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Expansion of the Hiroshima University English Can-Do List to Support English Learning Outside the Classroom

Shuichi AMANO
Yuka YAMAUCHI
Tatsuya SAKAUE
Yuka TAKAHASHI
Atsushi NAKAGAWA
Katsuhiro YAMAUCHI
Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education
Hiroshima University

In this paper, we report on the expanded analysis and results for further validation of Hiroshima University's English can-do statement list, which has been developed by the Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education at Hiroshima University (Enokida et al., 2017; Kida et al., 2017; Kida et al., 2018; Kida et al., 2019). Can-do statement lists are utilized in three ways: 1) as a self-assessment tool for proficiency (Jones & Saville, 2009; Little, 2011), 2) as a scale to augment teacher grading from varied perspectives (Ozawa, 2018), and 3) as a support tool for goal setting and self-access learning by the students (Kida et al., 2017; Kida et al., 2018; Kida et al., 2019). The goals of our list are comparable with the third method, as part of the educational environment reforms and improvements undertaken by our institute since its establishment in 2004. We will present the changes made to English language education in the liberal arts curriculum since the list was first developed, the challenges deepened by these changes, and a discussion about how the can-do list can assist in overcoming these challenges. In addition, we will report on the re-survey of the statement list data, its analysis results, and the project's future direction.

BACKGROUND

At the onset, we would like to clarify that we do not intend to use can-do statements as an instrument to assess learning outcomes or course efficacy. Instead, we will continue using the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC®) scores and teacher-created tests. Indeed, if valid assessments using can-do statements become feasible, it would enable the stakeholders across educational systems (e.g., high school, university, graduate school) to discuss students' stages of language learning. However, even the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is already in the practical phase (Jones & Saville, 2009; Little, 2011), partially lacks validity because its descriptor scales are not fully based on theories and research findings about language acquisition; hence, it is often claimed that further empirical research about its possible functions is needed (Fulcher, 2004; Jones & Saville, 2009). The properties of assessment with can-do statements have not been fully revealed (Denies & Janssen, 2016). The accuracy of second language self-assessments and self-efficacy has been proven to be affected by, for example, training (Chen, 2008), anxiety (MacIntyre et al., 1997), and gender (Denies & Janssen, 2016). Therefore, at present, can-do statements are not used in our institute as a measure of learning outcomes or course efficacy.

Meanwhile, can-do statements could serve as a tool to assist students in learning English and setting goals during their time at the university. The goal-setting objectives are in line with the acceptance of Hiroshima University, in 2014, as one of the 13 universities participating in the "Top Global University Initiative" of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. In line with this initiative, a TOEIC score of 730 is one of the targets for undergraduate students. However, students' career paths vary, which defines their need for English learning. Depending on future aspirations, some students may aim to achieve more than 730 points, while others may not need to achieve a similar TOEIC score at all. In other words, students need to set their goals in addition to the standards set by the university. However, it is extremely challenging to set English-learning goals that are linked with the TOEIC score. Therefore, we aimed to develop a list of can-do statements tied to students' TOEIC scores so that after graduation, they could understand the link between their TOEIC scores and the targeted English language skills.

The objective of supporting continued English language learning is related to the changes in the English language curriculum for liberal arts education. At the beginning of the development, some students were required to take six credits of liberal arts English language courses, while others were required to take eight credits, depending on their major program. Figure 1 illustrates the curriculum. Students who required six credits took Communication IA and Communication IB in the first semester of their first year and Communication IIA and Communication IIB in the second semester. Students who required eight credits took the same courses as students who required six credits, and additional online courses – Communication Basics I (first semester) and Communication Basics II (second semester) – in their first year. Furthermore, in the second year, both sets of students chose two each of Communication IIIA, Communication IIIB, and Communication IIIC, one for each semester. Compulsory English courses were not offered to students
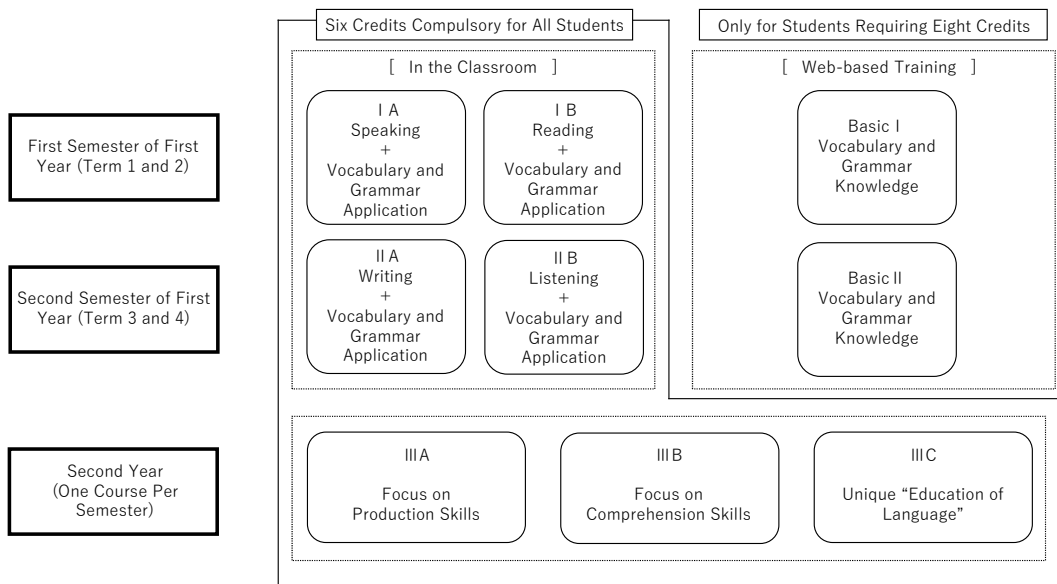

FIGURE 1. Liberal Arts English Language Education Curriculum at the Time of Starting the Can-do Statement List Development

in the third year or later. Therefore, self-access learning was indispensable to improve English language proficiency after the second year. Thus, the can-do statement list was developed to help students set English-learning goals in their first and second years and continue learning English in their subsequent years.

After the start of the list development, as reported by Kida et al. (2017), there were major curriculum changes. Therefore, for students entering after 2019, the number of required credits was revised to four and six credits, respectively, and Communication III A, Communication III B, and Communication III C were discontinued, as represented in Figure 2 (Morita, 2020). This change required self-access learning from the second year onwards and increased the need for English language learning support.
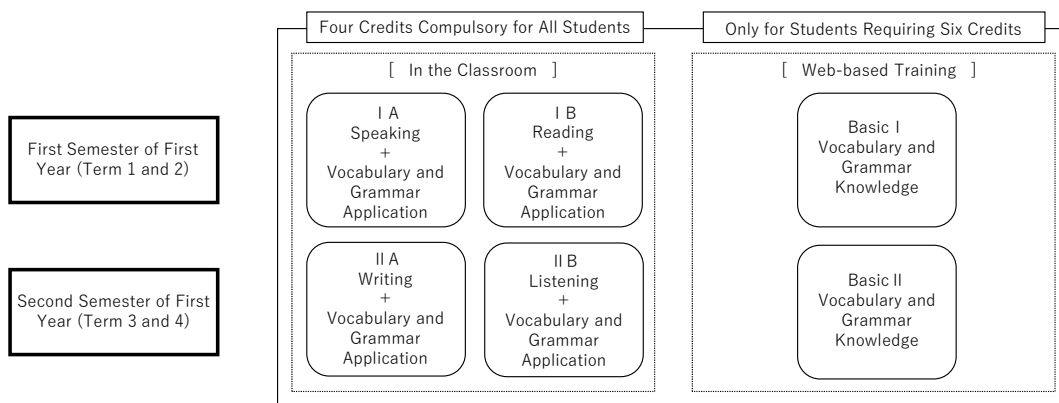

FIGURE 2. Liberal Arts English Curriculum as of 2022

SUPPORT FOR SELF-ACCESS LEARNING

Even if students set goals by using a can-do statement list associated with their TOEIC score, it is difficult for them to continue their English learning if they do not have support for self-access learning. To establish this support, our institute has purchased and subscribed to e-learning systems and extensive reading materials for self-access learning since the start of this project. In addition, we have provided two types of original teaching materials: Hiroshima University's English Podcast and English News Weekly (1,000+ podcast episodes from 2008 to May, 2022). However, it is not easy for students to continue self-access learning through teaching materials alone. Therefore, the list development aims to support students by making them aware of both TOEIC scores and can-do statements and by suggesting study materials that match their goals (Kida et al., 2017; Kida et al., 2018; Kida et al., 2019). We aim to present a comprehensive package that would help students understand what they can do with the English language when they enter the school, what they aim to do when they graduate, and the kind of study plan required to achieve their goals by using a list that links with their TOEIC scores. In addition, the purpose is to create an environment that allows students to continue self-access learning (Kida et al., 2017).

Therefore, Kida et al. (2017) decided that the Hiroshima University English Can-do List would be based on an existing standardized can-do list linked to a standardized test whose validity and reliability could be verified. Standardized tests also needed to be consistent with the situation of students and the purpose of the can-do list. After careful examination of existing can-do lists, they decided to develop Hiroshima

University's statement list based on the can-do statement list provided by the International Institute for Business Communication (IIBC), Japan. Research involving self-assessment by language learners often examines their self-assessment reports in comparison to more objective measures, such as standardized tests (Denies & Janssen, 2016). Hence, the decision to base the can-do statement list on the IIBC list is a reasonable approach. However, the list by Kida et al. (2017), based solely on 2016 data, was not a complete version, as they acknowledge. Considering the important role of this list, there is a need to examine it through multi-year data collection. Therefore, we report the results of a re-survey with newly collected data from 2016–2019 and its result.

SURVEY PROCEDURE

Survey Participants

The participants were approximately 2,000 students of Hiroshima University who had taken six or eight credits in the liberal arts English curriculum after the previous survey by Kida et al. (2017). They were in the bachelor's programs that require Communication Basic I and II (see Figures 1 and 2). Among them, those with incomplete responses and those in the score bands with fewer than 20 students (See Table 1), were excluded from the study. Finally, the re-survey was conducted using data for 1,971 students, roughly double the number of those in Kida et al. (2017).

TABLE 1. Number of Students by Score Band

Score bands	Number of applicable students
900–990	2
800–895	15
700–795	152
600–695	481
500–595	744
400–495	467
300–395	115
200–295	7
100–195	1
0–95	0

Questionnaire

We used the IIBC-developed Japanese questionnaire, published by Kida et al. (2017). This questionnaire is unique as it includes can-do statements for reading, writing, speaking, and listening along with can-do statements for the ability to interact with others (interaction) and the ability to functionally express oneself (function). The questionnaire was administered using a 5-point scale, ranging from "cannot do at all" to "can do without problems" (1: cannot do at all, 2: hardly can do, 3: barely can do, 4: mostly can do, and 5: can do without problems).

Data Collection

The primary data collected for this project were TOEIC® Listening & Reading IP test scores and can-do questionnaire responses. The TOEIC® Listening & Reading IP test was administered in August and De-

cember 2016, February and October 2017, January and October 2018, January, April, and July 2019, and January 2020.[1] Only the can-do surveys administered within three months of each test were included.

Analysis Criteria

The procedure used for the analysis to create the can-do statement list, led by the first author, was equivalent to Kida et al. (2017), which conformed to the Educational Testing Service procedures. The first step was to create score bands based on the TOEIC® IP test scores of the survey participants in increments of 100 points (e.g., 300–395, 400–495). The second step was to link the survey participants' TOEIC® IP test scores with the results of their questionnaire responses.

The responses to each questionnaire item were tabulated with "4: mostly can do" and "5: can do without problems" being the can-do responses, "1: cannot do at all" and "2: hardly can do" being the cannot-do responses, and "3: barely can do" being a neutral response. Subsequently, the can-do, cannot-do, and can-do with difficulty cells were determined for each score band. A cell was designated as "can-do" if 50% or more of the participants had can-do responses. Similarly, a cell was designated as "cannot-do" if 50% or more of the participants had cannot-do responses. A cell with less than 50% of both can-do and cannot-do responses was considered a between cell and was designated as "can-do with difficulty."

Finally, the score bands for each item were determined. Can-do items were allocated to the lowest score band of all the score bands in which 50% or more of the participants provided can-do responses. Meanwhile, the can-do with difficulty item was assigned to the lowest score band with less than 50% of both can-do and cannot-do responses.

RESULTS

The results of the survey are presented in Tables 2–7. To explain how to interpret the tables, we use Table 2 as an example. White cells are can-do cells with more than 50% can-do responses, dark gray cells are cannot-do cells with more than 50% cannot-do responses, and light gray cells are can-do with difficulty cells with less than 50% in both responses. The percentages in the white and dark gray cells indicate the percentage of can-do and cannot-do responses, respectively. Since neither set of responses exceeded 50% in any of the score bands for Items R-1 to R-3, these are all can-do with difficulty items in the lowest score band of the current survey, i.e., 300–395. Item R4 is a can-do with difficulty item in the 600–695 score band because can-do responses did not exceed 50% in the higher score bands. When can-do responses exceed 50% in the score bands from 300–395 to 700–795, as in Item R-5, it is considered a can-do item in the lowest score band, i.e., 300–395. Item R-7 had neither can-do nor cannot-do responses of less than 50% in the score range from 300–395 to 500–595; however, from 600–695, can-do responses began to exceed 50%, hence, it was considered a can-do with difficulty item in 300–395 and a can-do item in 600–695.

TABLE 2. List of Can-do Statements on Reading

Section	Statements	395-300	495-400	595-500	695-600	795-700
R-1	I can read and understand paperback stories and novels.					
R-2	I can understand restaurant menus.					
R-3	I can read and understand English language newspapers as long as I know the content of the topic beforehand from Japanese news or newspapers.					
R-4	I can read an an English language newspaper and understand the content even if it is a new topic.	**72.17%**	**62.31%**	**54.57%**		
R-5	I can read the alphabet in both upper and lower case.	91.30%	89.29%	92.61%	94.80%	95.39%
R-6	I can look at an address written in English and identify its location (on a map, etc.).					
R-7	I can understand a person's character by looking at their letter of introduction.				52.39%	56.58%
R-8	I can see and understand the meaning of simple informational signs ("EXIT," "Entrance," "Stop!", etc.)	70.43%	75.37%	81.45%	88.15%	91.45%
R-9	I can read and understand simple cards such as a Birthday Card, Christmas Card, New Year's Card, etc., from friends.		52.03%	56.99%	74.22%	76.32%
R-10	I can understand the content of a movie by looking at the English subtitles (closed captioning).	**54.78%**				
R-11	I can understand the lyrics of English language songs that come with CDs.					
R-12	I can understand websites written in English that have content of my interest.					
R-13	I can read and understand international travel guides (brochures, etc.).					
R-14	I can read timetables for trains, buses, airplanes, etc. and understand departure/arrival times and destinations.				52.39%	53.95%
R-15	I can read and understand the content of magazine articles, such as in Time and Newsweek.	**64.35%**	**57.17%**	**53.36%**		

TABLE 3. List of Can-do Statements on Writing

Section	Statements	395-300	495-400	595-500	695-600	795-700
W-1	I can write the list of things to take with me on a trip.					
W-2	I can write simple cards such as Birthday Cards, Christmas cards, New Year's cards, etc., to my friends.					
W-3	I can write the directions to my house.					
W-4	I can write postcards to friends to let them know about my vacation.					
W-5	I can write the reason for being late.					
W-6	I can write both upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet.	88.70%	89.29%	93.28%	93.97%	95.39%
W-7	I can write the invitation for a party addressed to my friends.					
W-8	I can write my home address.					
W-9	I can prepare a report on my school research project.	**66.96%**	**66.38%**	**59.27%**	**52.60%**	**54.61%**
W-10	I can write my résumé (a document showing my background).	**66.09%**	**59.10%**	**50.94%**		**51.32%**
W-11	I can write a book report.	**59.13%**	**50.54%**			
W-12	I can write a letter of introduction about myself to a stranger.					
W-13	I can write a note to my friends letting them know where and when to meet me.					
W-14	I can write an essay about my future dreams (e.g., what career I want to pursue).	**51.30%**				
W-15	I can keep a diary.					

TABLE 4. List of Can-do Statements on Speaking

Section	Statements	395-300	495-400	595-500	695-600	795-700
S-1	I can introduce myself (name, age, grade, etc.).	56.52%	60.39%	68.82%	77.34%	76.32%
S-2	I can greet people when I meet them and when I say goodbye.	60.87%	67.24%	72.98%	82.54%	79.61%
S-3	I can tell people where I come from.	62.61%	68.31%	76.61%	86.69%	82.24%
S-4	I can describe my family structure.	53.04%	61.67%	71.77%	80.87%	78.95%
S-5	I can give the synopsis of the movies and TV shows that I have seen.					
S-6	I can describe my friend's physical appearance (e.g., tall) and personality.				60.29%	55.26%
S-7	I can explain the subject that I am (or was) learning (or majoring) in school.					
S-8	I can talk about my dreams (what I hope to do next year, etc.).					
S-9	I can name the days of the week and the months.	80.00%	81.16%	86.42%	92.10%	94.08%
S-10	I can talk about my daily life (waking up, lunch time, etc.).			58.60%	68.81%	69.74%
S-11	I can count.	88.70%	88.01%	89.65%	94.80%	92.11%
S-12	When I don't understand what someone is saying, I ask them to repeat or speak more slowly.	57.39%	66.17%	71.91%	81.70%	82.89%
S-13	I can order in a restaurant (by reading the menu).				59.25%	59.87%
S-14	I can ask people about their work (occupation).			51.21%	59.88%	69.08%
S-15	I can give a brief speech at a party of close friends/ acquaintances.		**52.46%**			
S-16	I can explain the directions to my house.					
S-17	I can explain the reasons for my actions.					
S-18	I can describe my daily actions in a sequence (e.g., what time I got up, what I did next, etc.).					
S-19	I can state my position when there is a conflict of opinion and the reasons for agreeing (or disagreeing) with either side.					
S-20	I can speak on the topic, "what I would like to do if I had enough time and money to myself" right now.					

TABLE 5. List of Can-do Statements on Listening

Section	Statements	395-300	495-400	595-500	695-600	795-700
L-1	I can understand simple greetings and questions such as "How are you?", "Where do you live?", and "How do you feel?"	73.91%	77.09%	83.87%	90.64%	87.50%
L-2	If people speak slowly and considerately, I can understand directions to nearby places.	53.04%	57.60%	65.68%	76.30%	75.00%
L-3	I can understand self-introductions and catch people's name, hometown, etc. (unless the name of a person or place is unfamiliar to me).		50.54%	60.48%	75.05%	72.37%
L-4	I can understand the days of the week and month.	72.17%	78.59%	85.48%	91.68%	88.82%
L-5	I can understand the date and time.	71.30%	78.37%	84.41%	89.81%	87.50%
L-6	I can understand the TV news announcer if I know the content of the topic beforehand from Japanese news or newspapers.					
L-7	I can understand the TV news announcer even if it is a new topic.	57.39%	68.31%	62.77%	57.80%	60.53%
L-8	I can watch (and listen to) movies and TV dramas and understand their content.	60.00%	63.60%	56.72%	54.05%	54.61%
L-9	I can understand the interviewees on TV or radio news.	61.74%	68.09%	59.54%	53.85%	55.92%
L-10	I can understand lectures and talks in my field of study.	69.57%	77.09%	72.45%	67.78%	68.42%
L-11	I can understand general airport announcements regarding boarding times, departure gates, etc.					
L-12	I can understand the explanation of menu recommendations in restaurants.					
L-13	I can understand the announcements commonly made in public places, such as calling people or informing them of (changes in) scheduled events.	53.91%				
L-14	I can understand the instructions given by the teacher in class (e.g., "Open your textbook to page ...").		53.53%	63.44%	70.69%	76.97%
L-15	I can listen to people with different opinions and understand the main points and conflicts of argument.	51.30%	50.75%			

TABLE 6. List of Can-do Statements on Interaction

Section	Statements	395-300	495-400	595-500	695-600	795-700
I-1	I can exchange simple words of greeting with people I meet for the first time.			58.87%	67.36%	63.82%
I-2	At the airport immigration counter, I can interact with the officer (length of stay, purpose of visit, etc.).					
I-3	I can call a friend's house and ask the family members to get the friend on the phone.					
I-4	I can call a restaurant and make a reservation.					
I-5	I can understand the usual check-in and check-out procedures at the front desk of a hotel.					
I-6	I can change my stay dates at the hotel front desk (extend or cancel).	59.13%	54.18%			
I-7	I can conduct simple business at bank counters, such as withdraw and exchange money.	60.00%	54.39%			
I-8	I can explain to a taxicab driver where I want to go.					
I-9	I can talk to a salesperson at an electronics store about the product I want.	50.43%				
I-10	I can describe a malfunctioning item and request a repair at an electronics store.	60.87%	58.46%	51.75%		
I-11	I can explain a situation to the person in-charge and obtain instructions about how to handle the situation later, such as lost baggage.	68.70%	65.52%	57.39%	51.77%	50.00%
I-12	I can ask people for directions.					
I-13	I can talk with close friends or acquaintances about recent events or incidents and share their thoughts.					
I-14	I am able to discuss my interests with others and explain my point of view when I disagree with them.	59.13%	56.53%			
I-15	I can talk to a foreign visitor in Japan answer their queries (e.g., how to get to a destination).					

TABLE 7. List of Can-do Statements on Function

Section	Statements	395-300	495-400	595-500	695-600	795-700
F-1	I can express that I have a _____ (e.g., I have a laptop.).	67.83%	77.52%	83.87%	88.98%	90.79%
F-2	I can ask questions like, "What is that?" about things I don't recognize.	65.22%	76.23%	82.80%	89.19%	91.45%
F-3	I can express dates and times (e.g., Sports Day is on May 10 at 9:30 a.m.).	64.35%	70.45%	77.42%	84.41%	80.92%
F-4	I can express a need (e.g., I need a dictionary to study English.).	57.39%	70.88%	78.90%	85.65%	86.84%
F-5	I can express that I want something (e.g., Please give me something to write with, I want a glass of water.).	63.48%	70.88%	81.05%	85.03%	88.82%
F-6	I can make requests to others (e.g., I need help moving my desk.).	58.26%	66.81%	77.42%	82.12%	84.21%
F-7	I can express myself to explain my strengths and interests (e.g., I can play the piano.).	55.65%	69.16%	77.42%	83.37%	85.53%
F-8	I can ask for permission (e.g., May I use this ball?).	56.52%	68.31%	77.69%	83.16%	86.18%
F-9	I can express quantities (e.g., 3 pencils, 5 eggs).	60.87%	70.45%	77.28%	82.33%	82.89%
F-10	I can express portions, doses, sizes, etc. (e.g., 1 square meter of board, 5 liters of water).		50.11%	59.01%	62.16%	63.82%
F-11	I can express time durations (e.g., Lunch time is from 12:00 to 13:00 hrs.).	51.30%	61.24%	68.28%	76.92%	73.03%
F-12	I can invite people to do something (e.g., Let's go to lunch.).	52.17%	64.45%	73.39%	80.04%	82.89%
F-13	I can ask for a reason (e.g., Why were you late?).	52.17%	64.03%	74.46%	81.08%	82.89%
F-14	I can express frequency (e.g., This machine breaks down from time to time.).		59.96%	70.03%	75.68%	74.34%
F-15	I can describe where people are or where things are placed (e.g., on a desk, behind a door).	56.52%	64.67%	73.12%	77.55%	82.24%
F-16	I can express predictions and possibilities (e.g., It's going to rain tomorrow.).		55.46%	64.92%	71.31%	76.97%
F-17	I can express my opinion in a definitive manner (e.g., I think we should cancel the gathering tomorrow.).		53.96%	63.58%	70.69%	74.34%
F-18	I can express my suggestions (e.g., How about canceling the gathering tomorrow?).			58.33%	63.20%	67.76%
F-19	I can express my hopes and fears (e.g., Will he understand my English?).			52.42%	56.13%	66.45%
F-20	I can express my concerns (e.g., I am worried that you will miss the train.).			54.30%	59.25%	67.76%

CONCLUSION

This paper described the process and procedures involved in the re-survey to develop the Hiroshima University English Can-Do List and provided an analysis of the student responses. However, this re-survey did not eliminate all the problems in our list and we expect to revisit and modify the list in the future.

There are two main points to consider in the future. The first is the range of the score band. In our survey, a few students fell into the upper group of TOEIC® Listening & Reading IP test scores of 800–895 and 900–990 while others fell into the lower groups of 10–95, 100–195, and 200–295. We excluded these students from the score bands for analysis. Further consideration must be given to whether these students remain excluded from our list, judging by the fact that there are very few students who fall into these score bands, or whether we should collect more data and aim to expand the score band range. Second, in this project, we analyzed the can-do statements using an existing questionnaire developed by the IIBC as in Kida et al. (2017). Therefore, aspects of students' English skills that were excluded in their questionnaire were excluded from our analysis and there were some statements that could have been excluded but were included. In refining this list, modifications such as the addition and deletion of the can-do statements are necessary.

NOTE

1) Due to changes in regulations for the operation of student personal information at Hiroshima University, TOEIC scores after 2018 are based on self-reports.

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Expansion of the Hiroshima University English Can-Do List to Support English Learning Outside the Classroom

Shuichi AMANO
Yuka YAMAUCHI
Tatsuya SAKAUE
Yuka TAKAHASHI
Atsushi NAKAGAWA
Katsuhiro YAMAUCHI
Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education
Hiroshima University

We report on a re-survey of the Hiroshima University English Can-Do List, developed by the Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education at Hiroshima University, and the results of the survey conducted to improve the validity of the list. The development of this list was initiated with the aim of contributing to English language education at Hiroshima University as a tool to support students' goal setting and self-access learning, and data collection has continued since then. The previously published list was based on only one year of data, but given the expected role of this list, additional studies based on multi-year data collection are desirable. Therefore, a re-survey was conducted with newly collected data from 2016 to 2019. Unfortunately, however, this re-survey did not resolve all the remaining challenges, and we believe that the list should continue to be revised in the future. We suggest two issues that should be explored in the future. One is the range of score bands to be analyzed. In this study, a small number of students who scored 800 or above and 295 or below on the TOEIC® Listening & Reading IP Test were excluded from the analysis. Further study is needed to determine whether to exclude students in these score ranges, given the small number of students who fall in these ranges, or to expand the range of scores. The other issue is that, as in the previous survey, a can-do analysis was conducted using an existing list provided by the International Institute for Business Communication (IIBC). In the next and subsequent surveys, the list will need to be refined and modified by adding or deleting can-do statements.

<div align="center">要　約</div>

教室外での英語学習を支援するための広島大学英語 Can-Do リストの拡充

天　野　修　一
山　内　優　佳
阪　上　辰　也
高　橋　有　加
中　川　　　篤
山　内　勝　弘
広島大学外国語教育研究センター

　本論文は，広島大学外国語教育研究センターが開発した広島大学英語 Can-Do リストについて，有効性を高めるために実施した再調査とその結果を報告する。本リストは，学生による目標設定と自主学習の支援ツールとして広島大学の英語教育に貢献することを目指して開発が開始され，その後もデータ収集を継続していた。前回発表されたリストは単年のデータのみに基づくものであったが，このリストの期待される役割の大きさを考えると，複数年のデータ収集による追加の検討が必要である。そこで，2016年から2019年にかけて新たに収集したデータで再調査を行った。しかし，残念ながら，この再調査ですべての問題点を解消することはできなかったため，今後もリストの修正を継続すべきであると考える。今後，検討すべき点を二つ指摘する。一つは，分析する得点帯の範囲である。今回の調査では，TOEIC® Listening & Reading IP テストのスコア800点以上および295点以下に該当する学生が少なく，分析から除外した。これらの得点帯に該当する学生は少ないと判断し，このまま除外とするのか，それとも，得点帯の拡大を目指すのか，今後さらに検討する必要がある。もう一つは，前回調査と同様に IIBC が開発した既存のリストを用いて Can-Do 分析を行ったことである。次回以降の調査では，リストに Can-Do ステイトメントの追加や削除を施し，精緻化や修正が必要である。