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A preliminary report on a correlation between the Minimal English Test and German Diploma in Japan: Future possibilities of measuring third language learners' second language proficiency

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1. Introduction

Since the Minimal English Test (MET) was developed by Maki, Wasada and Hashimoto (2003), correlations between the MET and traditional English proficiency tests have been examined. One of the major investigations has been examining the correlation between the MET and the English portion of Japan's university entrance examination (The National Center Test), and each year since 2007 high correlations have been reported (e.g., Maki, et al., 2008).

In such studies the MET serves as a test to measure takers' second language proficiency. The current research builds upon this, investigating the possibility of measuring third language proficiency. The participants were learning German as a third language at college. The MET and a modified version of the German Diploma in Japan were administered, and the correlation between their results was examined.

2. Materials

2.1 The Minimal English Test (MET)

The MET requires test takers to fill an English word of four (or fewer) letters into each of 72 gaps in sentences on a piece of A4 paper, while listening to a CD recording of the full text. The reading materials are based on lessons 1 and 2 of a textbook for first-year university students written by Sakamoto, Furuya, and Hubenthal (2001), and the CD that accompanies it. The MET lasts about 5 minutes, and the recording has a speaking speed of 125 words per minute. In advance, test takers are given the following verbal instructions: 1. to write their name, grade, and the testing date on top of the test sheet; 2. to fill an English word into each blank space while listening to the CD; 3. that the CD lasts about 5 minutes, and there is a three-second interval between Line 18 and Line 19. After the instructions are given, the volume of the CD is checked, and then the MET is administered.

The MET used in the current research is the original version, and is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Minimal English Test

Name: _____	Date: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____	Score: _____/72
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Please fill an English word with 4 letters or less into each blank spot, 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 The German Diploma in Japan (a modified version)

In order to measure the participants' German proficiency, a modified version of the German Diploma in Japan was administered. Questions were adapted from Level 4 of the original version. The test was designed to be completed within 60 minutes. An excerpt of the version used is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The German Diploma in Japan

1. 次の(1)~(4)の条件にあてはまるものが各組に一つずつあります。それを下の①~④のうちから選び、その番号を解答欄に記入しなさい。

1) 下線部の発音が他と異なる。
①Mittag ②gelb ③regnen ④fragen

2) 下線部にアクセント(強勢)がある。
①geradeaus ②gestern ③Gemüse ④gehören

3) 下線部が長く発音される。
①Papier ②Garten ③Sprache ④Wasser

4) 問いAに対する答えBの下線部中で、通常最も強調して発音される。
A: Ist das dein Auto?
B: Nein, das ist das Auto meiner Mutter.
①das ②Auto ③meiner ④Mutter

2. 次の(1)~(4)の文で()の中に入れるのに最も適切なものを下の①~④のうちから選び、その番号を解答欄に記入しなさい。

1) Am Wochenende () wir eine Party machen.
① wollt ② willst ③ will ④ wollen

2) () ich Ihnen helfen? – Ja, ich suche einen großen Rucksack.
① Könnt ② Kann ③ Kannst ④ Können

3) Wie () ihr am Sonntag nach Nagoya?
① fahren ② fährt ③ fahrt ④ fährst

4) Sarah, es ist schon spät. () ins Bett! Du musst morgen früh aufstehen.
① Geh ② Gehen ③ Geht ④ Gehst

3 次の(1)~(4)の文で()の中に入れるのに最も適切なものを下の①~④のうちから選び、その番号を解答欄に記入しなさい。

1) Er wird am Wochenende () Schwester besuchen.
① sein ② seine ③ seinen ④ seiner

2) Gerade kommt Herr Fischer aus () Zimmer.
① das ② dem ③ den ④ des

3) Markus kauft diese Hose. Sie gefällt () sehr.
① er ② ihm ③ ihn ④ sie

4) Willst du mit () ins Kino gehen?
① dir ② dich ③ mir ④ mich

4 次の文に()内の語を挿入して文を完成する場合、最も適切な箇所はどこですか。 [1] ~ [4]のうちから選び、その番号を解答欄に記入しなさい。

1) (für)
A: Was [1] Bücher [2] liest [3] du gern [4] ?

B: Ich lese gern Romane.

2) (gehen)
A: Was machst du morgen ?
B: Morgen 1 möchte 2 ich 3 in den Sportklub 4 .

3) (nicht)
Sabine 1 lehrt 2 in den USA Deutsch, 3 sondern in Japan 4 .

4) (mir)
Der Briefträger 1 bringt 2 die Post 3 um 9 Uhr 4 .

5 次の (1)~(4)の文で()の中に入れるのに最も適切なものを下の①~④のうちから選び、その番号を解答欄に記入しなさい。

1) Wie () ist dein Sohn? – Er ist erst fünf.
①alt ②groß ③klein ④viel

2) Jetzt spielen wir Volleyball. Hast du auch () ?
①Fieber ②Geld ③Hunger ④Lust

3) Möchten Sie noch () Kuchen?
①eine Flasche ②ein Glas ③ein Stück ④eine Tasse

4) Zeitung lese ich nie, aber Zeitschriften lese ich () .
①gern ②kaum ③selten ④schlecht

2.3 Participants

53 Japanese university students participated in this research. All of the participants were females attending the same municipal university in Aichi prefecture. Participants had an average age of 21.5 years at the time of testing.

3. Results

A correlation between the scores of the MET and the German Diploma in Japan (a modified version) was examined. A statistical analysis revealed that there was a moderate correlation between them ($N = 53$, $r = .44$, $p < .05$). Figure 3 visualises score distribution of the two tests, and Table 1 shows correlation coefficient between them.

Figure 3. Distribution of the scores between the MET and the modified German Diploma in Japan

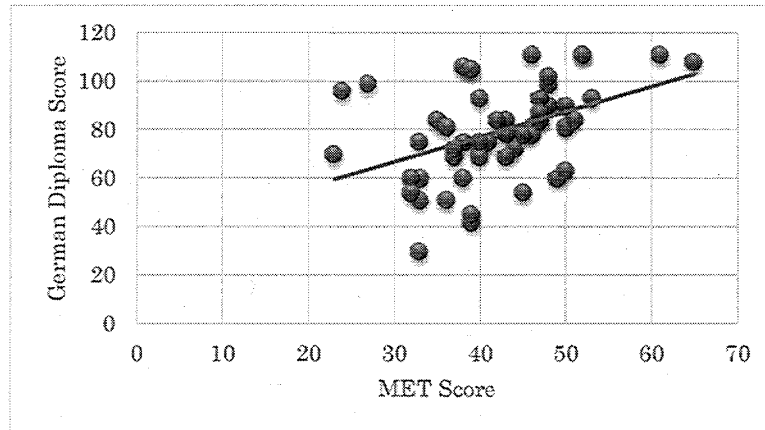


Table 1. Correlation Coefficient between the MET and the modified German Diploma in Japan

N	Correlation Coefficiency	Significance Level
53	.437	.05

4. Conclusion

From the current research it was found that there was a moderate correlation between the MET and a modified version of the German Diploma in Japan ($r = .44$, $p < .05$).

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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
$0 \leq r < .2$	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

2. The version of the MET and the M4L are the original version of the MET, and Lesson 2 of the M4L.