

Correlations between ESL Proficiency and Factors toward English and English Teachers: A Preliminary Study

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1. Introduction

One of the main concerns of the teachers in the world is how we can improve the students' learning abilities. For instance, Kageyama and Ogoe (2003) note that the basic lifestyle habits (such as getting up early in the morning or eating three times a day) affect the basic learning abilities. Or if we look at newspapers, we can see many reports regarding the students' learning abilities. For instance a report says that reading has a great influence on the students' learning abilities (June 27th, Asahi Shimbun). Many people also believe that if a student likes or is interested in a certain subject, then he/she will get a good score on that subject. Thus, it seems that the teachers in Japan focus on how they can entertain the subjects or how they can improve the teaching skills. However, it seems also true that the students like the subject because they like the teacher(s) of the subject. If a student cannot understand what a teacher says, then he/she will lose any interest in that subject that the teacher teaches. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to investigate what kinds of effects on the students are significant correlations with the scores on the Minimal English Test (MET), developed by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003). In this research, we administered the MET and a questionnaire to freshman college students, and found that there was a statistically strong correlation between the scores of the MET and (1) whether he/she likes English, (2) whether he/she is good at English, (3) the fact that he/she took more than 6 classes per week, and (4) the fact that the student had an English teacher who he/she likes.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of the materials (the Minimal English Test (MET) and the lifestyle questionnaire). Section 3 analyzes the data, and Section 4 reports the results. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Materials

Section 2.1 gives a brief overview of the Minimal English Test developed by Maki, Wasada, and Hashimoto (2003), and Section 2.2 gives an overview of the questionnaire.

2.1. The Minimal English Test (MET):

The MET is a very simple test which requires the test taker to fill a correct English word into each of the 66 blank spaces of the given sentences written on one A4 paper sheet, while listening to the CD which produces the sentences. The blank spaces are created in every 6th word. The MET we created for this research is based on Lessons 1 and 2 of the textbook for college freshmen written by Kuwana 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 the speed of 125 words per minute. The MET is shown below.

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 eventu-

- ally
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.

2. 2. A Questionnaire

The lifestyle and nutritional parts of the questionnaire are created following the research by Ono et al. (2003). Since a great majority of the subjects is freshmen, we focused on how the lifestyle habits in the high school days affect the scores on the MET. Finally, we added the four more questions regarding their love or interest toward English, the number of the classes per week, and whether there is a teacher or teachers who he/she liked in his/her high school days. The questionnaire is shown in the appendix A.

3. Data and Analysis

3. 1. Data

The subjects of this research were mainly freshmen at Morioka University. The MET was conducted in April of 2010, and the questionnaire was conducted in May of 2010. The total number of the data was 118.

3. 2. Analysis

First, in order to see if there was a statistically significant difference between those who tend to like English and those who do not tend to like English, we analyzed the data (the score on the MET and the questionnaire) by a two-sample t-test assuming unequal sample variances. The result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The difference in the scores on the MET

	Those who tend to like English	Those who does not tend to like English
Mean	17.73	13.46
Variance	53.88	35.28
Observations	51	67
t Stat	3.41	
t Critical Two Tai	0.0009	

The mean of those who tend to like English was 17.73 out of 66 points on the MET, and that of those who do not was 13.46 points. The absolute value of t Stat (3.41) is larger than that of t Critical Two Tail (0.0009). Therefore Table 1 shows that, with respect to the scores on the

MET, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Second, in order to see if there was a statistically significant difference in the total scores on the MET between those who tend to be good at English and those who do not tend to be good at English, we analyzed the data with a two-sample t-test assuming unequal sample variances. The result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The difference in the total scores on the MET

	Those who tend to be good at English	Those who does not tend to be good at English
Mean	21.20	14.50
Variance	65.03	40.21
Observations	15	103
t Stat	3.080	
t Critical Two Tail	0.007	

The mean of those who tend to like English was 21.20 out of 66 points on the MET, and that of those who do not was 14.50 points. The absolute value of t Stat (3.080) is larger than that of t Critical Two Tail (0.007). Therefore Table 2 shows that, with respect to the scores on the MET, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Third, in order to see if there was a statistically significant difference in the total scores on the MET between those who took more than 6 English classes per week (above average) and those who didn't (below average), we analyzed the data with a two-sample t-test assuming unequal sample variances. The average of the number of the English classes per week was 5.2. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The difference in the total scores on the MET

	Those who took more than 6 English classes per week	Those who didn't take more than 6 English classes per week
Mean	17.16	14.01
Variance	36.91	52.40
Observations	50	68
t Stat	-2.560	
t Critical Two Tail	0.011	

The mean of those who tend to like English was 17.16 out of 66 points on the MET, and that of those who do not was 14.01 points. The absolute value of t Stat (-2.560) is larger than that of t Critical Two Tail (0.011). Therefore Table 3 shows that, with respect to the scores on the MET, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Finally, in order to see if there was a statistically significant difference in the total scores on the MET between those who had an English teacher who a subject likes and those who didn't, we analyzed the data with a two-sample t-test assuming unequal sample variances. The result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The difference in the total scores on the MET

	Those who had an English teacher	Those who didn't have an English teacher
Mean	16.88	12.89
Variance	43.55	45
Observations	73	68
t Stat	3.136	
t Critical Two Tail	0.002	

The mean of those who tend to like English was 16.88 out of 66 points on the MET, and that of those who do not was 12.89 points. The absolute value of t Stat (3.136) is larger than that of t Critical Two Tail (0.002). Therefore Table 3 shows that, with respect to the scores on the MET, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

4. Results

The results of the present study are summarized in (1).

- (1) a. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between those who tend to like English and those who do not. There was a 4.27 point difference on the MET ($n=118$).
- b. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between those who tend to be good at English and those who do not. There was a 6.7 point difference on the MET ($n=118$).
- c. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between those who took more than 6 English classes per week and those who do not. There was a 3.15 point difference on the MET ($n=118$).
- d. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between those who had an English teacher who a student likes and those who do not. There was a 3.99 point difference on the MET ($n=118$).

5. Conclusion

These results clearly show significant differences in the scores on the MET (1) between students who have a positive attitude toward English and those who does not, (2) between students who took more than 6 classes per week, and those who did not, and (3) between students who

had a teacher liked by them. These results suggest that future ESL research should take into account the qualities and the characters of the English teachers, as well as students' attitude toward English and the number of English classes.

In this preliminary study, we have shown that there was a statistically significant difference between those who had an English teacher who a student likes and those who do not. However, it will be more interesting to specify which property of teachers (such as teacher's teaching techniques, personality, frankness, etc) is important, which will be a topic for future research.

References

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*This research was supported in part by the Academic Research Grant provided by Morioka University.

Appendix A : アンケート

○あなたの高校時代の生活についておたずねします

1. 次の () の中に 0~7 の整数で答えてください。
1週間 (7日間) のうち、何日くらい朝食を取っていましたか？
()

2. 次の生活に関する質問について、一番近いものを1つ選んで番号に○をつけてください。
 - 1) 学校がある日は、朝、何時頃に起きていましたか？
 1. 午前5時前 2. 午前5時から6時の間 3. 午前6時から7時の間
 4. 午前7時から8時の間 5. 午前8時以降

 - 2) 平日は、夜、何頃に寝ていましたか？
 1. 午後9時前 2. 午後9時から10時の間 3. 午後10時から11時の間
 4. 午後11時から午前0時の間 5. 午前0時以降

 - 3) 一日に平均何時間程度運動 (部活動を含む) をしていましたか？
 1. ほとんどしなかった 2. 1時間未満 3. 1時間以上2時間未満
 4. 2時間以上3時間未満 5. 3時間以上

 - 4) 一日に平均何時間程度テレビを見ていましたか？
 1. 見なかった 2. 1時間未満 3. 1時間以上2時間未満
 4. 2時間以上3時間未満 5. 3時間以上

 - 5) 一日に平均何時間程度ラジオを聴いていましたか？
 1. 聴かなかった 2. 1時間未満 3. 1時間以上2時間未満
 4. 2時間以上3時間未満 5. 3時間以上

 - 6) 一日に平均何時間程度邦楽 (日本語の歌詞の歌) を聴いていましたか？
 1. 聴かなかった 2. 1時間未満 3. 1時間以上2時間未満
 4. 2時間以上3時間未満 5. 3時間以上

 - 7) 一日に平均何時間程度洋楽 (英語の歌詞の歌) を聴いていましたか？
 1. 聴かなかった 2. 1時間未満 3. 1時間以上2時間未満
 4. 2時間以上3時間未満 5. 3時間以上

3. 次の食に関する質問について、一番近いものを1つ選んで番号に○をつけてください。
 - 1) 色の濃い野菜 (ほうれん草、人参、かぼちゃなど) を 100g (こぶし位) 食べていましたか？
 1. ほぼ毎日 2. 週3日以上 3. 週1、2回 4. ほとんどない

 - 2) 色の薄い野菜 (キャベツ、レタス、たまねぎなど) を 200g (こぶし2位) 食べていましたか？

1. ほぼ毎日 2. 週3日以上 3. 週1、2回 4. ほとんどない

3) 牛乳と乳製品を取っていましたか？

1. ほぼ毎日 2. 週3日以上 3. 週1、2回 4. ほとんどない

4) 肉、卵を食べていましたか？

1. ほぼ毎日 2. 週3日以上 3. 週1、2回 4. ほとんどない

5) 魚介類を食べていましたか？

1. ほぼ毎日 2. 週3日以上 3. 週1、2回 4. ほとんどない

6) 大豆製品（豆腐、納豆、揚げ、味噌など）を食べていましたか？

1. ほぼ毎日 2. 週3日以上 3. 週1、2回 4. ほとんどない

7) 海藻類（わかめ、ひじき、のり）を食べていましたか？

1. ほぼ毎日 2. 週3日以上 3. 週1、2回 4. ほとんどない

4. 次の英語に関する質問について、一番近いものを1つ選んで番号に○をつけてください。

1) どれくらい英語が好きでしたか？

1. 好き 2. どちらかといえば好き 3. どちらかといえば嫌い 4. 嫌い

2) どれくらい英語が得意でしたか？

1. 得意 2. どちらかといえば得意 3. どちらかといえば不得意 4. 不得意

3) 英語の授業は、週何コマ（何回）ありましたか？

() コマ (回)

4) 好きな英語の先生はいましたか？

いた・いなかった

○最後に、あなた自身についておたずねします

学部・学科 _____ 学年・クラス _____ 番号 _____

性別 男・女

自宅生ですか、下宿生ですか？	1. 自宅生 2. 下宿生
大学までの主な通学形態はどのようなものですか？	1. 徒歩 2. 自転車 3. 車やバイク 4. 電車などの公共交通機関

ご協力どうもありがとうございました。