the following, we call the revised version of the MET the MET 6 because of Rule (1a), and call the original MET the MET 4 because it 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.

The MET 6 is a simple test which requires the test taker to write a correct English word into each of the 66 blank spaces of the given sentences, written on one piece A4 paper, while listening to the CD on which the sentences are recorded. The CD lasts about 5 minutes with a speed of 125 words per minute. The MET 6 is shown in (2).

(2)　The Minimal English Test: A Revised Version (The MET 6)

Name: _____ Date: Month____Day____Year_____

The Score on the Reading Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010: _____/200
The Score on the Listening Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010: _____/50

Please fill an English word into each blank spot, while listening to the CD.

1.　The (　　　　) of people have at least (　　　　) pet at some time
2.　in (　　　　) life. Sometimes the relationship between (　　　　) pet dog or cat
3.　and (　　　　) owner is so close that (　　　　) begin to resemble
4.　each other (　　　　) their appearance and behavior. On (　　　　) other hand,
5.　owners of unusual (　　　　) such as tigers or snakes (　　　　) have to protect
6.　themselves from (　　　　) own pets. Thirty years ago (　　　　) idea of
7.　an inanimate pet (　　　　) arose. This was the pet (　　　　), which became a craze
8.　in (　　　　) United States and spread to (　　　　) countries as well.
9.　People paid (　　　　) sums of money for ordinary (　　　　) and assigned them names.
10.　They (　　　　) a leash around the rock (　　　　) pulled it down
11.　the street (　　　　) like a dog. The rock (　　　　) even talked to
12.　their pet (　　　　). Now that we have entered (　　　　) computer age,
13.　we have virtual (　　　　). The Japanese Tamagotchi---
14.　the imaginary chicken (　　　　) ---was the precursor of many (　　　　) pets.
15.　Now there are an (　　　　)-increasing number of such virtual (　　　　)
16.　which mostly young people are (　　　　) as their own.
17.　And if (　　　　) virtual pet dies, you can (　　　　) a permanent resting
18.　place on (　　　　) Internet in a virtual pet (　　　　).

19.　Sports (　　　　) big business. Whereas Babe Ruth, the most (　　　　)
20.　athlete of his day, was (　　　　)-known for earning as much (　　　　) the President
21.　of the United (　　　　), the average salary of today's (　　　　) baseball players
22.　is ten times (　　　　) of the President. And a (　　　　) of sports superstars
23.　earn 100 times (　　　　) through their contracts with manufacturers (　　　　)
24.　clothing, food, and sports equipment. (　　　　) every generation produces
25.　one or (　　　　) legendary athletes who rewrite the (　　　　) books,
26.　and whose ability and (　　　　) are remembered for generations.
27.　In (　　　　) current generation Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan are two (　　　　)
28.　legendary figures, both of whom (　　　　) achieved almost mythical status.
29.　The (　　　　) that a large number of (　　　　) athletes earn huge incomes
30.　has (　　　　) to increased competition throughout the (　　　　) world.
31.　Parents send their children (　　　　) sports training camps at an (　　　　) age.
32.　Such kids typically practice (　　　　) to four hours a day, (　　　　) weekend
33.　and during their school (　　　　) in order to better their (　　　　) of eventually
34.　obtaining a well-(　　　　) position on a professional team (　　　　) they grow up.
35.　As for (　　　　) many young aspirants who do (　　　　) succeed,
36.　one wonders if they (　　　　) regret having lost their childhood.

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

1.　Write the score on the University Entrance Examination (English Part) that you took in 2010.
2.　Fill an English word 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 6 is administered.

2.2. The University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010 (CT 2010)

The University Entrance Examination Center (2010) provides the summary of the CT 2010 results shown in (3-4).

(3)   The Reading Section of the CT 2010

Observations	512,451
Full mark	200
Number of questions	50
Average score	118.14
Standard deviation	39.96
Time limit	80 minutes
Date	January 16th, 2010

(4)   The Listening Section of the CT 2010

Observations	506,898
Full mark	50
Number of questions	25
Average score	29.39
Standard deviation	9.24
Time limit	30 minutes
Date	January 16th, 2010

The reading section of the CT 2010, contains questions about pronunciation, grammar, reordering of sentences, and reading comprehension, and the listening section of the CT 2010, contains questions about listening comprehension.

3. Data and Analysis

3.1. Data

The MET 6 was administered at six institutions during the period from mid April to the end of May of 2010. The total number of the data was 1188.

3.2. Analysis

We analyzed the data (the scores on the MET 6 and the scores on the CT 2010) by a simple regression analysis (correlation analysis). The results are shown in (5-7). The significance level was set at .05 for each analysis.

(5)   Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Total Scores on the CT 2010

Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	.53
R Square	.28
Adjusted R Square	.28
Standard Error	26.38
Observations	1188
P-value	.00

(6) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the Reading
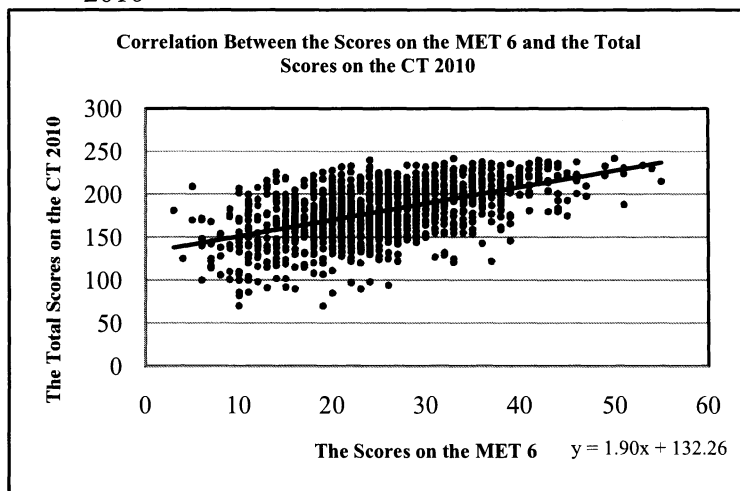Section of the CT 2010

Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	.48
R Square	.23
Adjusted R Square	.23
Standard Error	23.07
Observations	1188
P-value	.00

(7) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the Listening
Section of the CT 2010

| Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	.52
R Square	.27
Adjusted R Square	.27
Standard Error	6.43
Observations	1188
P-value	.00

The results of these analyses are more clearly represented by the graphs in (8-10).

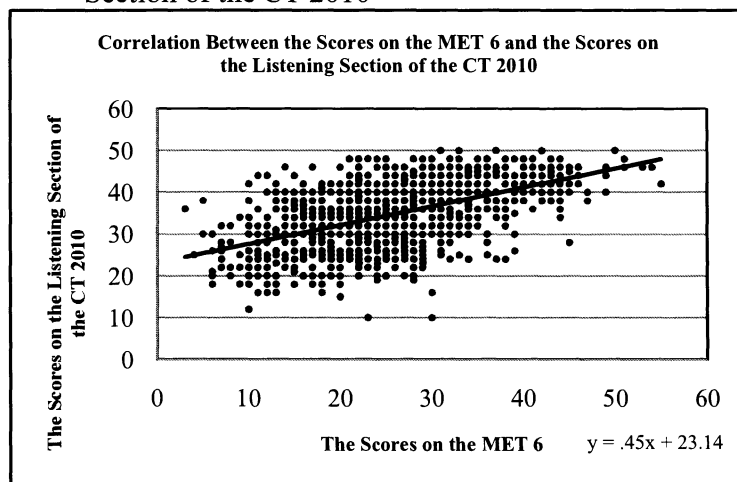(8) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Total Scores on the CT
2010

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Total
Scores on the CT 2010

The Scores on the MET 6 $y = 1.90x + 132.26$

The regression line is $y = 1.90x + 132.26$.

(9) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the Reading
Section of the CT 2010

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2010

The Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2010

The Scores on the MET 6 $y = 1.45x + 109.12$
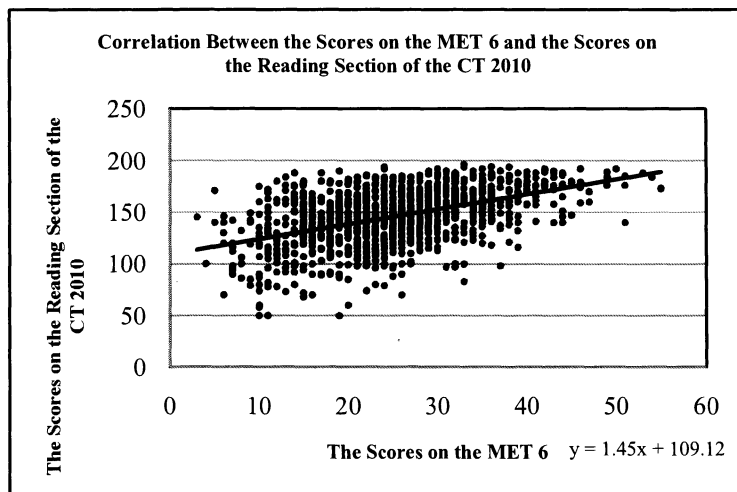
The regression line is $y = 1.45x + 109.12$.

(10) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2010

Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2010

The Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2010

The Scores on the MET 6 $y = .45x + 23.14$

The regression line is $y = .45x + 23.14$.

4. Results

As the above analyses show, it turned out (1) that the scores on the MET 6 and the total scores on the CT 2010 had a moderate correlation ($n=1188$, $r=.53$, $p<.05$), 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 6 and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2010 had a moderate correlation ($n=1188$, $r=.48$, $p<.05$); and (3) that the scores on the MET 6 and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2010 had a moderate correlation ($n=1188$, $r=.52$, $p<.05$).

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have found that like the result of the survey in 2009, the scores on the MET 6 and the total scores on the CT 2010 had the highest correlation coefficient

(r=.53, 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 6 and the scores on the CT from 2009 to 2010, reveals that the correlation coefficients between the scores on the MET 6 and the total scores on the CT are more or less consistent (from .53 to .59). See the chart in (11).

(11) Results of the Analyses of the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the CT from 2009 to 2010

Year	Observations	Correlation Coefficient (R)	Regression Line
2009	577	.533 (Reading)	y = 1.34x + 93.19
		.589 (Listening)	y = .49x + 12.49
		.592 (Reading and Listening)	y = 1.83x + 105.68
2010	1188	.48 (Reading)	y = 1.45x + 109.12
		.52 (Listening)	y = .45x + 23.14
		.53 (Reading and Listening)	y = 1.90x + 132.26

We will continue to conduct this research in order to uncover the genuine nature of the MET 6.

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Note

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
$0 \leq r < |.2|$	almost no correlation
$|.2| \leq r < |.4|$	weak correlation
$|.4| \leq r < |.7|$	moderate correlation
$|.7| \leq r < |.9|$	strong correlation
$|.9| \leq r < |1|$	extremely strong correlation