

# Can-Do Self-Evaluation by English Camp Participants

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## Reference Data:

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This study was an analysis of a can-do self-evaluation by children (grades 3-6) participating in a 6-day English immersion camp, Kumon English Immersion Camp. Employing the Eiken Can-Do list (STEP, 2008) and a daily self-evaluation form, the changes in participants' confidence in each can-do statement (CDS) and in the activities of the camp are presented. Also, the relationship between the children's confidence and interest in CDSs and the language activities at the camp are discussed. Furthermore, such issues as the importance of English camps in the English education of Japan, especially with regard to MEXT's proposals for foreign language education, are addressed.

本稿は、6日間の英語イマージョンキャンプ (Kumon English Immersion Camp) に参加した小学3~6年生の児童による Can-Do自己評価の分析についての研究である。英検Can-Doリスト (STEP, 2008) と毎日行う自己評価シートを用い、個々の能力記述文 (can-do statement: CDS)、およびキャンプの活動における参加者の自信の変化について研究した。CDSの結果における自信と、キャンプでの言語活動の関係について議論すると同時に、特に文部科学省の外国語教育に関する提言に関連して、近年の日本の英語教育における英語キャンプの重要性等にも言及したい。

**L**ARGELY PROMPTED by MEXT's (the Japan Ministry of Education's) "Five Proposals and Specific Measures for Developing Proficiency in English for International Communication" (The Commission on the Development of Foreign Language Proficiency, 2011), research that examines the feasibility of the five proposals and attempts to apply the essentials of them to the language classroom is now on the rise. Among the five proposals, Proposal 1 has been having the most definitive impact on English education throughout the country. Proposal 1 addresses the English ability required of students. Specifically, one of the practical suggestions in the proposal, "The Government shall consider establishment of national learning attainment targets in the form of 'Can-Do lists,' while taking into account approaches adopted in foreign countries" (p. 5) attracts the greatest amount of attention.

Less noticed, but nonetheless important, is the MEXT proposal concerning the effective use of English camps. Proposal 3, which discusses providing students with more opportunities to use English, states that "Education boards and schools shall provide students with opportunities for intensive contact with practical English, such as English camps with ALTs and people from the private sector" (p. 9). Similarly, a suggestion for English camps can be found in a more recent proposal by the government, "The Third Proposal for University Education and



Global Human Resource Development for the Future” (The Education Rebuilding Implementation Council, 2013). In the proposal, the Council advocates that “The national government and local governments should . . . increase opportunities for students to come into contact with English through the holding of ‘English camps’ and so on” (p. 7). Despite the two official proposals, it must be candidly acknowledged that research on English camps has not been conducted sufficiently.

### Previous Studies

Regarding can-do research, it is often pointed out that studies that target elementary school students are rather small in number. This is partly because reflecting on their own learning process on a can-do list is not an easy task for younger children. Bearing this difficulty in mind, Naganuma (2011) conducted a study on elementary school students, from 1st to 6th grade, by adding a comment section to a can-do list in order to elicit qualitative responses from the students. According to his analysis, although most of the 1st graders could not write a comment, there were some who illustrated their impressive moments with drawings. Most of the 2nd graders wrote a comment on their achievement or goals, and the 3rd graders as a whole were able to analyze how they should tackle the language task such as by recalling their past experience. There were more reflective comments on their own learning among students in the upper grades. The 5th graders typically made objective comments about where and when to use the grammar that they had been taught, and the 6th graders made self-reflective comments on the learning process and strategies. By including a comment section in a can-do list, Naganuma argued in conclusion, children’s comments can be diversified according to their stage of development, and even students in the lower grades in elementary school can engage in self-evaluation of their achievements.

Turning to the current state of research on the effectiveness of English camps, except for brief reports (e.g., Shiratori, 2013), studies in light of the recent governmental proposals are scarce. One of the few is Onaka’s (2013) research that was conducted at a 2-day English immersion camp held in Iwate, in which 22 junior high school students participated. At the end of the program, according to Onaka, almost all the students answered on a questionnaire that they wanted to study English more. Based on the results, Onaka argued that even a short program is effective in increasing intrinsic motivation.

In light of the paucity of data on this topic, the author’s research (Muto, Shinohara, Adachi, & Kikuta, 2013) should be of particular interest. With the cooperation of program staff, research was conducted at a 6-day English immersion camp held in Shiga. There were 86 elementary school children in the program, ranging from 3rd to 6th graders, and the focus of the research was to study the change in the participants’ language learning motivation and attitudes toward English. In a nutshell, the findings showed that “international posture,” one of the most important language learning motivations for Japanese students (Yashima, 2002), was nurtured by international university students acting as camp leaders.

Taking two keywords, *Can-Do lists* and *English camps*, into account, the motivation for the present study was two-fold: the importance of measuring the outcomes of a language program targeted for elementary school students by means of a Can-Do list, and the (re)evaluation of the effectiveness of English camps that reflect recent governmental proposals.

### The Study

With the background and previous studies in mind, two research questions were developed:

1. Using a Can-Do list, how can the change in participants' confidence be shown?
2. What can be understood from their comments on daily self-evaluation forms?

After deciding not to create an original can-do list, which often is very risky especially when the research setting is unique, and deciding instead to employ an existing can-do list, the Eiken Can-Do List (STEP, 2008) was chosen from among several conventional widely used can-do lists. This is because the Eiken list (a) was meticulously developed with reference to several existing universally prevalent can-do lists (e.g., CEFR), the national course of study, and approved textbooks; (b) was based on the responses of over 20,000 test takers; and (c) is one of the most widely used can-do lists in Japan. According to STEP (2008), written into its Can-Do List is what the test takers believe they can accomplish in English in real-life situations, and therefore the list is not customized exclusively for language activities in the classroom (Yanase, 2014). Considering these characteristics, it is safe to say that the list reflects the use of English in real life, which is essentially the same as the English participants would use in a language camp where they enjoy a communal life style. Out of the 7 levels of the Eiken can-do lists, the Grade 4 Can-Do List (STEP, 2008) was chosen as a research instrument for this study, the reason being that before participating all the children had already passed Eiken Grade 4 or had equivalent English abilities.

## Method

Data was collected using a questionnaire. Participants were instructed to fill out the same questionnaire at home twice, about 1 month before and within a month after the camps they participated in. Besides the questionnaire, participants' comments on a daily self-evaluation form were analyzed.

## Research Tools

As stated above, the Eiken Grade 4 Can-Do List was employed (see Appendix A for an outline of the English version of the list). The list has 18 can-do statements (CDSs), including six pertaining to reading, four about listening, four about speaking, and four about writing. For each CDS, questions were added that asked about the participant's previous experience and their confidence in the statement. Previous experience was asked by a yes/no question and confidence was to be rated on a 4-level scale: *None*, *Little*, *Some*, and *A lot*. Comparing the Eiken Grade 4 Can-Do List and the Activity Manual and checking with camp staff about the program, I found that 14 out of the 18 CDSs were related to or treated in the activities of the camp program. I chose to keep the four seemingly irrelevant CDSs in the questionnaire to see whether or not participants' confidence in those four CDSs would remain the same regardless of the impact the program might have on them.

Along with the questionnaire, a daily can-do self-evaluation sheet, similar to the one illustrated in CILT (2006), was used to elicit onsite responses and qualitative data from children. At the end of Day 1 to Day 5, the program spared some time before lights-out for participants to reflect on their achievements and fill out the form simply by circling bubbles in which a CDS was written with a Japanese translation. They were also asked to write in either language (English or Japanese) what they wanted to try on the following day, words and phrases they had learned, and what they had learned on the given day (see Appendix B for a sample completed form).

## Target Camps

The target camps were ones in KUMON English Immersion Camp (EIC). EIC is a series of English immersion camps that have been held annually in summer since 2001. As a short-term

foreign language experience (FLEX) program, EIC is committed to fostering individuals who will contribute to world peace with their abilities to communicate in English (Deta, Muto, Kikuta, Adachi, & Shinohara, 2012). Therefore, most activities are designed so that children, who are encouraged to use English as a tool throughout the camp, can build confidence by communicating with camp leaders who are from diverse backgrounds.

In 2013 five camps, two 4-day camps intended for children with lower English skills (Eiken Grade 5) and three 6-day camps for children with higher skills (higher than Eiken Grade 4), were held in and around a tourist hotel located by Lake Biwa in Shiga. The latter three camps, labelled here Camp 1 (August 6-11), Camp 2 (August 12-17) and Camp 3 (August 19-24), were the subjects of the present research. Shown in Figure 1 is the outline schedule of the 6-day camps.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise
	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
	English Festival	Traveling Around the World	World Food Market	Studying about the EIC Website	Graduation Ceremony
	Sign Game		World Music Dance & Games	Drawing My Dream Poster (cont'd)	
	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Reception	Love Chain	Wonder-Land - Listening to a Presentation - Discussion	My Hometown	Writing Impression about Camp	Leave Camp
Entrance Ceremony		Eco-Heroes - Postcard Writing - Making an Eco Bag	Outdoor Games	Preparation for Drama, Show Biz & Graduation	
Making Friends - Sign Game - Team Building				Reading Camp Impression (in front of all)	
		Diary Reading	Diary Reading		
Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner (BBQ)	Dinner (Party)	
Group Introduction	Story Making	Talent Show	Drawing My Dream Poster	Drama Skit Performance & Show Biz	

Figure 1. Schedule outline of each of the 6-day English immersion camps.

## Participants

As indicated in Table 1, camp participants were all elementary school students ( $N = 223$ ), consisting of 3rd ( $n = 15$ ), 4th ( $n = 41$ ), 5th ( $n = 79$ ), and 6th graders ( $n = 88$ ). They spent most of the time in groups consisting of children from various school grades.

Table 1. Participants in the English Immersion Camps, by Grade and Sex

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Totals
Camp 1	4 (3:1)	19 (4:15)	35 (15:20)	24 (7:17)	82 (29:53)
Camp 2	5 (1:4)	7 (3:4)	21 (9:12)	35 (8:27)	68 (21:47)
Camp 3	6 (2:4)	15 (5:10)	23 (8:15)	29 (11:18)	73 (26:47)
3 camps	15 (6:9)	41 (13:29)	79 (32:47)	88 (26:62)	223 (76:147)

Note. Total number (boys: girls).

In terms of language proficiency, participants were considered to have sufficient language aptitude or input to participate in English immersion camps, where they were advised to use English only. To be eligible for participation, every one of them was required to have passed the Eiken Grade 4 test and/or finished studying Kumon worksheets equivalent to Eiken Grade 4. Out of the 223 participants, 45 had passed Grade 5, 105 had successfully completed Grade 4, 53 had passed Grade 3, 9 had passed Grade Pre-2, 1 had passed Grade 2, and 10 had never taken the test. In addition to English classes in school, all except for one attended the Kumon classroom to study English. Considering that Eiken Grade 4 is intended for 8th graders, it should be noted that the English skills of the EIC participants were much higher than those of average children of the same age.

Camp leaders, who not only conducted camp activities but also took care of all of the children's needs, were all university students from overseas ( $N = 62$ ). In the five camps held in 2013, they were all nonnative speakers of English who had learned English as their official or second language. Thirty-two students who were studying at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) attended to the children in Camp 1 and 30 students from several universities located in the Kansai area took care of the children in Camp 3. They had received intense training in advance and therefore their skills could be considered essentially equal. The diversity of the backgrounds of camp leaders offered participants opportunities to listen to World Englishes and use English as an international language.

### Data Analysis

Participants who had answered Yes to the question in the pre-questionnaire about previous experience were subjects of the analysis. It was determined that without any previous experience, subjects cannot even guess whether or not they "can do" the statement. Thus, the total number of participants varies in each CDS. Responses in each of the four columns (*None*, *Little*, *Some*, *A lot*) were counted separately. The 18 CDSs were classified into two categories: *Treated* (EIC offered activities related to the CDS) and *Not Treated* (EIC had no activities related to the CDS). Labeled *Treated* are all CDSs except for four: Reading-6, Speaking-4, Writing-2, and Writing-4. The Tables 2-5 show the responses for each Can-do Statement, grouped according to language skills.

Table 2. Responses to Can-Do Reading Statements

Can-do statement	B/A	None	Little	Some	A lot	Total
R-1. Can understand short letters and emails.	B	1 (2%)	9 (19%)	27 (57%)	10 (21%)	47
	A	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	27 (57%)	12 (25%)	
R-2. Can understand simple stories that include illustrations or photographs.	B	0 (0%)	16 (14%)	59 (53%)	35 (31%)	110
	A	0 (0%)	14 (12%)	49 (44%)	47 (42%)	
R-3. Can understand sentences describing familiar activities from everyday life.	B	1 (0%)	14 (12%)	57 (51%)	39 (35%)	111
	A	0 (0%)	8 (7%)	44 (39%)	59 (53%)	
R-4. Can understand simple signs and notices in public facilities.	B	0 (0%)	7 (6%)	40 (36%)	63 (57%)	110
	A	0 (0%)	6 (5%)	32 (29%)	72 (65%)	
R-5. Can understand simple English menus.	B	1 (1%)	15 (21%)	27 (38%)	28 (39%)	71
	A	1 (1%)	9 (12%)	36 (50%)	25 (35%)	
R-6. Can understand the information in an invitation to a party, etc.	B	0 (0%)	6 (13%)	27 (58%)	13 (28%)	46
	A	0 (0%)	12 (26%)	24 (52%)	10 (21%)	

Note. B / A = before and after camp experience.

Table 3. Responses to Can-Do Listening Statements

Can-do statement	B/A	None	Little	Some	A lot	Total
L-1. Can understand the information in a simple self-introduction.	B	0 (0%)	13 (13%)	46 (47%)	38 (39%)	97
	A	0 (0%)	7 (7%)	36 (37%)	54 (55%)	
L-2. Can understand the content of simply constructed sentences.	B	0 (0%)	10 (8%)	43 (38%)	59 (52%)	112
	A	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	34 (31%)	76 (68%)	
L-3. Can understand the meaning of simple instructions.	B	0 (0%)	12 (10%)	42 (37%)	58 (51%)	112
	A	2 (1%)	4 (3%)	28 (25%)	78 (69%)	
L-4. Can understand descriptions of the location of people and things.	B	0 (0%)	8 (8%)	39 (41%)	47 (50%)	94
	A	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	41 (43%)	50 (52%)	

Note. B / A = before and after camp experience.

Table 4. Responses to Can-Do Speaking Statements

Can-do statement	B/A	None	Little	Some	A lot	Total
S-1. Can give a simple self-introduction.	B	1 (1%)	19 (20%)	43 (46%)	29 (31%)	92
	A	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	36 (39%)	53 (57%)	
S-2. Can ask simple questions.	B	2 (1%)	17 (16%)	39 (38%)	43 (42%)	101
	A	0 (0%)	8 (7%)	39 (38%)	54 (53%)	

Can-do statement	B/A	None	Little	Some	A lot	Total
S-3. Can ask for repetition when he/she does not understand what the speaker says.	B	2 (2%)	10 (13%)	33 (45%)	27 (37%)	72
	A	5 (6%)	18 (25%)	25 (34%)	24 (33%)	
S-4. Can say dates and days of the week.	B	6 (7%)	19 (22%)	30 (35%)	29 (34%)	84
	A	3 (3%)	17 (20%)	29 (34%)	35 (41%)	

Note. B / A = before and after camp experience.

Table 5. Responses to Can-Do Writing Statements

Can-do statement	B/A	None	Little	Some	A lot	Total
W-1. Can write sentences using English word order, provided that the sentences are short.	B	4 (3%)	30 (25%)	52 (43%)	34 (28%)	120
	A	4 (3%)	24 (20%)	46 (38%)	46 (38%)	
W-2. Can write short messages by putting words and phrases together.	B	1 (1%)	15 (26%)	24 (42%)	17 (29%)	57
	A	1 (1%)	15 (26%)	26 (45%)	15 (26%)	
W-3. Can write sentences joining clauses with conjunctions.	B	9 (8%)	31 (28%)	45 (42%)	22 (20%)	107
	A	4 (3%)	15 (14%)	49 (45%)	39 (36%)	
W-4. Can write dates and days of the week.	B	4 (3%)	29 (28%)	38 (37%)	30 (29%)	101
	A	1 (0%)	25 (24%)	34 (33%)	41 (40%)	

Note. B / A = before and after camp experience.

Furthermore, in order to determine whether there might be a significant change in the nominal data (i.e., the number of responses) before and after the target camps, a McNemar's test (exact significance, 2-tailed) was applied after creating two groups by combining *None* and *Little* into *Negative*, and *Some* and *A lot* into *Positive*. Table 6 shows the results of the test. As is obvious from the table, only two statements, S-1 ( $p = .015$ ) and W-3 ( $p = .005$ ) were found to show a significant change ( $\alpha < .05$ ).

**Table 6. Results of McNemar's Test Comparing Responses Before and After Camp**

	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing
R-1	.757	L-1 .430	S-1 .015	W-1 .478
R-2	.840	L-2 .316	S-2 .139	W-2 1.000
R-3	.383	L-3 .462	S-3 .080	W-3 .005
R-4	.946	L-4 .512	S-4 .488	W-4 .360
R-5	.356			
R-6	.251			

## Discussion

As shown in Table 6, S-1 and W-3 showed significant increase. Presumably, the growth in S-1 (Can give a simple self-introduction) is attributed to activities called *Sign Game* (Day 1, Day 2) and *My Hometown* (Day 4). In *Sign Game*, while freely walking around in the room, children introduced themselves to each other and took notes in their camp booklets about what they learned. Similarly, in *My Hometown*, each participant, with prepared notes and pictures, introduced his or her hometown to everyone in the group.

The significant change in confidence because of these two activities is also corroborated by participants' own Can-Do evaluation on the daily self-evaluation sheet. On Day 1, 209 children out of 223 (93%) circled the bubble that said "I can introduce myself (Sign Game)," and 214 out of 223 (95%) circled "I can introduce my hometown (My Hometown)" on Day 4.

Regarding participants' comments related to *Sign Game* on Day 1, children wrote comments in Japanese in the *New things I learned today* section such as "If we talk to each other, we can be friends" (a 5th grader), "I made friends with new people and learned interesting things" (a 5th grader), and "Through speaking English and playing Sign game, I learned about various lifestyles" (a 6th grader).

Activities that may have triggered the rise in W-3 (Can write sentences joining clauses with conjunctions) are activities named *Diary Writing* (from Day 1 to Day 5), *Writing a Postcard* (Day 3), *Camp Impression* (Day 5) and *Dream Poster* (Day 4, Day 5). In all four activities, though their purposes differed, children were encouraged to write English in sentences, when possible with conjunctions. According to daily self-evaluation sheets, 216 (96%) children circled "I can write a postcard" on Day 3, 191 (85%) circled "I can tell my dream" on Day 4, and 211 (94%) circled "I can write impression" on Day 5. As for *Diary writing*, though the "I can write diary" bubble appeared only on Days 2, 3, and 4, the number of participants that circled the bubble showed a steady increase with 204 (91%) participants circling it on Day 2, 209 (93%) on Day 3, and 212 (95%) on Day 4.

The powerful and repetitive encouragement to write English seems to have stimulated participants' interest. Take for example participants' comments in the "What I want to challenge tomorrow" section on Day 2: 44 out of 223 commented on writing a better or long diary, with comments like "I hope I can write a diary tomorrow" (a 3rd grader), "I want to be able to write a diary by myself" (a 4th grader), and "I want to write

long sentences in my diary by consulting a dictionary” (a 5th grader).

In sum, what the activities targeted at S-1 and W-3 have in common is that both CDSs refer to productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing), and the activities were done more than once in each camp.

It should be noted, however, productive and repetitive are not always key to confidence. In each camp, there was an activity called *Say out loud*, which was intended to boost confidence in S-3 (Can ask for repetition when he/she does not understand what the speaker says). In the activity, all children repeated useful expressions such as “Please say again” after a camp leader. The activity, done over a span of 3 days, was not as effective in terms of confidence as was expected—the number of *Some* responses to CDS S-3 dropped from 33 (45%) before camp to 25 (34%) after camp and *A lot* responses declined from 27 (37%) to 24 (33%). Presumably, these results are because there were no opportunities for children to use the phrases at any other time. This is regrettable considering the rising number of participants who circled the “I can say with a big voice (Say out loud)” bubble: 157 (70%) participants on Day 2, 171 (76%) on Day 3, and 187 (83%) on Day 4.

## Conclusion and Implications

The camp program, measured by means of the Eiken Can-Do List and the daily self-evaluation form, was shown to potentially be a language-learning environment for increasing confidence of participants, most notably, CDS S-1 (Can give a simple self-introduction) and CDS W-3 (Can write sentences joining clauses with conjunctions). Both are statements of productive skills and are related to activities that were done repetitively during the camps. However, analysis of the opposite results of CDS S-3 suggests that providing a productive task repeatedly does not

necessarily lead to an increase in confidence—making the activity meaningful is important. This we should keep in mind when designing language tasks or activities.

Regrettably and admittedly, the Eiken Can-Do List may not be sufficient to cover all EIC characteristics. An original Can-Do list customized for the program needs to be devised to measure the desired outcomes more precisely. In order to shed light on the effects of the camp leaders with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, such CDSs as “Can understand a wide variety of English” or “Can talk about world problems” would need to be included. Clearly, those CDSs are essential for the “English for international communication” that MEXT proposes. After creating and testing such a targeted Can-Do list, the uniqueness of EIC may be recognized and its mission may become more highly valued in the English education of the country.

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## Bio Data

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire (Summary)

Direction: Circle one that matches your experience and confidence for each can-do statement.

Ever Experienced?		Your Confidence?			
Yes	No	None	Little	Some	A lot

### Reading

- R-1. Can understand short letters and e-mails.
- R-2. Can understand simple stories that include illustrations or photographs.
- R-3. Can understand sentences describing familiar activities from everyday life.
- R-4. Can understand simple signs and notices in public facilities.
- R-5. Can understand simple English menus.
- R-6. Can understand the information in an invitation to a party, etc.

### Listening

- L-1. Can understand the information in a simple self-intro-

duction.

- L-2. Can understand the content of simply constructed sentences.
- L-3. Can understand the meaning of simple instructions.
- L-4. Can understand descriptions of the location of people and things.

### Speaking

- S-1. Can give a simple self-introduction.
- S-2. Can ask simple questions.
- S-3. Can ask for repetition when he/she does not understand what the speaker says.
- S-4. Can say dates and days of the week.

### Writing

- W-1. Can write sentences using English word order, provided that the sentences are short.
- W-2. Can write short messages by putting words and phrases together.
- W-3. Can write sentences joining clauses with conjunctions.
- W-4. Can write dates and days of the week.

## Completed

**Please circle the speech bubbles when you can do these things**  
できると思うものにマルをつけてね

**DAY2**

I can write story  
物語を書ける

I can express what I want on my (strong feeling)  
強い感情を表現できる

I can express my opinion  
意見を述べられる

I can draw a map  
地図が書ける

I can draw a map  
地図が書ける

I can draw a map  
地図が書ける

**What I want to challenge tomorrow**  
明日挑戦したいこと  
物語を書く  
家で

**New Words & Phrases I learned today**  
今日新しく習った単語やフレーズがあげられてね  
bullying, outdoor, park, museum

**New things I learned today**  
今日新しく習ったこと  
Schools have people in hand  
Museum don't eat, touch  
Different is OK  
They handle hand is "handy".

## Appendix B

### Daily Can-Do Self-Evaluation Form (Day 2,