研究論文

Designing a task-based syllabus: A case study—Part 1

タスク中心のシラバス構築：ケーススタディ— *Part 1*

Yoshizawa Kiyomi
吉　澤　清　美

本章では Brown（1995）のカリキュラム構築モデルをもとに、一企業の英語プログラムを発展させるため実施した学習者と職場のニーズ分析、さらにニーズ分析の結果を用い、学習項目の設定を行い、タスク中心のシラバスを構築させたケーススタディである。シラバス作成には、Long and Crookes（1992）のタスク中心シラバス構築（Task-based Syllabus Design, TBSD）のアプローチを活用した。これは次の３つの理由による。（１）学習内容と目標言語使用分野をできるだけ近づけることが可能である。（２）タスクを使って基準準拠評価が可能である。（３）TBSD は言語形態を学習者に意識させることの重要性を認識したものであり、これは受講者のニーズに合致するものであった。Part 1ではニーズ分析結果をまとめ、Part2ではタスク中心シラバスの学習目標設定プロセスを説明する。

キーワード
Needs analysis（ニーズ分析）　Task-based Syllabus Design　（タスク中心シラバスディザイン）　Target Language Use Domain（目標言語使用分野）　Criterion-referenced Testing（目標基準準拠テスティング）　Oral interview test（オーラル・インタビューテスト）

I INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate a process for designing a task-based syllabus for an in-service language program at a private company in Osaka, Japan. The company has earned an outstanding reputation as one of the leading manufacturers of machinery for hygiene products in the world. Even though its employees frequently have to deal with requests from overseas countries and English is demanded for the employees to communicate with overseas buyers, the management had not given appropriate recognition to the importance of English to their successful business. As a result, the work load of the people with a better command of English has increased much more than those with less or little command of English. In fact, the company is going more into the world market which requires English as the language of business. Thus, a strong request for an in-service English program was made by one of the managers and the in-service program for sales people started under one instructor. During the first two months of the program, the mangers have decided to expand the program for sales people who have severely limited command of English to include a second program for secretaries and a third program for more advanced learners of English. The present study presents the designing process for a curriculum for the sales people, focusing on needs analysis of the learners and the sales section, and setting up attainable objectives based on the needs analysis for the original group. In the rest of the paper, a fictitious name, Soka, is given to the company.[1)]

Theoretical frameworks

The overall theoretical model for curriculum development is taken from Brown's model of language curriculum development（Brown, 1995; Brown & Hudson, 2002）. What follows is a brief description of Brown's model. He postulates that language curriculum development involves at least six components: （a）analyzing needs; （b）developing goals and objectives; （c）testing; （d）materials; （e）teaching; （f）evaluation. All of these six components are interrelated with each other. The first component, needs analysis is defined as "the systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influences the learning and teaching situation"（p. 36）. The second component is developing goals and objectives for the program. Objectives are generally defined as statements of what teachers expect their learners to do at the end of a particular language course or program. The third component is "putting appropriate norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests in places." Tests function as diagnostic, progress, and achievement tests. Test users can adopt or adapt a test from an outside source or they can design their own for the program in question. The fourth component is adopting, adapting or creating materials. The fifth component is "supporting teachers in their efforts." The sixth component is to evaluate all the other five components on a continuous basis and to provide evaluative information about the curriculum in a formative manner in general. Figure 1 illustrates Brown's framework.

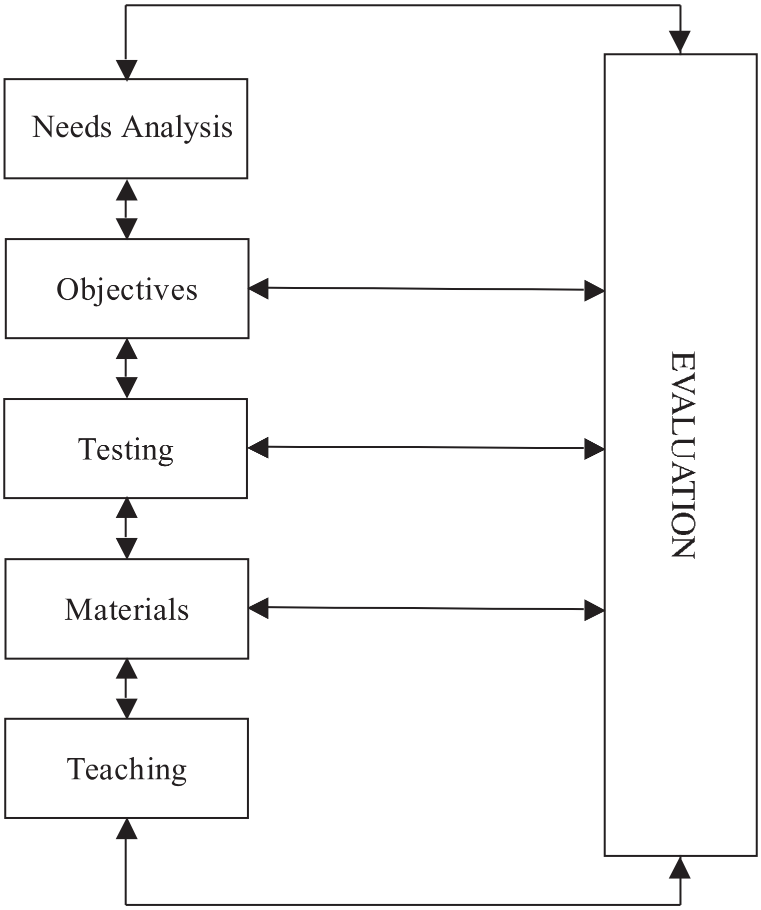

Figure 1 Components of language curriculum development

(Adapted from Brown, 1995)

In the present study, goals and objectives are written based on learners' needs analysis. In deciding goals and objectives, two points were taken into consideration. The first point was about the participants in the in-service program. The participants were adult learners of English as a foreign language. Nunan characterizes adult learners in developing a learner-centered curriculum (1988):

> They [adult learners] are less interested in learning for learning's sake than in learning to achieve some immediate or not too far distant life goals. Translated to the field of language teaching, this suggests that a learner-centred rather than subject-centred approach is more likely to be consonant with the principles of adult learning (p. 23).

In Soka's program, all the participants were adult learners, and the management people expected them to achieve goals in the shortest possible time. Consequently, a learner-centered approach was taken in writing goals and objectives.

Secondly, the ideas from Long and Crookes' Task-Based Syllabus Design (TBSD) were applied in developing goals and objectives (1992). Three factors were involved in deciding on TBSD. First, it was considered that tasks would provide the learners in the present program specific purposes for using language. The syllabus was designed in such a way that learners would work on tasks in a classroom as if they were rehearsing a task in a real life outside the classroom. Thus, the TBSD approach would make classroom learning correspond to the target language use domain (Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer, 1996). At the same time, communicative skills were incorporated into the process of carrying out a task successfully. Second, it was assumed that TBSD would enable the instructor and the program evaluator to make a criterion-referenced measurement, using tasks. TBSD takes tasks as a unit of analysis. Third, Long and Crookes' task-based syllabus would be able to respond to the request and needs of the learners. Needs analysis indicated that some of the participants in the in-service English program were false beginners, and they needed to have clear understanding of forms used in carrying out different tasks. Also, one leaner requested that the program would have occasional review sessions for basic structures in English. Long and Crookes' task-based syllabus is designed in such a way that pedagogic tasks and other methodological options draw learners' attention to linguistic forms of a target language. Linguistic forms are not the object of study in the task-based syllabus, but Long and Crookes recognize the importance of drawing learners' attention to forms while they are working on pedagogical tasks.

Long and Crookes define three kinds of tasks: target tasks, task types, and pedagogical tasks. A target task is defined:

> A piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some regard. Thus the example of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form . . . in other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between (p. 89).

Long and Crookes describe the steps in which a task-based syllabus is constructed. First, target tasks are identified from needs analysis. Once they are identified, they are classified into task, types, generic tasks, from which pedagogical tasks are formed. Pedagogical tasks are the ones teachers and learners cope with in their language learning classrooms. The pedagogic tasks are sequenced and graded according to their accumulating complexity.

II NEEDS ANALYSIS

Steps taken for needs analysis

Data for needs analysis were collected from four sources: management people, learners, English needed for business dealings at Soka, and a brief inventory of facilities for language learning and teaching. The following section includes the management people's perceptions concerning goals and expectations for the English program, information about the learners and English needed for business dealings at Soka.

Goals and expectations for the English program from the management at the beginning

Before the in-service English program actually started, the instructor had contact with two people in the management and asked them about the goals and expectations for the in-service English program. One of the people the instructor contacted was the director of the engineering section. He wanted the in-service program to help the sales people to feel comfortable conducting telephone and in-person business-related conversations in English. He expected the participants to be able to present the company and its products to overseas buyers at the end of the program or after one year or so. According to him, the emphasis of the lessons should be placed on oral proficiency. Also, he agreed that pre-developed text materials could be used for the program if they met the needs of the learners.

The other person the instructor contacted was a senior sales manager, who actually made a strong request for an in-service English program for the employees. He was in charge of the sales section of the company. He had 18 sales representatives under him and half of them needed to improve English. He felt a strong need for English for the sales representatives, basically because the demand of English had been increasing in dealing with overseas buyers. He knew the proficiency level of the people who would be in the program, and he expected the program to help them to improve their English so that they could handle some of the business dealings in English. This would eventually reduce the work load of the other sales representatives with better command of English. Also, the sales manager assumed that it would take much longer for the sales people in the program to be able to make a presentation in English. Concerning pre-developed text materials, the sales manager considered that pre-developed materials would not meet the needs of the sales people.

After the initial contact, a written request was made to the manager of the sales section concerning three points: (a) the proficiency level of the participants at the outset of the program, both individually and as a group; (b) the use of pre-developed text materials or the development of new teaching materials; (c) the assessment measure through which the company would decide whether the participants would have adequate level of proficiency to conduct business dealings. The reply from the sales manager contained the following points: (a) no objective data was available concerning the proficiency level of the participants; (b) the instructor would select teaching materials; and (c) no decision was made on how to measure the participants' proficiency. In relation to the third point, the sales manager expected that the sales people in the program would be able to make a presentation in English of their machine and discuss the specifications of their products.

As a result, a meeting was arranged where the instructor would be able to have more information from the management people and some of the actual participants in his class before instruction started. The meeting was arranged and it was decided that instruction would begin while assessing the participants' English proficiency and adapting pre-developed text materials.

Information about the learners

Information about the learners was collected from six sources: (a) individual learners' brief personal history and goal for learning English; (b) Questionnaire 1 administered before the in-service program started; (c) Questionnaire 2 administered shortly after the outset of the program; (d) a published TOEIC practice test; (e) oral interview in English followed by an interview in Japanese. The first three sources provide learners' background. The items on the first questionnaire were designed for collecting information about learners' brief biodata and difficulties they had in speaking, listening, reading and writing in English. The second questionnaire was designed to collect information about learners' previous English learning experiences, self-rating of their proficiency, and the similar questions concerning the difficulties in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. To measure English proficiency of the participants, a published TOEIC practice test was administered and an oral interview was conducted in English. Each oral interview was immediately followed by an interview in Japanese. The following section presents a brief description of the participants, their major problems in using English, and the language learning experiences in the past. Then, a subsequent section presents the results of oral interviews. Due to the space, the results of the TOEIC practice test are not included in this article.

60% of the participants belonged to the sales division of the company and 40% belonged to the engineering division. All the participants were male employees in mid-thirties to early forties. 60% of the participants had taken lessons at language schools from six months to three years.

Concerning the main problems in speaking English, the participants answered in a similar way. They answered that they did not have enough vocabulary to communicate in English, and they needed time before they started to talk in English. Some participants made Japanese sentences first, and then tried to make word-by-word translation into English. Others constructed an English sentence in such a manner that their listeners would need to confirm and clarify its meaning with them. Also, one participant mentioned the need for improving his pronunciation and other phonological characteristics of English.

Concerning the main problems in listening, the participants felt that native-speakers of English spoke so fast that they could not follow them, and they put words together. It is interpreted that the learners at this stage are not accustomed to listening to English with reduced and contracted forms.

Concerning the main problems in reading, all of the participants felt that their vocabulary was very limited, and they had to use an English-Japanese dictionary each time they encountered unknown words or they stopped reading further. If they stopped checking the meanings of unknown words in a dictionary, they could not understand what they were reading. One participant expressed the need for reviewing some grammatical points. Others mentioned their difficulty in understanding long sentence with specific grammatical features. Similar difficulties were mentioned in relation to writing.

The second questionnaire contains the participants' learning experiences in the past in relation to the following points: the types of English lessons at school, the use of language laboratories, the use of computer-assisted language classrooms, the use of tapes and videos in classroom lessons, and lessons with native speakers of English. The responses showed that the participants had very little exposure to spoken English at formal learning situations, and English was taught basically through visual input.

English proficiency of the participants: Oral interview results

Different oral interview tests were examined in terms of format, question types, approaches taken for devising question items, testing time for conducting an interview, the characteristics of the target test-takers, and availability of materials. Further, the expectations of the management people were taken into consideration in selecting an oral interview test. It was more likely that the management of Soka would assess the learners in the in-service program mainly in terms of their oral proficiency. Further, it was assumed that Soka would evaluate the in-service language program in the same respect.

The program instructor and the present writer agreed to base the initial interview test on the framework set up by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). At present, ALTE has established the content definitions of the three lower levels of proficiency. Learners at ALTE's Level One are capable of performing the following at work context:

> In the context of work they can handle basic enquiries related to their own familiar job area, dealing, for example, with questions about prices, quantities of goods ordered, or delivery dates. In a meeting, they can provide straightforward facts if asked directly, but cannot follow a discussion. On the telephone they can take the name of a caller and note down a simple message including a phone number. Where reading is concerned, at this level learners can understand the gist of a tourist brochure with the help of a dictionary, to the extent of being able to identify the starting and finishing times of a guided tour and what will be seen on the tour. They can write very simple personal letters, expressing thanks, or a basic message although there may be elementary mistakes.

Learners at ALTE's Level Two are capable of performing the following at work context:

> In the context of work they can state requirements within their own job area, and ask questions of a fact-finding nature. In a meeting, they can take part in a discussion which involves the exchange of factual information or receiving instructions, but they may have difficulty dealing with anything unpredictable or unfamiliar. Where telephone calls are concerned predictability is also important at this level, and as long as only routine matters are involved, the learners can pass on and receive messages. Learners at this level can read and understand straightforward information supplied by a tourist information centre, as long as no specialized terms are involved. They can write simple personal letters such as thank-you letters, but only within a more or less standard format.[2)]

The University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) has established five levels of examinations, which correspond to the framework set up by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). KEY English Test (KET) corresponds to ALTE's Level One and Preliminary English Test (PET) corresponds to Level Two. The oral interview test in the needs analysis was modeled after the speaking component of PET with respect to format, level description, and types of materials.

The oral interview consists of four sections. In Section I, an interview begins with a general conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee. The purpose of this conversation is to settle the interviewee and to enable him/her to feel comfortable about the interviewing situation. The interviewer encourages the interviewee to talk about himself or herself, family, work, study, means of transportation, and other everyday topics. Section II takes a form of a simulated situation where the interviewee is asked, for example, to give directions or to make and reply to requests. In Section III, each interviewee is given a visual input and asked to describe it. In Section IV, the topic of Section III is used as a starting point for a general conversation in which the interviewee is encouraged to talk about his/her likes and dislikes, experiences, or habits.

Oral interviews in the present study were conducted in English and all the interviews were recorded into audio-tapes. Each interview was supposed to take eight to ten minutes. After each oral interview, an informal interview was conducted in Japanese. The informal interview was aimed at collecting information concerning learners' preferences for language learning and requests to the instructor and the English program in general.

PET assessment criteria consist of four parts: fluency, accuracy and appropriacy of language, pronunciation, and task achievement. An interviewer assesses an interviewee in each of the four parts and rate, using a scale from zero to five. In general, all the participants did Sections I and II better than Sections III and IV. The topic on the visual input in Section III was related to language learning and the participants were asked to talk about their likes and dislikes in relation to language learning. Except for one, the participants needed a lot of prompting from the interviewer. They provided their responses at the minimum level, but they did not elaborate their responses. Further, it was observed that very few used communication skills for asking for clarification or repetition.

The informal interviews in Japanese indicated that the participants had a positive attitude to learning English, even though their time for attending the in-service program was not counted as their overtime. On the other hand, the participants referred to different aspects of the program. Some participants felt pressured, knowing that the management would assess their language learning and the success of the in-service program by tangible measures after a relatively short period of time. One participant requested that basic grammatical points be reviewed in class. Yet, another expressed a strong dislike to English grammar. Another expressed his preference for using a textbook, basically because he could understand visual input better than the aural input at the present stage of his language development. It was very difficult for him to follow a lesson conducted entirely in English.

English needed for business dealings at Soka

Two sources were looked into to analyze target language use domain for the participants in the in-service language program at Soka (Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer, 1996). One was a 46-minute recording of a business meeting and the other was journal writing.

A 46-minute recording of a business meeting

Before the beginning of the in-service program, a request was made to record the telephone conversations or requests from the overseas countries and to copy their business letters, requests or complaints so that the instructor would have a better idea concerning the kind of English his students would have to deal with in future and communicative skills which they would need. However, information was not provided due to the technical difficulties and high confidentiality of some of the matters in the business dealings. In stead, the senior manager of the sales division recorded a beginning section of his business meeting with an overseas partner in a 46-minute cassette tape. The recording was transferred to a mini disc for analysis. Table 1 presents the sequence of topics and issues discussed and negotiated in the first half of the meeting.

Table 1 The sequences and topics in a business meeting

I. Preparation stage

Soka and the business partner exchange comments and responses concerning recording their meeting; they exchange jokes about recording the meeting.

II. Starting the meeting

A. Confirming the agenda

1. Soka asks the business partner to confirm the agenda for the meeting.
2. The business partner presents and explains the agenda for the meeting: production schedule of the current project; facility of one of Soka's factories; a second line of production/future production line.
3. a. Soka starts to suggest reporting another project called Project A, which is related to the business partner;

   b. The partner disagrees to include the report in the meeting;

   c. Soka accepts the disagreement.

B. Starting discussion topics

1. Soka reports the progress of the current project and presents the future schedule with specific dates.
2. The business partner confirms the scheduling of the current project by asking questions; he makes a request to see the unit which has been completed in the construction section in Soka's main building.
3. Soka states the company policy: due to the confidentiality nobody is allowed to enter the construction site until units are moved to their factories.

(Table 1 continued)

4. The business partner agrees, and starts asking about the test run of the units with the rest of the entire machine, which belongs to the business partner.
5. Soka explains the feasibility of the test run, and presents a tentative schedule for the test run.
6. The business partner states his observation that Soka assembles and disassembles their machine each time for their test runs. ((*Comment: The business partner made a long statement, but the intent of his long statement was not clear.*))
7. Soka states their position that they are not making profit by assembling and disassembling the machine, but they take this procedure for the benefit of the business partner. Soka makes a point that they will repeat this procedure one more time, but it will be the last.

The initial analysis of the recording was aimed at detecting recurrent patterns or repeated use of communicative tasks and skills to be an active participant in a meeting or in a group discussion. Subsequent analyses would be made in terms of language needs of the learners. The data provided communicative tasks and skills for interacting in a meeting or in a group in general. Especially, the data showed repeated use of skills for avoiding misunderstanding. The participants in the program would need them in their interaction in a group as their proficiency improved. Table 2 presents the communicative skills used for avoiding misunderstanding in the data.

Table 2 Communicative skills for avoiding misunderstanding

1. Giving feedbacks
2. Interrupting for clarifying meaning
3. Asking for focused repetition
4. Asking for focused explanation
5. Asking for meaning
6. Confirming presented information by summarizing
7. Repeating information, if other members have not understood
8. Eliciting additional information by asking specific questions
9. Confirming and going back to topic

Journal writing

Each participant was given a notebook at the outset of the program to write down their business dealings in Japanese. They did not conduct telephone or in-person business-related conversations in English at the time of data collection except for the occasions when they visited their overseas customers and discussed their products. Journal writing was considered to give more ideas to the program instructor concerning the responsibilities of the participants when they had to deal with their customers. They were asked to write anything which would help the instructor to set up attainable objectives. A blank notebook was provided with a note written in

Japanese, which explained the purpose of writing a journal. Examples given to the participants were inquiries frequently made by their customers, standard procedures routinely employed for writing contracts, procedures to be followed when they showed their factories to visitors or customers, skills needed for intercultural communication based on their past experiences, grammatical points and vocabulary which the participants had trouble with, or requests concerning their class.

The frequently asked questions and the description of their daily business dealings were translated from Japanese to English by the present writer. Those questions and descriptions are classified into groups according to their nature of the questions or descriptions. Table 3 presents the questions and descriptions emerged from the participants' journal writing. The headings of each group on Table 3 are used for justifying goals for the in-service program.

Table 3 Questions and descriptions emerged from journal writings

Ⅰ Giving specific information (Product description)

1. How durable is the unit? How often do we have to replace the unit?
2. We've been considering installing a new model, and we would like to have estimation on the cost and delivery time.
3. What size product does the new model make? How many different kinds of product is the new model capable of producing in terms of size or shape?
4. How many people does the new model require to make necessary changes for making products of different size? How long does it take to change the parts?
5. How much electricity, compressed air, and water do we need to operate the machine?
6. In terms of temperature and humidity, what is the best condition for the machine to run most efficiently?
7. We have been remodeling our machine. We would like to have specific details, procedures, and cost for remodeling.
8. This machine is not functioning as they are specified. What is causing this problem? How do you solve this problem?

Ⅱ Negotiating terms of sale ((a dialog written by one participant))

1. Is it possible to build a machine of this performance within a limit of budgetary appropriation?
2. We did not expect it to be so high. This is far beyond our estimation.
3. Is there any way you can reduce the price?
4. Is it possible to build a machine of higher performance at this cost?
5. Additional specifications are needed to build a machine of higher performance, which will result in additional expenses. Would that be all right with you?
6. Could you send us an estimate sheet?

Ⅲ Stating the company's position and confirming agreement

1. We need to discuss the change with our engineers. However, we need to have additional specifications to build a machine of higher performance. This will result in additional expenses. Would that be all right with you?

（Table 3 continued）

2. If you purchase product A not directly from us, but from Company B, warranty is not valid, and you cannot have a maintenance service from us. Therefore, we recommend you order directly from us.

Ⅳ Scheduling
We received your fax, inquiring about a possible delivery time. We have been constructing the machine at such a pace that it will be delivered to you at the earliest possible time. It is quite difficult to give specific information at the moment. A production scheduling meeting will be held this week, and we will be able to inform you more specifically when we can deliver the machine.

Ⅴ Arranging appointment
We are planning to visit your factory next Monday to present Project X and to confirm the specifications. Discussion topics are listed on the attached sheet, and we would like you to confirm them.

Ⅵ Presenting the company
What percentage of share does Soka have in the Japanese and world market?

Ⅶ Describing trends of the market
Could you describe the trend of the market?

SUMMARY

Part I of this article presents the initial stages of a curriculum development for an in-service English language program. The study followed Brown's（1995）language curriculum development. Part 1 of the article presents the results of needs analysis and different sources were used for collecting data to analyze the needs of the participants: the goals and expectations for the English program from the management people, information about the participants, and English needed for business dealings at Soka. Part 2 of the article presents the goals and instructional objectives of the program, based on the data collected for needs analysis.

NOTES

1）I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. J. D. Brown at the University of Hawai'i for giving advice and guidance for conducting the present project. Above all, I am very grateful to the participants, the instructor of the in-service program, and the management people at Soka for their support and cooperation in this study.

2）Information is taken from the following source:
http://www.edunet.com/edunet/alte/intro.html

REFERENCES

Bachman, L. F.（1990）. *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S.（1996）. *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, J. D.（1995）. *The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Brown, J. D., & Hudson, T.（2002）. *Criterion-referenced language testing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Long, M. H., & Crookes, G.（1992）. The approaches to task-based syllabus design. *TESOL Quarterly, 26*（1）, 27-56.

Nunan, D.（1988）. *The learner-centered curriculum: A study in second language teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.