

国際日本学研究科  
修士学位請求論文要旨

〔論文題名〕

**Clarification of Japanese Elementary School English  
Objectives Using a CAN-DO List**

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## 修士学位請求論文要旨

Given the impact of globalization, there is an increasing trend favoring the introduction of English to younger learners. This trend has been reported around the world. Reflecting the need to standardize the language educational context for young learners, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, and assessment* (CEFR) was developed especially for young learners in 2018 (CE, 2018, CEFR YL). This reference has clarified the levels of multidimensional scales referred to as the CAN-DO list. The CAN-DO descriptors are primarily communication tools that allow learners to become users in real-life communication settings.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in Japan has drawn on CEFR to provide language education aimed at fostering the communication abilities of pupils. The implementation of elementary school English educational reform has been planned for 2020. *The Course of Study* was announced in 2017 and referred specifically to the English education provided at the elementary school level. Foreign language education launched in 2011 in Japan. However, the definition of activity is distinct from that of a compulsory subject. The forthcoming reform which will be launched in 2020, is scheduled to make English a compulsory subject for the fifth and sixth grade levels (MEXT, 2017). Even though the transitional period started in 2018, implementation details have varied among schools due to the relatively high levels of autonomy in which local boards of education operate. Thereby,

teachers of English are working under various teaching conditions which may result in unequal English education being provided to pupils around Japan. The main concern is that elementary school teachers have a limited background in English pedagogy and competence, especially in terms of oral fluency. Team teaching with assistant teachers was suggested. However, there are schools wherein homeroom teachers (HRTs) conduct English classes without any aid. Some of the earlier studies pointed out that insufficient competence may result in difficulty implementing English education, if this responsibility rests mainly with HRTs (e.g., Allen-Tamai, 2010; Butler, 2004, 2015; Enever, 2015; Copland & Ni, 2019; Rich, 2019; Richard, 2008; Rixon, 2019).

Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of developing pre-service elementary school English training and educational programs as well as longitudinal in-service teacher training. In particular, Tokyo Gakugei University (2016) introduced *The Core Curriculum*, serving as the study contents of an elementary school teacher license course program for university English education. Sato (2016) investigated the quality of teaching ability, and the educative power of elementary school HRTs, along with English proficiency. Matsumiya (2013) investigated the anxiety experienced by HRTs, that is to say, *teaching anxiety*, in order to suggest useful contents of in-service teacher training programs. Machida & Uchida (2015) and Machida, Takahashi, & Kurokawa, (2017) have introduced in-service teacher training focused on English fluency development under Akita prefecture board of education. However, the overall support

provided for individual in-service educators appears to be insufficient. This study endeavored to provide effective support for HRTs in Japan by creating supportive tools that address their main concerns regarding the ongoing practice of teaching.

The study consists of two sections. One was an investigation of the conditions and perceptions held by HRTs toward English classes and verification examinations of the researcher's original CAN-DO list, aimed at clarifying the ambiguity in teaching objectives experienced by HRTs. Hopefully, critical issues both those faced by teachers and the contents of English education, can thus be investigated. In the first part of the study, the research questions were stated as:

RQ1. What are the problems faced by elementary school HRTs in English education?

RQ2. What would be the effective supporting tools for these educators?

The survey was distributed in March 2019 to HRTs as both hard copies and online. In total, 58 answers were collected. The results indicated that 65.5% of HRTs were reluctant to teach English in the capacity of a lead teacher (T1). Analyzing open-ended answers and 5-point Likert-type scale questions revealed that there are two distinct perceptions. One, a negative group, reacted by rejecting the idea of becoming T1, whereas the positive group sought skill improvement. This result, revealing broad diversity among respondents, indicated the difficulty of applying a group teacher training system. Due to the differences in individual perceptions, a range of supportive

tools were created. First, for the negative group, three tools comprising a starter kit for HRTs to rely upon were introduced. The other, for the positive group, was a CAN-DO list designed to clarify the objectives to be met in fostering the communicative abilities of pupils.

Referring to CEFR, CEFR YL, CEFR-J, ELP, the Course of Study, and other CAN-DO lists, the original version was created. The matching task was conducted by 49 in-service teachers working in elementary schools. The original rank order of the descriptors did not yield perfect matches. However, some similarities and differences were detected. Follow-up interviews of four teachers were carried out in order to revise the descriptions and thereby confirm the final rank order. The final version was completed in December 2019.

This study has three main three limitations that should be mentioned. First, the main causes of negative perceptions were not determined. After conducting quantitative analysis and examining the open-ended answers qualitatively, individual interviews were needed to confirm the reasons for the responses given. Second, despite creating supportive tools, examinations of whether they were effective or provided the intended support in actual practice are still lacking. Thus, uncertainty remained. These tools were distributed to several elementary schools in Tokyo, and further investigation may be needed to revise them for the convenience of HRTs. The last issue regarding the CAN-DO list is the study site. This tool was specifically created for HRTs willing to improve

their daily teaching practices by introducing more communicative activities. However, a substantial number of participants did not feel the necessity of improving either practice or learning of the contents and objectives. Moreover, it seemed that none of the participants were familiar with the CAN-DO list concept. A clear explanation of the purpose and benefits of applying the CAN-DO list may be needed.

This report represents a contribution to support for in-service teachers in daily practice, who are teaching in various educational contexts. Teachers' roles are crucial for achieving educational discipline (e.g., Henry & Thorsen, 2018; Ushioda, 2016; Taylor, 2013). Thereby, more empirical research aimed at supporting in-service teachers needs to be conducted to adequately prepare for the official implementation of English education in 2020.

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