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Citation	[岐阜大学地域科学部研究報告] vol.[30] p.[47]-[54]
Issue Date	2012
Rights	
Version	岐阜大学地域科学部 (Faculty of Regional Studies, Gifu University) / 岐阜大学 (Gifu University) / 岐阜大学 (Gifu University) / 岐阜大学 (Gifu University) / 横浜国立大学 (Yokohama National University) / 岐阜大学地域科学部 (Faculty of Regional Studies, Gifu University) / 岐阜市立女子短期大学 (Gifu City Women's College) / 横浜国立大学 (Yokohama National University) / SeDoMoCha Middle School
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12099/41559

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The Minimal English Test: Its Correlation with the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2011*

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(Received October 7, 2011)

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, the original MET had a problem. It was not able to provide an explanation to the question of why the target words were 4 letters or fewer. To avoid this problem, Maki, Sarenqimuge, Yoshimura, Makino, Hasebe, Goto, Ito, Yumoto, Oku, Hamasaki, Ueda, Nagasue, Kasai, Munakata, and Dunton's (2010) 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) 2009. They found a moderate correlation between the scores on the new version of the MET and the total scores on the CT 2009 ($n=518$, $r=.57$, $p<.05$).¹

Then, Maki, Tokunaga, Sugiyama, Hasebe, Yoshimura, Kasai, Umezawa, Yumoto, Hamasaki, Ueda, Nagasue, Kasai, Munakata, and Dunton (2011) further examined the correlation between the scores on the new version of the MET and the scores on the Japanese University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2010, and again found a moderate correlation between the scores on the new version of the MET and the total scores on the CT 2010 ($n=1188$, $r=.53$, $p<.05$).

However, the new version of the MET entailed a minor problem. The first paragraph of each of the two parts which the MET consists of does not start with a blank in the 6th word. In this study, we further revise the revised MET, and investigate the correlation between the scores on the newest version of the MET and the scores on the Japanese University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2011. For the sake of clarity, we call the older version of the revised MET the MET 6A, and the newer version of the revised MET the MET 6B, hereafter. In this research, we found (1) that the scores on the MET 6B and the total scores on the CT 2011 had a moderate correlation ($n=217$, $r=.60$, $p<.05$), 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 6B and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2011 had a moderate correlation ($n=217$,

$r=.54$, $p<.05$); and (3) that the scores on the MET 6B and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2011 had a moderate correlation ($n= 217$, $r=.56$, $p<.05$).

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 presents the materials (the Minimal English Test (MET) 6B and the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2011 (CT 2011)) to be employed in this research. Section 3 reports the results, and Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. Materials

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

The Minimal English Test (MET) 6B is based on Lessons 1 and 2 of the textbook for first year university students written by Kawana and Walker (2002) and the CD that accompanies it, exactly like the original MET. The MET 6B 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 MET 6B has the form of a cloze test, where every 6th word is left blank, no matter how many letters the word may consist of.

The MET 6B 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 6B is shown in (2).

(2) The Minimal English Test 6B (The MET 6B)

Name: _____ Date: Month ____ Day ____ Year _____
The Score on the Reading Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2011: _____/200
The Score on the Listening Section of the University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2011: _____/50
Please fill an English word into each blank spot, while listening to the CD.
1. The majority of people have () least one pet at some () in their life.
2. Sometimes the () between a pet dog or () and its owner
3. is so () that they begin to resemble () other in their appearance
4. and (). On the other hand, owners () unusual pets
5. such as tigers () snakes sometimes have to protect () from their own pets.
6. Thirty () ago the idea of an () pet first arose.
7. This was () pet rock, which became a () in the United States
8. and () to other countries as well. () paid large sums of money
9. () ordinary rocks and assigned them ().
10. They tied a leash around () rock and pulled it down () street just like a dog.
11. () rock owners even talked to () pet rocks.
12. Now that we () entered the computer age, we () virtual pets.
13. The Japanese Tamagotchi---the () chicken egg---
14. was the precursor () many virtual pets.
15. Now there () an ever-increasing number of such () pets
16. which mostly young people () adopting as their own.
17. And () your virtual pet dies, you () reserve a permanent resting place
18. () the Internet in a virtual () cemetery.
19. Sports are big business. () Babe Ruth, the most famous athlete of () day,
20. was well-known for earning () much as the President of () United States,
21. the average salary () today's professional baseball players
22. is () times that of the President. () a handful of sports superstars
23. () one hundred times more through () contracts with manufacturers
24. of clothing, (), and sports equipment. But every () produces
25. one or two legendary () who rewrite the record books,
26. () whose ability and achievements are () for generations.
27. In the current () Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan are two such legendary (),
28. both of whom have achieved () mythical status.
29. The fact that () large number of professional athletes () huge incomes
30. has led to () competition throughout the sports world.
31. () send their children to sports () camps at an early age.
32. () kids typically practice three to () hours a day,
33. all weekend () during their school vacations in () to better their chances
34. of () obtaining a well-paid position on () professional team
35. when they grow (). As for the many young () who do not succeed,
36. one () if they will regret having () 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 2011.
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 6B is administered.

2.2. The University Entrance Examination (English Part) 2011 (CT 2011)

The University Entrance Examination Center (2011) provides the summary of the CT 2011 results shown in (3-4).

(3) The Reading Section of the CT 2011

Observations	519,538
Full mark	200
Number of questions	50
Average score	122.78
Standard deviation	41.24
Time limit	80 minutes
Date	January 15th, 2011

(4) The Listening Section of the CT 2011

Observations	513,817
Full mark	50
Number of questions	25
Average score	25.17
Standard deviation	9.55
Time limit	30 minutes
Date	January 15th, 2011

The reading section of the CT 2011, contains questions about pronunciation, grammar, reordering of sentences, and reading comprehension, and the listening section of the CT 2011, contains questions about listening comprehension.

3. Results

The MET 6B was administered at two institutions during the period from mid April to the end of May of 2011. The total number of the data was 217. We analyzed the data (the scores on the MET 6B and the scores on the CT 2011) 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 6B and the Total Scores on the CT 2011

Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	.60
R Square	.36
Adjusted R Square	.36
Standard Error	24.53
Observations	217
P-value	1.42E-22

(6) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6B and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2011

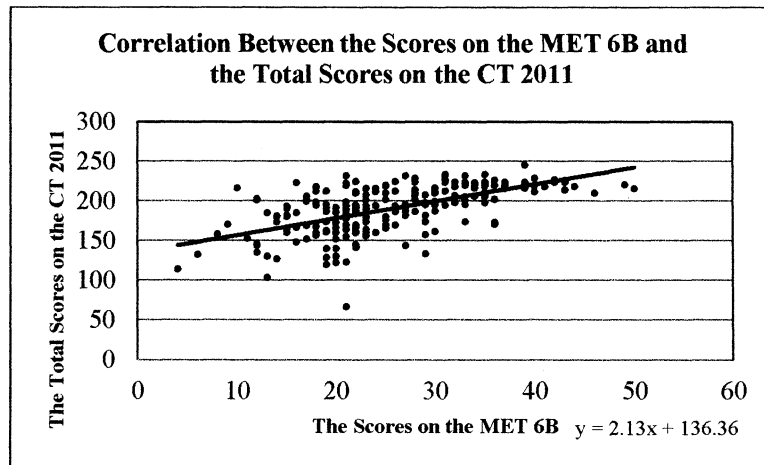
Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	.54
R Square	.30
Adjusted R Square	.29
Standard Error	21.34
Observations	217
P-value	4.28E-18

(7) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6B and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2011

Regression Statistics	
Correlation Coefficient (R)	.56
R Square	.31
Adjusted R Square	.31
Standard Error	6.54
Observations	217
P-value	5.97E-19

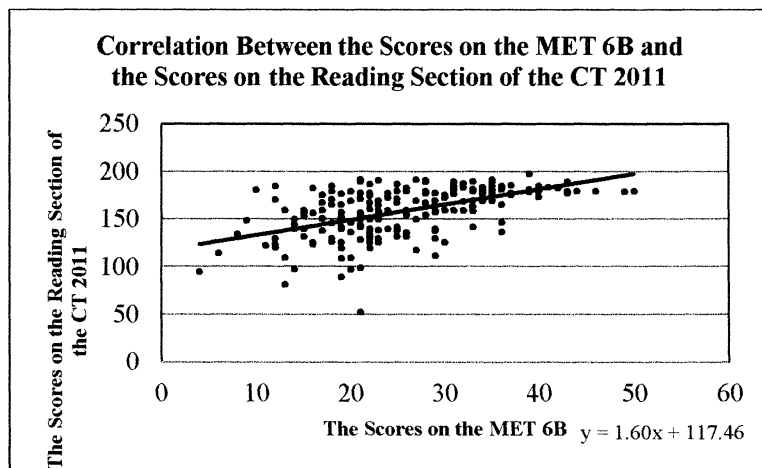
The results of these analyses are more clearly represented by the graphs in (8-10).

(8) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6B and the Total Scores on the CT 2011



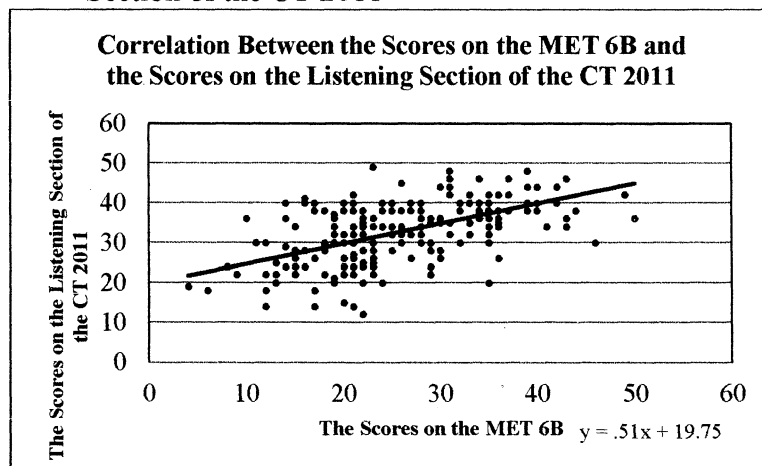
The regression line is $y = 2.13x + 136.36$.

(9) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6B and the Scores on the Reading Section of the CT 2011



The regression line is $y = 1.60x + 117.46$.

- (10) Correlation Between the Scores on the MET 6B and the Scores on the Listening Section of the CT 2011



The regression line is $y = .51x + 19.75$.

The above analyses show (1) that the scores on the MET 6B and the total scores on the CT 2011 had a moderate correlation ($n=217$, $r=.60$, $p<.05$), 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 6B and the scores on the reading section of the CT 2010 had a moderate correlation ($n=217$, $r=.54$, $p<.05$); and (3) that the scores on the MET 6B and the scores on the listening section of the CT 2011 had a moderate correlation ($n=217$, $r=.56$, $p<.05$).

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we found that like the result of the survey in 2010, the scores on the MET 6B and the total scores on the CT 2011 had the highest correlation coefficient ($n=217$, $r=.60$, $p<.05$) 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 6B 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 (either MET 6A or MET 6B) and the scores on the CTs from 2009 to 2011, reveals that the correlation coefficients between the scores on the MET 6 and the total scores on the CTs are more or less consistent (from .53 to .60). See the chart in (11).

(11) Results of the Analyses of the Scores on the MET 6 and the Scores on the CTs from 2009 to 2011

Year	MET	Observations	Correlation Coefficient (R)	Regression Line
2009	MET 6A	577	.533 (Reading)	$y = 1.34x + 93.19$
			.589 (Listening)	$y = .49x + 12.49$
			.592 (Reading and Listening)	$y = 1.83x + 105.68$
2010	MET 6A	1188	.48 (Reading)	$y = 1.45x + 109.12$
			.52 (Listening)	$y = .45x + 23.14$
			.53 (Reading and Listening)	$y = 1.90x + 132.26$
2011	MET 6B	217	.54 (Reading)	$y = 1.60x + 117.46$
			.56 (Listening)	$y = .51x + 19.75$
			.60 (Reading and Listening)	$y = 2.13x + 136.36$

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Note

* We are grateful to Yuko Nagao, Yoko Sugiyama, and Ying-Ling Yang for cooperating to help collect data. All errors are our own.

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