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# The Minimal English Test: Its Correlation with the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2006*

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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) 2006 administered by the University Entrance Examination Center. We call the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2006 the Center Test (CT) 2006 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). Then, 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). Furthermore, 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). The present research is then a continuation of the research program started by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003). At the same time, since listening comprehension has been added to the CT 2006 for the first time in the history of the CT, the present research also investigates correlations between the scores on the MET on one hand and the scores on the reading and listening sections on the other.

In this study, we collected sets of data from the students at Gifu University, Hokkaido University, Osaka University, and University of Tokyo at Komaba. Data were collected from 610 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 2006 had a relatively high correlation (r=.62, p<.05), (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 (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).

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) 2006 (CT 2006)) to be employed in this research. Section 3 analyzes the data, and Section 4 reports the results. Section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. The 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) 2006 (CT 2006).

## 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 Sakamoto, Furuya, and Hubenthal (2001) 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*

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Name: _____ Date: Month____Day____Year_____ Score: _____/72

The Score on the Reading Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2006: ____/200
The Score on the Listening Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2006: ____/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 2006.
2.  Fill an English word with 4 letters or fewer into 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) 2006 (CT 2006)

The University Entrance Examination Center (2006) provides the summary of the CT 2006 results below.

*The Reading Section of the CT 2006*

| Observations | 499,630 |
|---|---|
| Full mark | 200 |
| Number of questions | 50 |
| Average score | 127.52 |
| Standard deviation | 39.37 |
| Time limit | 80 minutes |
| Date | January 21st, 2006 |

*The Listening Section of the CT 2006*

| Observations | 492,555 |
|---|---|
| Full mark | 50 |
| Number of questions | 25 |
| Average score | 36.25 |
| Standard deviation | 8.27 |
| Time limit | 30 minutes |
| Date | January 21st, 2006 |

The reading section of the CT 2006, contains questions about pronunciation, grammar, reordering of sentences, and reading comprehension, and the listening section of the CT 2006, contains questions about listening comprehension.

## 3. Data Analysis

### 3.1 Data

The MET was administered at the following institutions during the period from April to July of 2006: Gifu University, Hokkaido University, Osaka University, and University of Tokyo at Komaba. The total number of the data was 610, as shown below.

| Institution | Number of the Data |
|---|---|
| Gifu University | 516 |
| Hokkaido University | 32 |
| Osaka University | 26 |
| University of Tokyo at Komaba | 36 |
| Total | 610 |

## 3.2 Data Analysis

We analyzed the data (the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT 2006) 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 2006*

| Regression Statistics | |
|---|---|
| Correlation Coefficient (R) | 0.618129 |
| R Square | 0.382083 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.381067 |
| Standard Error | 23.8178 |
| Observations | 610 |
| P-value | 1.45E-65 |

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2006*

| Regression Statistics | |
|---|---|
| Correlation Coefficient (R) | 0.585616 |
| R Square | 0.342946 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.341865 |
| Standard Error | 21.2329 |
| Observations | 610 |
| P-value | 1.96E-57 |

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2006*

| Regression Statistics | |
|---|---|
| Correlation Coefficient (R) | 0.553674 |
| R Square | 0.306555 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.305415 |
| Standard Error | 5.097402 |
| Observations | 610 |
| P-value | 2.71E-50 |

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

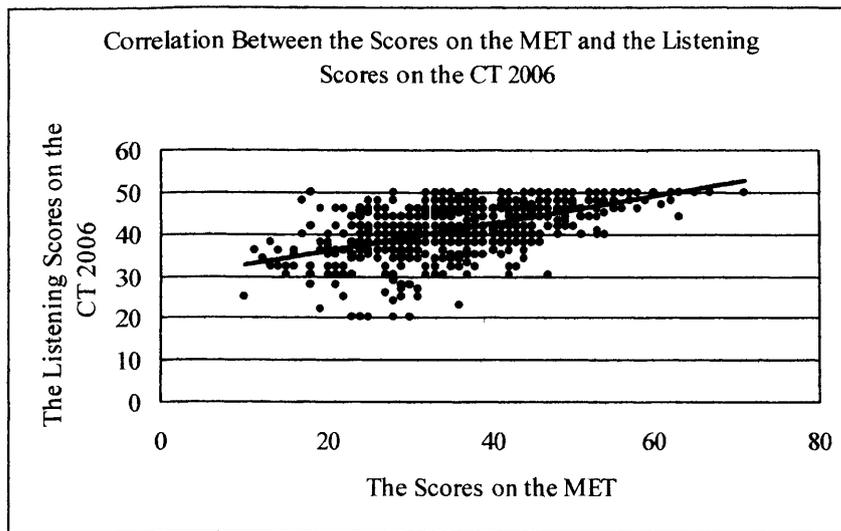*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Total Scores on the CT 2006*



Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Total Scores on
the CT 2006
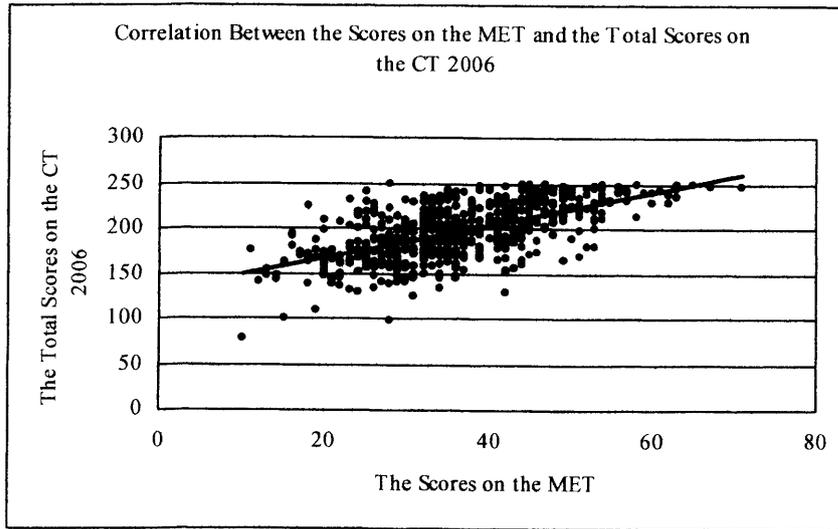
The regression line is y = 1.82x + 130.89.

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2006*



Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Reading Scores on
the CT 2006
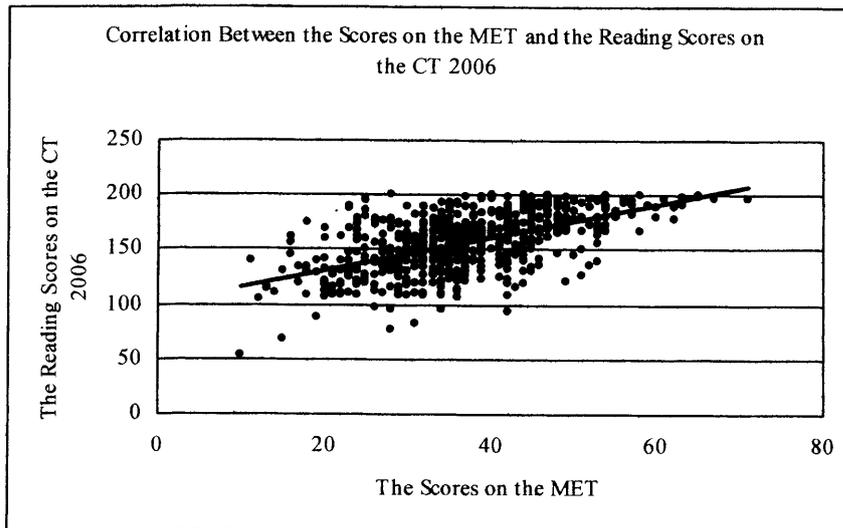
The regression line is y = 1.49x + 101.55.

*Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2006*



Correlation Between the Scores on the MET and the Listening Scores on the CT 2006

The regression line is y = .33x + 29.34.

## 4. Results

As the above analyses show, it turned out (1) that the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT 2006 had a relatively high correlation ($r=.62$, $p<.05$), (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 (3) that the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2006 had a moderate correlation ($r=.55$, $p<.05$).

The fact that there is little difference between the correlation coefficient between the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2006 ($r=.59$) and the correlation coefficient between the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2006 ($r=.55$) indicates that contrary to its appearance, the MET does not simply measure listening comprehension, but it measures more general English proficiency, including reading comprehension and listening comprehension. This finding is important, since this is the first time since we started the MET-based research that we have been able to see clearly what proficiency of English the MET actually measures. We will continue to investigate the comparison between the correlation coefficient of the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT, and the correlation coefficient of the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT, in order to uncover the true nature of the MET.

Also, a comparison of the results of the analyses of the scores on the MET and the scores on the CT from 2002 to 2006, 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 2006*

| 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 |
| 2006 | 610 | .55 (Listening) | y = .33x + 29.34 |
| 2006 | 610 | .62 (Reading and Listening) | y = 1.82x + 130.89 |

We will continue this research to determine whether the correlation coefficients between the scores on the MET and the total scores on the CT are consistently around .7.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, we have found (1) that the scores on the Minimal English Test (MET), developed by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003), and the total scores on the CT 2006 had a relatively high correlation (r=.62, p<.05), (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 (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). The fact that there is little difference between the correlation coefficient of the scores on the MET and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2006 (r=.59), and the correlation coefficient of the scores on the MET and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2006 (r=.55) indicates that the MET does not simply measure listening comprehension, but it measures a more general English proficiency, including reading comprehension and listening comprehension.

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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 |