Adopting Task-Based Language Teaching in Japan:
Proposed Task-Based Lesson Plans
for Elderly Japanese Learners of English at an Elementary Level

WAKAARI Yasuhiko

Key words: TBLT, task, teaching plan, elderly Japanese learners of English

1 Introduction

In the recent literature of language teaching, much discussion has been going around the so-called Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (e.g., Candlin, 1987; Crooks & Gass, 1993; Legutke & Thomas, 1991) and it has been steadily adopted in many English language teaching (ELT) contexts in the world. In Japan, however, it has been tried sporadically only at the level of classroom activities (Doi, 1995), and has never been adopted fully at the more comprehensive levels of teaching frameworks and syllabuses, possibly due to Japan's particular contextual issues, such as class sizes, teachers' skills, learners' needs, and their attitudes toward expressing their opinions in front of others (Wakaari, 2008).

Taking these contextual issues into account, I suggested earlier in 2008 a lesson plan based on TBLT designed especially for elderly Japanese learners at an elementary level (Wakaari, 2008). However, the suggested plan was only for the very first lesson based on the TBL syllabus, leaving the rest of the syllabus untouched. In this paper, I would like to take up the remaining parts of my task of designing the whole plan for the lessons that are to follow, in the hope that it will promote and facilitate the adoption of such task-based lessons in other ELT contexts in Japan.

The paper begins with a description of the programme and the learners in question as they exist, followed by a rationale for the adoption of the task-based teaching framework in the programme. And then, some key factors in designing tasks (i.e., task aims, task criteria, and text selections) will be discussed in relation to the particular teaching context. On the basis of these discussions, task-based lesson plans will be presented, along with my justifications and rationalizations for the plans.

2 Description of the teaching context
2.1 Description of the programme and the learners

The programme described in this paper is a voluntary study-group class still at an elementary level, formed by some of the elderly Japanese learners who have completed their elementary-level ELT programme created and administered by the Department of Social Education of Nishi-Tokyo City in Tokyo. The class, consisting of 10-12 members, is held twice a month for 60 minutes each.

All the learners, mostly female, are native speakers of Japanese over 60 years old. They tend to think that they are too old to learn anything new, much less a foreign language and thus lack confidence in learning, which is said to be a characteristic feature of elderly learners (Harmer, 2001; Sidwell, 1992). Nevertheless, they are all highly motivated and the class has a positive atmosphere for learning.

Most of these learners have expressed their needs or desires for learning English: (1) to communicate with foreign people when travelling abroad; (2) to improve their pronunciation for successful communication; (3) to interact with other community members through the programme; and (4) to exercise their brain through learning 'everyday English'(Wakaari, 2008). On the basis of these needs, the programme has set two goals: (1) to develop the learners' communication skills; and (2) to improve their pronunciation. As regards the third and fourth needs, they will be achieved through actual activities in the class.

Some of the views expressed by these learners on language and learning, which were made available through informal group meetings, are that (1) 'accuracy on form' has the primary importance in communication; (2) repetition has a crucial role in the learning process; and (3) self-study is important for improving language skills. Given that the learners' beliefs in language learn-

ing are of significant importance (William & Burden, 1997), they have been taken into consideration and reflected in the teaching approach and materials adopted in the programme. For that purpose, the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) framework has been used in the lessons. Since this framework focuses more on learners' accuracy in language form (Harmer, 2001; Ritchie, 2003) and involves repetition in the practice stage, it satisfies the learners' insistence on accuracy, which is typical of Japanese learners (Gray & Leather, 1999). In addition, the teaching materials adopted in the programme, *The NHK Radio New Basic English 3* (NHK Press, 2002), are closely linked with the radio programme, and provide them with opportunities for self-study at home, as the materials such as the textbooks and/or the CDs are readily available to them off the shelf.

2.2 Rationale for adopting task-based lessons in the programme

As noted in Wakaari (2008), while the current teaching method in the programme is generally satisfying for many learners, it does not meet all of the learners' needs or expectations. For instance, the PPP framework used in this method is said to prevent them from using English freely (e.g., Willis, 1994) and forming hypotheses on the structure of language (Ritchie, 2003). In addition, the teaching materials used in the programme do not focus on 'everyday English' which they expect to learn. These issues seem to suggest that there is a need for revising the current teaching practice.

In the face of this unique teaching context, along with the fact that adults can generally learn better by the use of cognitive approaches (Pinker, 1994; Sidwell, 1992), it seems quite appropriate to adopt a task-based teaching framework and change the teaching materials accordingly: the task-based teaching framework is considered to help improve learners' communication skills more naturally (Willis, 1996) and adopting the materials with 'everyday English' at the core will not only provide for better learning, but also meet their expectations.

3 Examining issues in task designing

In adopting a task-based teaching framework in the context described above, designing tasks would be the next step. This section thus discusses issues which are crucial in task designing (i.e., task aims, task criteria, and materials selections) (Nunan, 1989; Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Each issue is taken up and examined,

with these particular learners and the unique teaching context taken into consideration.

3.1 Task aims

A number of studies (e.g., Nunan, 1989; Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Shavelson & Stern, 1981) regard task aims as a necessary component of TBLT. Murphy (1993), for instance, points out that, if there is no aim in a task, learners would not be able to connect the task with their learning, even if they might enjoy their lessons. This indicates that, in order to connect the task with their learning, it is necessary to relate task aims to goals of the lessons.

In determining task aims, Clark (1987; cited in Nunan, 1989:49) classifies tasks into the following four types, in accordance with their goal areas: (1) communicative; (2) socio-cultural; (3) learning-how-to-learn; and (4) language and cultural awareness. Of these four types, the aims of the tasks for my particular class need to be closely linked to (1) communicative, since one of the learners' goals is to develop their communication skills (see 2.1). In addition, it is important for the task aims to have the element of (3) learning-how-to-learn, given that self-learning is a key factor in this teaching context where the lessons are held only twice a month.

With these elements taken into account, the aims of the tasks for my class are set as follows: (1) to develop the learners' confidence in speaking; and (2) to develop their skills necessary for exchanging information among themselves.

3.2 Task criteria

On the basis of these task aims, task criteria are set for designing effective tasks. As regards task criteria, various suggestions have been made (e.g., Breen, 1985; Candlin, 1984; Nunan, 1989). For example, Breen (1985, cited in Candlin, 1987) sets nine criteria, while in Candlin (1984, cited in Candlin, 1987) there are as many as twenty presented.

Of the criteria referred to in these studies, some are more essential than others. With regard to what are essential criteria, Shirahata, Tomita, Muranoi and Wakabayashi (1999) state that an effective task: (1) has a clear goal; (2) creates needs to exchange information; (3) has similarity to real communication; and (4) matches learners' interests. In addition to these, if learners' expectations for and beliefs on language learning (see 2.1) are to be taken into account to make them all the more effective, it may be appropriate to include the following three criteria to the above four: language focus;

Adopting Task-Based Language Teaching in Japan: Proposed Task-Based Lesson Plans
for Elderly Japanese Learners of English at an Elementary Level

learning focus; language practice, all of which are found in the criteria suggested by Nunan (1989). These criteria will be used to examine the tasks after detailed lesson plans are presented.

3.3 Materials selections

As in the case of curriculum development (e.g., Brown, 1995), the issue of materials selections is considered to come after the task aims and criteria for designing tasks are determined. In selecting materials for adult learners, the use of genuine materials will be more appropriate, for such materials will make the tasks more authentic (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), and thus more effective in motivating the learners (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Kuo, 1993; Little, Devitt & Singleton, 1994; Tomlinson, 2001). Although genuine materials usually contain difficult words and expressions and thus may not be easy for elementary-level learners (Shirahata et al., 1999; Lee, 1995), the learners in my teaching context are likely to enjoy the challenge of such materials, given their expressed needs and expectations for learning.

Genuineness, however, is not the only criterion considered important for materials selections, as indicated by Lee (1995) and MacDonald, Badger and White (2000). Additionally, McGrath (2002) maintains that various other criteria need to be considered in selecting appropriate materials for classroom use. He suggests the following eight criteria, all of which seem to fit my teaching context: (1) relevance (to syllabus, to learners' needs); (2) topic/theme [of intrinsic interest]; (3) cultural appropriateness; (4) linguistic demands; (5) cognitive demands; (6) logistical considerations (e.g., length, legibility/audibility); (7) quality (as a model of use or as a representative token of a text-type); and (8) exploitability (McGrath, 2002:106). These criteria will be used to examine my tasks after the detailed lesson plans are presented.

4 The proposed task-based lesson plans

This section describes the proposed lesson plans in detail. The plans are based on a task-based teaching framework, Willis's TBL (1996) in particular. Among many frameworks such as 'ARC' (Authentic use, Restricted use, Clarification & focus) (Scrivener, 1994), 'III' (Illustration, Interaction, Induction) (McCarthy & Carter, 1995), 'ESA' (Engage, Study, Activate) (Harmer, 1998), this particular framework seems to provide more detailed and, therefore, clearer descriptions about what to do in each stage of the framework, thus

making it easier for teachers to plan each lesson, as stated by Wakaari (2008).

The gist of the whole lessons in the programme is such that the learners develop their oral communication skills through trying to obtain from others some information on sightseeing spots in Singapore in order to make a group trip plan to go there. The teaching procedures are as follows (see also Appendix 1): (1) Pre-task A; (2) Task A; (3) Post-task A; (4) Extra task for task A; (5) Pre-task B; (6) Task B; (7) Post-task B. For each of the stages listed above, detailed descriptions and justifications are provided. Then, I suggest a plan for each of the successive lessons, along with its justifications and rationalizations. Finally, the whole lesson plans are examined in relation to task criteria and materials selections, as stated in 3.2 and 3.3.

4.1 Pre-task A

The teacher informs the learners that the topic for the day is 'travelling' and then shows them some pictures of places and buildings and asks what they are called in English, with a view to letting the learners learn some words related to the topic (see Appendix 2).

Next, the teacher introduces to the learners the following six categories of activities: (1) shopping; (2) viewing the seaside; (3) watching animals and birds; (4) looking at famous buildings; (5) visiting museums and theatres; and (6) enjoying tropical trees and flowers. Learners form pairs and choose one category which they have an interest in. The teacher provides each pair with an underground map of Singapore (see Figure 1) and a sheet with information on sightseeing spots (see Figure 2), and then asks them to obtain from each other the following information: (1) the nearest station to a certain spot; (2) whether there is a cost incurred. Learners are allowed to make marks on the map.

Justifications and rationalizations

Regarding how to introduce the pre-task, several suggestions are made by Willis (1996). In this context, the use of pictures seems the most appropriate, as it is less difficult for learners than using other media (Ellis, 2003), which will help lessen learners' anxiety about a new task (Wakaari, 2008).

Given that the learners are at an elementary level with a limited vocabulary, learning some topic-related vocabulary items at the pre-task stage will be helpful for them to go on to the next stage. As one of the aims of the pre-task is to inform learners what they are going to do in the main task, this activity is conducted together as

MRT SYSTEM

END STATION NUMBERS
1 Towards Pasir Ris Station
2 Towards Boon Lay Station
3 Towards Changi Airport Station
4 Towards Jurong East Station
5 Towards Marina Bay Station
6 Towards Harbour Front Station
7 Towards Punggol Station
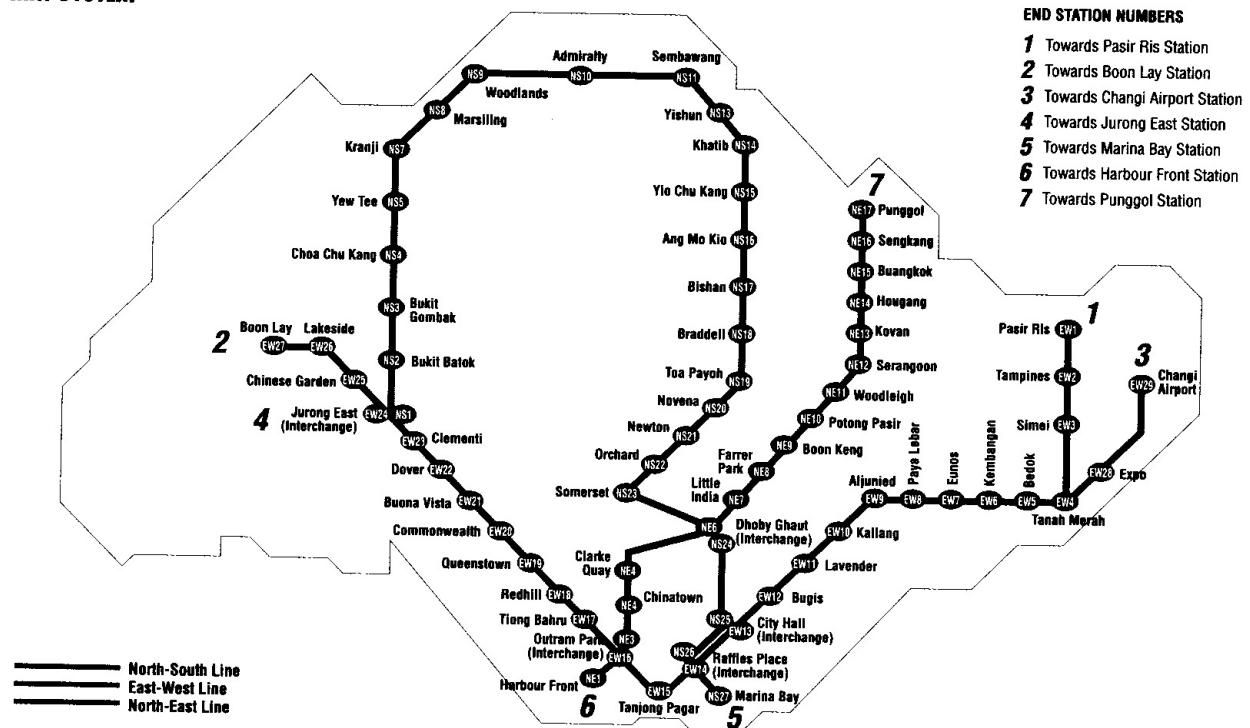
North-South Line
East-West Line
North-East Line

Figure 1 The underground map of Singapore from *Pocket Guide Singapore* (2003, Berlitz Publishing)

a whole class. Although activities done with the whole class may impose some pressure on the learners when they have to answer questions in front of their classmates, especially in the Japanese context (Gray & Leather, 1999), this will not be much of a problem in this class because of its congenial atmosphere (see 2.1) and also because this particular activity requires only a minimal amount of response from learners (Willis, 1996).

4.2 Task A

Learners, in pairs, conduct the task by asking questions about the sightseeing spots. While learners are working, the teacher stands back and monitors the class. When five minutes have passed, the teacher stops them and checks their achievement. In case no pair has finished the task, the teacher offers them one more minute.

Justifications and rationalizations

The plan may be questioned by some for not giving learners sufficient time for task completion. However, as described in Wakaari (2008), setting a short time limit obliges the learners to concentrate on the task and prevents them from lingering (Jacobs & Hall, 2002). Besides, extending the time limit is relatively easy compared to shortening it, the latter of which may discourage those who are trying to complete the task (Harmer,

2001).

As regards helping learners at the task stage, Harmer (2001) warns teachers not to provide too much support, as this may deprive learners of an opportunity to do the task by themselves (Willis, 1996). Thus, the teacher at this stage needs to stand back unless the learners get totally stuck (Wakaari, 2008).

4.3 Post-task A

The teacher asks learners to reflect on their performance with their partners for three minutes. Then the teacher gives the whole class some positive feedback, while pointing out some common mistakes made by them. After that, some useful expressions for the task are introduced, and learners are given some time to take notes, ask questions, and practise on the useful expressions.

Justifications and rationalizations

Willis (1996) maintains that focusing on language form is useful after the task has been conducted. In order to encourage learners' autonomy, this activity is conducted in pairs.

Providing learners with positive feedback is important (Kosuge & Kosuge, 1995), whether it is about the use of certain vocabulary and grammatical items, or the use of some gestures and other strategies, as this will al-

Adopting Task-Based Language Teaching in Japan: Proposed Task-Based Lesson Plans
for Elderly Japanese Learners of English at an Elementary Level

Top **25**

Night Safari

Singapore's Night Safari—a zoo that allows you to see nocturnal animals—is the largest attraction of its kind in the world. Special lights that simulate moonlight were developed to illuminate this night zoo.

A world of animals The night safari is divided into eight "geographical" zones that are home to the park's 142 species—more than 1,000 animals in all. You can expect to see animals from the Southeast Asian rainforests, the African savanna, the Nepalese river valley, the South American pampas and the jungles of Myanmar (Burma). As in the Singapore Zoo, the enclosures are "open" and animals are confined by hidden walls and ditches. Five of these zones have walking tracks; others must be visited by tram.

Welcome to the jungle The best way to see the Night Safari is to take the tram journey—the tram is silent to avoid frightening the animals. A guide offers commentary as you pass through. Get off at the tram stations and follow the marked walking trails through each zone. You can rejoin the tram anytime; all follow the same route. Avoid using a flash on our camera as it disturbs the animals and fellow visitors.

The favorites Listen for the intermittent roaring of the big cats. The Leopard Trail is one of the busiest walking trails. You can see straight into the enclosure of the prowling leopards—only a plate-glass wall separates you from them. On the Mangrove Walk, fruit bats hang overhead in the gloom, and the elephants, giraffes, tigers and lions are always favorites. Be sure to catch the educational and entertaining "Creatures of the Night" show.

HIGHLIGHTS

- "Open" enclosures
- Leopard Trail
- Silent tram ride with commentary
- Mouse deer
- Tapirs
- Giraffes
- Lions
- Tigers
- Hippos
- Elephants
- Bats
- Walking trails

INFORMATION

www.zoo.com.sg/safari
- Off map to northwest
- Mandai Lake Road
- 6269 3411
- Daily 7.30pm–midnight
- Restaurant
- Ang Mo Kio MRT, then bus 138 or Choa Chu Kang MRT, then bus 927
- Reasonable
- Expensive
- Singapore Zoo (► 33), Mandai Orchid Gardens (► 45)

Figure 2 An information sheet on a sightseeing spot from *CityPack Singapore Top 25* (2005, AA Publishing)

most always have a favorable effect on learners' motivation (Williams & Burden, 1997). It is also important for the teacher to limit the number of mistakes to be pointed out to the learners (Wakaari, 2008), since too much comment on their mistakes will negatively affect learners' motivation (Wakabayashi, 1983).

4.4 Extra task for task A

The teacher asks learners if they want another chance to practise on the expressions introduced. After obtaining their consent, the teacher provides them with a list of sightseeing spots (see Figure 3) and explains the extra task, in which learners, in pairs, choose two sightseeing spots which attract them and obtain information on them from their partner.

Justifications and rationalizations

This extra task is designed to answer learners' wish that they would like to use in a communicative context those expressions they have just learned in class. As the task deals with sightseeing spots which will be interesting to the learners, they may well keep their motivation for the task.

4.5 Pre-task B

The teacher asks learners to form a group of four, and explains the task, which is to make a group trip plan in five minutes by choosing five sightseeing spots.

Justifications and rationalizations

The task could have been made to have less of a specific goal by letting the learners to choose any number of sightseeing spots (e.g., 'Choose some sightseeing spots which you would like to cover in one day.'), which may have been more realistic to the learners' context. However, setting certain specific goals makes the task clearer and enables the learners to feel more secure in conducting the task (Willis, 1996).

SINGAPORE's top 25 sights

The sights are shown on the maps on the inside front cover and inside back cover, numbered **1**–**25** across the city

1 Raffles Hotel *26*
2 Night Safari *27*
3 Chinatown *28*
4 Little India *29*
5 Asian Civilisations Museum *30*
6 Botanic Gardens *31*
7 Orchard Road *32*
8 Singapore Zoo *33*
9 Sentosa Island *34*
10 Jurong BirdPark *35*
11 Fort Canning Park *36*
12 The Padang *37*
13 Boat Quay *38*
14 Esplanade—Theatres on the Bay *39*
15 Clarke Quay & Riverside Point *40*

16 Bukit Timah Nature Reserve *41*
17 Sri Mariamman Temple *42*
18 Bugis Street *43*
19 Singapore Science Centre *44*
20 Mandai Orchid Gardens *45*
21 Singapore Art Museum *46*
22 Kampung Glam *47*
23 East Coast Park *48*
24 Joo Chiat Road *49*
25 Bishan HDB Estate *50*

Figure 3 List of sightseeing spots from *CityPack Singapore Top 25* (2005, AA Publishing)

Adopting Task-Based Language Teaching in Japan: Proposed Task-Based Lesson Plans
for Elderly Japanese Learners of English at an Elementary Level

4.6 Task B

Learners conduct the task by negotiating with each other. After five minutes the teacher checks their achievements, and then asks if they would like to know other groups' plans. With their consent, the teacher gives learners five minutes and asks them to list up some reasons for their choice and plan a report. In the reporting stage, the teacher gives each group a worksheet (see Figure 4) and asks them to complete it while listening to other groups.

Justifications and rationalizations

Reporting activities are very useful as they provide learners with opportunities for public speaking and generate in them the need to use more accurate language than in private conversation (Willis, 1996). This activity is introduced after asking the learners for their consent so that it will help create in them a positive attitude towards the activity (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000).

The use of worksheets proves quite appropriate in this teaching context, as it provides learners with a clear purpose for listening (Wakaari, 2008). It thus helps learners stay concentrated on the reports that others make (Kosuge & Kosuge, 1995).

4.7 Post-task B

Learners are provided with a questionnaire (see Figure 5) and are asked to reflect on their performance by answering the questions on it so that they can set their own goal for their next negotiation task. Next, learners are given another worksheet (see Figure 6) dealing with language functions which are likely to be used in the negotiation task, and are told to complete it

in groups. Then the teacher explains some key expressions, and learners take notes and practise them.

Justifications and rationalizations

The use of the questionnaire helps learners to reflect on their performance in the negotiation task. It also contributes to learners' setting their own goal, the importance of which is emphasised in Williams and Burden (1997) as this kind of goal-setting will encourage autonomous learning.

4.8 The plans for further lessons

The plans for further lessons are shown in Table 1 below. They are based on the same task-based teaching framework, although this time they deal with some other aspects of travelling and involve two tasks in each lesson. After learners have decided on each aspect of travelling, they will have a presentation of the whole group trip plan on the basis of discussions held in previous lessons.

Justifications and rationalizations

Since most of the learners are supposed to go abroad for sightseeing and have to communicate with foreign people when travelling, the task contents of the suggested lesson plans should be able to fulfill their expectations. Moreover, the activity of developing a group trip plan will have a real-world relationship to them as it is possible for them to actually make the group trip. With these qualifications taken into account, the tasks are considered to help deepen their relationship with one another and facilitate their interaction with other members of the community, which is their other reason for participating in the programme.

A Worksheet for the Reporting			
Listen to the report and complete the blanks below.			
G	Member	Chosen places	Reasons for choice (may take notes in Japanese)
1			
2			
3			

Figure 4 A worksheet for the reporting activity

Questionnaire on Your Performance

1. Think about your performance in making a group trip plan. Answer the four questions below.
   (1) Did you make a suggestion?   Yes / No
   (2) Did you agree with someone?   Yes / No
   (3) Did you disagree with someone?   Yes / No
   (4) Did you ask questions?   Yes / No
2. Set one goal for the next discussion and write it down (in Japanese).

Figure 5 Questionnaire on learners' performance in the negotiation task

Worksheet for Language Focus

Put the expressions at the bottom into their appropriate boxes.

Suggest	Agree	Disagree	Desire
-I suggest ～.	-I agree with you.	-I disagree.	-I want to ～.

[Choice]
-How about ～? -I don't think so. –I think that's a good idea. –I don't like the idea.
-I would like to ～. –I think we could ～. –I'm interested in ～. –That sounds nice.

Figure 6 A worksheet for the reporting activity

Lesson No.	Task	Task contents	People needed in the task
1	A	-obtaining information on sightseeing spots	2
	B	-making a group trip plan 1 (choosing five sightseeing spots)	4
2	C	-obtaining information on hotels	2
	D	-making a group trip plan 2 (choosing a hotel)	4
3	E	-obtaining information on restaurants	2
	F	-making a group trip plan 3 (choosing a restaurant and a trip route)	4
4	G	-obtaining information on airplane tickets	2
	H	-making a group trip plan 4 (choosing a flight)	4
5	I	-obtaining information on the cost for the trip	2
	J	-making a group trip plan 5 (calculating the cost for the group trip)	4
6	K	-presenting the whole group trip plan	4

Table 1 The proposed lesson plans for the class

4.9 Examining the tasks in relation to task criteria and materials selections

On the basis of the seven task criteria set in 3.2, the tasks are now examined as follows:

(1) Clarity of goals

The task goals (see 3.1), which are to be of some relevance to the goals of the programme (see 2.1), are clear to the learners. This should be able to motivate and enable the learners to concentrate on the tasks.

(2) Exchange of information

The tasks create information gaps with different sheets given to the learners concerning their sightseeing spots, which will entail their exchanging information among themselves.

(3) Similarity to real communication

The tasks require the learners to negotiate with one another on a group trip plan. Since the learners must have experiences discussing their trip plans with their friends before, they will find some similarity between the activities and real communication.

(4) Relevance to learners' interests

Considering the learners' expressed needs for learning English (see 2.1), tasks such as obtaining information or making a trip plan on the basis of existing sightseeing spots should interest them.

(5) Language focus

Post-task activities focus on language, as required by the learners' beliefs in the importance of language for communication (see 2.1).

(6) Learning focus

As the teaching context requires the learners to be self-directed, post-task activities provide them with opportunities to reflect on their performance, which is important for encouraging autonomous learning (Williams & Burden, 1997). This will be facilitated by pair discussions and the use of questionnaires.

(7) Language practice

Considering that the learners tend to relish repetition practice in the learning process (see 2.1), post-task activities offer a certain amount of time for them to enjoy oral practice. This practice will help the learners to perform better in similar tasks later on.

As regards the selection of materials, the materials adopted in the tasks are examined against the eight criteria as follows:

(1) Relevance

Travel guidebooks seem to have relevance to learn-

ers, as they often use them when they travel themselves. Considering that not all information is available in Japanese, reading guidebooks written in English will become a comfortable challenge to them.

(2) Topics of intrinsic interest

'Travelling in Singapore' as a topic seems to attract the learners, as the majority of them have already visited or wish to visit East Asian countries such as Singapore.

(3) Cultural appropriateness

Given that travelling abroad has somehow become an invested part of adults' cultural life in Japan, the materials are considered to have a certain cultural appropriateness.

(4) Linguistic demands

One problem of genuine materials is that they often contain far too detailed information for elementary learners, as indicated by Shirahata et al. (1999) and Lee (1995). However, the underground map of Singapore (see Figure 1) looks suitable for use in this class. The station names in the guidebook may be unfamiliar to the learners, but this does not become a serious problem as the learners can use alternative expressions such as 'NW21'.

(5) Cognitive demands

The tasks require learners to use reading strategies such as scanning. Considering the learners' cognitive level, the task will not be too demanding.

(6) Logistical considerations

The tasks do not require the learners to read the whole materials; they require them only to get some key information such as the nearest station and the cost to be incurred to enter a certain sightseeing spot. This information is presented with key symbol marks added on the map (see Figure 2), and thus the learners can find it without difficulty.

(7) Quality

The language used in the selected guidebook does not contain so-called 'inappropriate' language, which indicates that the materials have a certain degree of quality.

(8) Exploitability

The learners can make full use of the materials in discussing a group trip plan. In addition, as seen in Table 1, the materials are used for a series of successive lessons, which indicates that the materials contain a high degree of exploitability.

5 Conclusion

This paper has proposed a series of lesson plans based on a task-based teaching framework, and examined the suggested plans on the basis of some key issues in task designing. The suggested plans contain various aspects of language learning. Above all, tasks are found to be an exercise with a high degree of authenticity for the learners and thus they seem to have every reason to work quite effectively to achieve the goals of the programme.

On looking back, however, I notice that in the designing process there have been a number of practical problems yet to be solved. One such problem concerns the difficulty encountered in obtaining genuine materials suitable for elementary learners, as indicated by Shirahata et al. (1999) and Lee (1995). In the case of the suggested lessons, the teacher had to spend considerable hours to find a suitable underground map of Singapore for preparation.

Another problem is, it really takes time to develop a task from scratch, with the teaching context and the learners' characteristics taken into full account (see 2.1). In spite of the various advantages that a self-made task has in matching a specific class (Tomlinson, 2001; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994), it demands an inconceivable amount of time and work from the teacher (Block, 1991; Brown, 1995). In the case of these particular tasks, the teacher spent several hours developing each set of tasks. This may be partly due to the teacher's inexperience, yet designing a task for elementary-level Japanese learners who are not accustomed to the discussion style of learning would in any case require considerable time.

These and other problems may indicate a necessity for balancing between the teacher's workload and the learners' benefits from such teaching. One solution for these problems would be to find some teaching materials with a high degree of exploitability (McGrath, 2002), which will allow the same materials to be used for successive lessons, as shown in Table 1. Choosing in the next lesson some other country or countries which may attract the learners would be another possible solution, for it will enable the teacher to reuse similar materials. In addition, as Nunan (1988) maintains, some help from the institutional organisation sponsoring the programme is important to lessen the teacher's workload (e.g., by stocking travel guidebooks in the library). These suggestions will help improve the quality of similar English language programmes and further improve the communication skills of adult learners.

Hopefully, the lesson plans proposed in this paper may be of some help to those involved in teaching elderly Japanese learners or those exploring ways to implement TBLT in their teaching context. My next 'task' is to put the suggested plans into practice and examine the effects of the new teaching approach on the learning of adult learners. Such a cycle of practice and reflection will lead to the improvement of any ELT class (Sano, 2000). From a broader perspective, I think it is also important to explore the possibility of implementing TBLT in the regular educational context in Japan by developing materials suitable for the task-based teaching framework. In my opinion, the lack of such materials seems to be a stumbling block preventing TBLT from being fully adopted in the Japanese regular educational context. If such materials become available, it may encourage teachers across Japan to adopt TBLT in their classes.

Bibliography

Bacon, S. M. & Finnemann, M. D. (1990). A study of the attitudes, motives and strategies of university foreign language students and their disposition to authentic oral and written input. *Modern Language Journal,* 74(4), 459-473.

Block, D. (1991). Some thoughts on DIY materials design. *ELTJ*, 45(3), 211-217.

Breen, M. P. (1985). Authenticity in the language classroom. *Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 60-70.

Breen, M. P. & Littlejohn, A. (2000). The significance of negotiation. In M. P. Breen, & A. Littlejohn (Eds.), *Classroom decision-making: Negotiation and process syllabuses in practice* (pp. 5-38). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

Candlin, C. (1984). Syllabus design as a critical process. In C. J. Brumfit (Ed.), *General English syllabus design* (pp. 29-46). Oxford: Pergamon and the British Council.

Candlin, C. (1987). Towards task–based language learning. In C. Candlin, & D. Murphy (Eds.), *Language learning tasks* (pp. 5-22). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Clark, J. (1987). *Curriculum renewal in school foreign language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crooks, G. & Gass, S. M. (1993). *Tasks and language learning: Integrating theory & practice*. Cleveton: Multilingual Matters.

Doi, T. (1995). Task-based language teaching (TBLT). In K. Tazaki (Ed.), *A compendium of modern English language teaching methodology* (pp. 305-316). Tokyo: Taishukan-shoten.

Ellis, R. (2003). Designing a task-based syllabus. *RELC Journal*, 34(1), 64-81.

Gray, P. & Leather, S. (1999). *Safety and challenge for Japanese learners of English*. London: English Teaching Professional.

Halliday, T. (2003). *Pocket guide Singapore*. London: Berlitz Publishing.

Harmer, J. (1998). *How to teach English*. Harlow: Longman.

Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. Harlow: Longman.

Hutchinson, T. & Torres, E. (1994). The textbook as agent of change. *ELTJ*, 48(4), 315-328.

Jacobs, G. M. & Hall, S. (2002). Implementing cooperative learning. In J. C. Richards, & W. A. Renandya. (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 52-58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kosuge, A. & Kosuge, K. (1995). *Teaching speaking*. Tokyo: Kenkyusha.

Kuo, C. H. (1993). Problematic issues in EST materials development. *English for Specific Purposes*, 12, 171-181.

Lee, W. Y. (1995). Authenticity revisited: text authenticity and learner authenticity. *ELTJ*, 49(4), 323-328.

Legutke, M. & Thomas, H. (1991). *Process and experience in the language classroom*. Harlow: Longman.

Little, B. L., Devitt, S., & Singleton, D. (1994). Authentic texts, pedagogical grammar and language awareness in foreign language learning. In C. James, & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Language awareness in the classroom* (pp.123-132). London: Longman.

Lytton, V. (2005). *Citypack Singapore top 25*. Farnborough: AA Publishing.

McCarthy, M., & Carter, R. (1995). Spoken grammar: What is it and how can we teach it? *ELTJ*, 49(3), 207-218.

MacDonald, M., Badger, R., & White, G. (2000). The real thing?: Authenticity and academic listening. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19, 253-267.

McGrath, I. (2002). *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Uni-

versity Press.

Murphy, D. F. (1993). Evaluating language learning tasks in the classroom. In G. Crooks, & S. M. Gass (Eds.), *Tasks and language learning: Integrating theory & practice* (pp. 139-161). Cleveton: Multilingual Matters.

NHK Press. (2002). *The NHK radio new basic English 3*, 1(2). Tokyo: NHK Press.

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pinker, S. (1994). *The language instinct: How the mind creates language*. New York: William Morrow.

Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C. & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Harlow: Longman.

Ritchie, G. (2003). Presentation-practice-production and task-based learning in the light of second language learning theories. *The English Teacher*, 6(2), 112-124.

Sano, M. (2000). *Recommendation of action research: The new study of English language class*. Tokyo: Taishukan-shoten.

Scrivener, J. (1994). PPP & after. *The Teacher Trainer*, 8(1), 15-16.

Shirahata, T., Tomita, Y, Muranoi, H., & Wakabayashi, S. (1999). *Dictionary of English language teaching terminology*. Tokyo: Taishukan-shoten.

Shavelson, R. & Stern, P. (1981). Research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgements, decisions and behaviour. *Review of Educational Research*, 51(4), 455-498.

Sidwell, D. (1992). Learning as an adult. In L. Arthur & S. Hurd (Eds.), *The adult language learner: A guide to good teaching practice* (pp. 5-11). London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.

Tomlinson, B. (2001). Materials development. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 66-71). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wakaari, Y. (2008). Examining the applicability of a task-based teaching framework to the Japanese teaching context: A proposal for a lesson plan for elderly Japanese learners at an elementary level. *Akita English Studies*, 50, 16-30.

Wakabayashi, S. (1983). *Future English teachers*. Tokyo: Taishukan-shoten.

Williams, M. & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, J. (1994). Preaching what we practice: training what we teach. *The Teacher Trainer*, 8(1), 17-20.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Harlow: Longman.

Appendix 1 The Teaching Procedures for the Proposed Task Programme

	Stage(mins)	Teacher	Learners
1	Pre-task A (7-10mins)	1 introduces vocabulary related to the task by showing pictures and asking learners questions about the pictures 2 gives worksheets and explains the task	1 review some words by answering teacher's questions 2 form pairs, listen to the teacher's explanation, and take notes about the task
	Task A (5-6mins)	1 stands back and monitors the class 2 stops learners when five minutes pass and checks their achievement	1 conduct the task by asking a partner for information on sightseeing spots
	Post-task A (7-10mins)	1 asks learners to reflect on their performance with a partner 2 gives them feedback and time to practise questions	1 reflect on their performance in pairs 2 take notes of useful expressions and practise questions
2	Extra task (7-10mins)	1 asks learners about another chance and explains the extra task 2 stands back and monitors the class 3 gives learners positive feedback	1 conduct the task in pairs, focusing on accuracy as well as fluency 2 receive positive feedback from the teacher
3	Pre-task B (2-3mins)	1 asks learners to form a group of four, and explains the task	1 form a group of four and listen to the teacher's explanation
	Task B (15-18mins)	1 stands back and monitors the class 2 stops learners when five minutes pass and checks their achievement 3 organizes the reporting activity	1 conduct the task by negotiating with other learners about a group trip plan 2 speakers present their group trip plan and listeners fill in the worksheet
	Post-task B (15-18mins)	1 asks learners to reflect on their performance with other members by using a questionnaire 2 gives them a worksheet and explain some useful expressions 3 gives them time to practise them	1 fill in the questionnaire and reflect on their performance 2 complete the worksheet for language focus 3 take notes of useful expressions and practise them

Appendix 2 Task Contents and Language Introduced in the Task

	Stage	Task contents	Language introduced in the task
1	Pre-task A	1 vocabulary work by using pictures of sightseeing spots 2 understanding the main task	1 hotel, museum, park, garden, zoo, temple, theatre, restaurant, shop, quay, mosque
	Task A	1 obtaining information on sightseeing spots from a partner	1 Do I need money? / Does it cost? / What's the nearest station?
	Post-task A	1 reflecting on the performance 2 focusing on language	
2	Extra task	1 obtaining information on two sightseeing spots which learners would like to visit	1 I want to visit…/ Can you tell me about …/ Do I need money? / Does it cost? / What's the nearest station?
3	Pre-task B	1 understanding the main task	
	Task B	1 making a group trip plan by choosing five sightseeing spots 2 preparing for the reporting activity, thinking about reasons for choice 3 reporting to the class	1 I want to go to…/ How about ...? / I think that's a good idea. / I agree with you. / Sorry, but I disagree. 3 We go to… because we want to…(do shopping / relax / see tigers)
	Post-task B	1 reflecting on the performance 2 focusing on language	