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Implementation of the communicative approach: A
comparative study of ELT in Japan and Spain

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Implementación del enfoque comunicativo: Un estudio comparativo de la enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés en Japón y España

Implementation of the communicative approach: A comparative study of ELT in Japan and Spain

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Abstract

The communicative approach to teaching and learning languages is one of the most popular nowadays, so it is particularly interesting to comparatively analyse its history and application across geographical and cultural boundaries. This Final Degree Project focuses on identifying differences and similarities between Japan and Spain when implementing the communicative approach for English learning and teaching (ELT). To achieve this, main principles and characteristics of this approach were reviewed to examine how they had been applied in both contexts in curriculum documents for Primary school. Moreover, surveys carried out with English teachers in both countries were reviewed to gain insight into the implementation of the principles found in the national education policy documents for ELT. Finally, a SWOT analysis was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of applying this approach in both contexts. The project sought to connect theory and practice, and thus obtain a global view of the benefits and main problems of implementing CLT in both countries. Furthermore, this project will inform future comparative studies that address the potential culture-related difficulties of implementing the communicative approach in primary school, and equally enable future teachers to identify communicative elements that can improve ELT in a context-sensitive manner.

Key words

Communicative Approach, ELT, Primary School, Spain, Japan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning and teaching, as actions carried out by human beings, are a very important part for the evolution of society. To learn from our experiences and be able to transmit that knowledge is what constitutes what we are as a whole. The word knowledge is referring to the things we know about a certain topic or life, but also includes the way we manage different situations and our individual capacities. So, we are also referring to skills and attitudes. This categorization is included in the competence model of the European Commission (2006), which describes the distinct competences that constitute us, human beings, as citizens of a society. There are eight key competences in this model: Communication in the mother tongue, Communication in foreign languages, Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, Digital competence, Learning to learn, Social and civic competences, Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and Cultural awareness and expression are the competences that describes this model. The development of these competences takes place within the framework of the general competences of *savoir*, *savoir-faire* and *savoir être*, that constitute the human being, including also other transversal skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and initiative (Piccardo and North, 2019).

The perspective of a competence-based model for teaching and learning languages can be found in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the standard document that provides guidance to language teachers. This document defines competences as "the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allows a person to perform actions" (CEFR, 2020, p. 9). Zooming in on the communicative competence, that englobes communication in the mother tongue and in foreign language, the CEFR (2020) identifies the following component elements: the linguistic competence, the sociolinguistic competence, and the pragmatic competence. All these elements are a central part of the communicative approach to language learning promoted by the CEFR, and it places emphasis on the language learner as a user and social agent (Council of Europe, 2020).

But, going back to the development of human beings as citizens, a community has also that power to make inferences in this learning and teaching process, creating different paths and many options. And this is why the same language teaching method has been implemented in a different way across national contexts. Holliday (1994)

signals that a different educational culture may affect the relationship established between the participants in the learning process, so culture is directly related with the teaching and learning styles. As a result, it is important to identify differences across national and cultural contexts in use and practices in relation to a language teaching approach such as the Communicative Language Teaching (henceforth CLT), an approach that helps teachers implement the vision of the CEFR in the classroom.

Given the uptake of the CEFR and CLT at global level in language education, here I seek to gain insight into the history and application of the communicative approach to language teaching and learning across geographical and cultural boundaries. However, the scope of the comparison has been restricted to Spain and Japan because of my current personal interests in Japanese history and culture, and in the Japanese education system. Moreover, the Japanese society is quite different from the Spanish one, and so is their education. Yet, given that at a global level there have been social developments that point to increasing homogenisation, there is some curiosity about whether the globalization trend that affects the whole world of education nowadays has led to similarities in relation to English language teaching and learning in Spain and Japan. In Japan, there is proof of a concern about the role of education systems in forming global citizens in the Action Plan reform for English Language Teaching (ELT) in which it is stated that "[t]he Japanese government views the role of English education in the larger educational goal of cultivating a more globalized citizenry" (Butler and Iino, 2004, p. 40). In the case of Spanish education, the educational legislation also reflects this idea of forming the students as citizens of a country, and members of the European community. Related to foreign language learning, there exists an interest in overcoming the difficulties that this globalized world presents, starting from the multiple languages that are spoken. Spanish educational policy documents establish that the mastery of two different languages is an official objective for the primary education level (BOA, 2014). Moreover, the increase of English bilingual education, is a proof of the implementation of this objective, introducing a foreign language since the very beginning of schooling (from 3 or 6 y.o., depending on the school program). These schools or high schools have adopted an integrated approach to the learning of culture and language, developing key competences while broadening student's horizons.

Another factor that motivates this contrastive analysis is the claim that education in East Asia, concretely in Japan, remains traditional and strict, focused on achieving a concrete outcome, namely passing the high school and university entrance exams (Otani, 2013). In terms of language teaching, traditionally there used to be a general vision or language learning aim: *To speak a language, you need to know the language.* This idea is in line with the Grammar Translation approach, and has placed an emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and accuracy in English language teaching at the expense of using the language (Celce-Murcia, 1991). In contrast, the communicative approach, under the developmental view, breaks with this trend, so the "language learner is no longer an empty receptacle who must learn a new language by [...] behaviourist moves, but an intelligent, problem-solving person, with and existing communicative competence" (Holliday, 1994, p.166). For this reason, it could be interesting to really know how both the Spanish and Japanese education systems are dealing with incorporating communication and use of language, and how the trace of traditional approaches affects today's language teaching and learning practices. Teaching style is key to these practices, and so are processes of analysing the needs of learners and their context. The structure and methods used during the process of learning, teaching style and needs analysis are the responsibility of the teacher. Holliday (1994) supports this idea of the teacher analysing the classroom in order to develop appropriate methodologies, learning about the needs of the students.

Therefore, teachers' management of the communicative approach must follow Holliday's consideration, trying to analyse if they are really prepared to implement it at school. Furthermore, making an identification of the strengths and weaknesses of applying this approach in both countries, paves the way for future research. It also could help in the identification of prospective approaches to collaboration between schools from Spain and Japan, creating the possibility of international collaborative projects. This analysis can also serve as a support if we want to extend different studies that may focus on the difference between Asian and European English language education, focusing on how the context influences their practices, considering the currents for language education in those societies. We can consider this study too as a possible starting point for a proposal of units of work or different recommendations in order to better implement the communicative approach in Japan or Spain.

This study is structured as follows: first, the objectives that it pursues in relation with the implementation of the communicative approach in Japan and Spain are presented; secondly, the theoretical framework that highlights and develops the main principles of the communicative approach and its teaching methods is described; then the methodology used in order to get the necessary information is outlined; next, the body of the study, namely the results of the comparative analysis of the implementation of CLT based on the educational laws and the perception and experiences of teachers and students in Japan and Spain will be presented. Finally, the study ends with some concluding remarks that emphasise the main ideas extracted from this comparative study.

1.1. OBJECTIVES

The following contrastive study has the main objective of identifying the most relevant characteristics and procedures of the communicative approach for English as a foreign language as implemented in Spain and Japan at the level of primary school education.

This purpose can be subdivided into some specific objectives, which are:

- To describe the main principles of the communicative approach, listing the key concepts, techniques and methods that can be used in the classrooms for language teaching. The roles of the participants (teacher and students) and their implication into the process will also be considered.

- To identify the characteristics (concepts, principles, and procedures or techniques) of the Communicative Language Teaching approach used in Japan for English Language Teaching.

- To identify the characteristics (concepts, principles, and procedures or techniques) of the Communicative Language Teaching approach used in Spain for English Language Teaching.

- To compare how the communicative approach is viewed and used in these two countries, Spain and Japan, according to the government's education policies.

- To compare how the communicative approach is viewed and used in Japan and Spain, by primary school teachers, based on common perceptions and attitudes towards this approach in these contexts.

- To highlight the most noticeable differences between these societies when implementing the communicative approach for ELT.

- To complete a SWOT analysis for a clear understanding of the communicative approach and its methodologies that could pave the way to a more context-sensitive approach and collaboration between the two countries.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Context of the study

10.000 km is what sets apart the societies that take part in this study. This physical distance implies a social distance, taking into consideration their different history and cultural development. Their different journeys also influence the educational trends they have followed and their time of application. Despite the differences in educational progress between the two countries, this work focuses on one of the most recent trends for language teaching: the communicative approach. It collects the initiative of the government, perspective of English teachers, and the reaction of the students to this trend in Spain and Japan. This contrastive study has the final purpose of recognising the characteristics of the communicative approach in each region, and making a reflection on their application in English classrooms.

At the present, the world is contemplating a very communicative way of teaching, whose purpose is for the learner to live the language. But not all countries and societies, even classrooms, interpret and implement the principles of the communicative approach in the same way. Their possibilities will be related to the educational system, which is recommended in the curriculum, in connection with the culture of each country. For example, LoCastro (1996) signals how sociocultural variables impact on the language of Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) documents, changing the interpretation of the concepts from abroad, creating a conflict between the aims and the context. That is why it is expected to obtain contrastive results and difficulties for the implementation of the communicative approach for English courses in Japan; while Spain would be into the current proposed by the CEFR.

To confirm if these educational systems are really into the communicative trend, what is needed to be identified first are the key concepts and main principles of the communicative approach. Another aspect to pay attention to is the role of the teacher and the students, and the connection between them. The communicative way is characterised too by the focus on the development of the communicative competence for language acquisition. Different methods and techniques that fit into this approach could be implemented, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning (TBLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Problem-Based

Learning or Project-Based Learning (PBL). It is essential to identify where the focus and the interests are in order to use these methods, adapting the teaching and learning styles to the context.

Getting into the circumstances of each region, different characteristics will be highlighted. To compare their implication with these recent trends, it is necessary to contextualise their aperture to external influences. In Spain, the impact of the leader currents all over the European countries in language teaching is key, while in Japan they have been growing by their own for a long time, until the aperture of their borders during the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (Seargeant, 2008).

If we take a look at the education policies, the Japanese curriculum would be built around learning vocabulary and grammar, knowing about the language, with not many implications on learning to communicate. Whereas Spanish teachers and students can have an extensive interaction, focusing on communication, encouraged by their roles under the communicative trend. Compared with the interaction recommended to participants in the Asian educational system, it seems easier for Spain to incorporate communicative dynamics and activities. But the relationship and freedom that permits the Spanish educational system can also generate difficulties.

Interests for English language education may vary between them, but in the end, both have a big relation with globalization. For instance, apart from the educational model that structures compulsory education in Japan, other reasons to pay attention to English teaching in this country are its recent aperture to the world and its relation with this language all over the years. English learning is a must these days as it acts as a passport of language, connecting cultures and societies, because of the role globalization plays at the present. Duff (2015), cited by Tsuchiya and Pérez-Murillo (2019), announces that, "multilingualism and transnationalism are intimately tied to globalization, which affects policies related to citizenship, education, language assessment, and many other areas of 21st-century applied linguistics and society" (p. 61). The case of Japan is not indifferent to this effect, especially for business and market issues. English language offers a ticket to many more opportunities (Seargeant, 2008).

As it is said, the aperture of the country is quite recent, but in this period, Japan has established different relations with anglophone countries. They got into contact

specially with the United States of America, following modernization at first, but rejecting everything that comes 'from the enemy' later (during World War II). These connections have ended as a vehicle to recover stability and to connect with other countries. English language has even become compulsory for high school entry exams (Butler and Iino, 2005). In recent years, the MEXT of Japan has made many changes in the curriculum. They included *Foreign language* as a compulsory subject (Butler and Iino, 2005), recommending teachers to teach in a more useful way, being more communicative and not as grammar-focused as it was. Nowadays.

On the other hand, Spain is another reference for the contrastive work. Spanish government reflects this need of learning a second language in a globalised society, encouraging citizens to develop competences that allow them to adapt to this rapidly evolving society in the curriculum (BOA, 2014). The referential standard for language education in Spain follows the indications of the CEFR, which includes the minimums of proficiency included for every one of its six levels. The CEFR includes descriptors written in a positive form, indicating the learner's needs to achieve a certain level of proficiency in a language. These descriptors are structured progressively, understanding every learner's possibilities, and specifying the capacities of the speaker. This framework also gives guides for language teaching, including recommended methods following the principles of the communicative approach. According to the CEFR, Spanish law for education emphasizes the communicative view of the language and the need of study of languages being adapted to every learner.

This contrastive study has the purpose of analysing how the sociocultural distance between Japan and Spain affects the implementation of the communicative approach, paying attention to the context and the possibilities that each method can offer for English learning. For the purpose of identifying the applications of this current, the main characteristics of the communicative approach will be described, as well as the methods that work under its principles.

2.2. Into the communicative approach

Before diving into how Spain and Japan use the communicative approach in their classrooms for ELT, it is essential to lay out the main characteristics of it.

First of all, the communicative approach needs to be defined. As its name says, it is an approach for teaching and learning a language which puts emphasis on communication and all its process, not only its outcome. Its main idea is that communication is the trigger for language learning (Richards, 2006). Therefore, the goal is for learners to achieve communicative competence, and therefore develop the four language skills (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) in order to comprehend and produce any content, being able to participate in social interactions.

Literature identifies five guiding principles for a communicative approach. First, the need of making communicative competence the central axis, focusing its complete formation. The second one illustrates the role of every subcompetence and the different ways they can be put into practice, for optimum development. First, *grammatical competence*, refers to the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity. Next, *sociolinguistic competence* makes reference to the understanding of the social context in which communication occurs. *Strategic competence* can be seen as coping strategies that permit the learner to maintain a clear conversation, avoiding pauses and keeping the conversation going. Finally, *discourse competence* refers to the interpretation of individual massage elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relation with the entire discourse or text (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

The third principle of a communicative approach to language teaching and learning refers to bringing learners opportunities to interact communicatively with highly competent speakers (Canale and Swain, 1980). The fourth one relates to the early stages of second language (L2) learning, in which establishing meaning is key (first language (L1) can be used in order to facilitate comprehension). Basic and functional grammar structures serve as a base, satisfying learners' communicative needs. The last principle, described by Canale and Swain (1980), is directed to the elements that the implementation of a communicative approach must take into account: "The primary objective of a communicative-oriented second language programme must provide the learners with information, practice and much of the experience needed to meet their communicative needs in the second language" (p. 28). Learners should be taught about language and its culture, wholly practicing communicative competence.

Culture has also a significant role in communicative methods in order to fully comprehend meanings and functions of language, helping the students to understand

messages in any context. Language is the tool humans use to communicate, being profoundly based on its society, including the different types of interactions between people (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). To study a language, the learner will need to be aware of its culture and the differences with his or her own, adapting his or her patterns of thinking.

Depending on its adaptation to the social context Holliday (1994) distinguishes two versions of the communicative approach: weak and strong. The first version "contains elements which are not adaptable to any social situation", while the second version "can be almost entirely culture-sensitive" (Holliday, 1994, p. 169). Weak version focuses on language use, working on functions, notions or topics, and the use of communicative activities. Oral work is constant (as it says communicative), showing the student's use of English. The strong version focuses on analysing language in discourse, in real life contexts. It requires a continuous effort for the learners as they are constantly trying to comprehend language uses, acquiring language in a more natural way. It involves the strategic competence subcomponent of the communicative competence, as the learner has to reconstruct the used language strategies (Holliday, 1994). Problem-solving and pair work fit on this version. Holliday also insists that it is not imperative to speak English all the time and that the students must have autonomy. We can find both types of implementation of the communicative approach depending on the educational system or the teacher's teaching style.

Building on the communicative approach, the CEFR proposes an *action-oriented approach* to teaching and learning a foreign language. Although this approach adopts the principles of the communicative approach, a significant principle is core to the action-oriented approach: learners act as *social agents*, paying attention to their cognitive, emotional and volitional resources (Council of Europe, 2020). This feature indicates that learners must be totally involved in their learning process by doing actions, immersing themselves in reality and feeling that those actions and activities are meaningful and useful, with a specific purpose. Piccardo (2014) argues that language users action implies competences' strategic activation to achieve an outcome.

Another main concept that structures the communicative approach is the communicative competence. As Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) indicated, one of the principal objectives of a communicative approach to language teaching and learning is

to develop learners' communicative competence. Defining this concept, it is important to clarify what the term *competence* refers to. Canale and Swain (1980) provided the first definition of communicative competence as it is known today in language teaching and learning:

> Communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and [...] strategic competence. [...] The primary goal of a communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of knowledge for the learner, an outcome that is not likely to result from overemphasis on one form of competence over the others throughout a second language programme. (Canale and Swain, 1980, p. 27)

This definition provides a three-fold model of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Later, Canale (1983) added the discourse competence as the fourth component of communicative competence.

Taking a look at communicative methods, Communicative Language Teaching could be the most frequent. Looking for a specific definition Richards (2006), some of the most renown expert of the CLT, state that:

> Communicative language teaching can be understood as a set of principles about goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. (Richards, 2006, p. 2)

This definition does not clarify or explain in detail every aspect of the communicative approach to language teaching and learning, but it does announce the most important theoretical points: purpose of language teaching, roles of L1 and L2 in the classroom, learning styles, role of culture, the kind of activities and techniques used, and the role that defines each participant (teacher and learner) and the interaction between them.

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) list a series of key elements of the CLT, which are summarized next:

1. Meaning has the main importance.

2. Learner-centred. The teacher has to structure the syllabus according to the students' capacities and interests, adapting it to every case if necessary. The teacher acts as a guide, as a facilitator.

3. Conversations are casual and from real life, contextualised and meaningful, including content, functions and meaning. Different kinds of grouping are desired.

4. Language learning is learning to communicate.

5. Fluency and accuracy are both necessary, paying special attention to the first one (meaning is paramount).

6. Drilling and translation can be useful in order to secure knowledge and make content comprehensible.

7. The development of the four main skills (writing, listening, reading, and speaking) can be introduced anytime. The objective is to work with all of them.

8. Communicative competence is the desired goal.

9. Motivation is key, and also an engine that pushes students to learn from their errors (trial and error process).

These principles set out the main concepts to take into account when referring to CLT. Most of them have appeared after numerous researches and advances in linguistics, pedagogy and psychology, analysing the responses of learners with respect to language learning.

To summarise, Richard and Rodgers (2001) highlight three principles that serve as pillars for CLT: communication principle, task principle and meaningfulness principle. They must be part of the activities proposed, so learners can mix different abilities in order to learn and practice the language in a wider context. The communication principle stresses the importance of introducing a real communicative context, introducing real information from the environment and where language is spontaneous, not predictable. The task principle is associated with the utility of the practices, the existence of an outcome that learners need to achieve. It is not necessary that this outcome is related to the accuracy of language, as its main purpose is to motivate and push learners to continue with the challenge that means learning something new. Language is a tool used to arrive there, carrying meaningful tasks. For this reason, the

third principle, the meaningfulness principle, is one of the most important. The language and language learning topics used have to be meaningful for the learner, so he or she can make a better understanding and include that language into his or her knowledge.

We must remember that learning a second language implies the existence of a first language that could interfere in the process. That is why Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) do not recommend the use of students' native language, unless necessary. The target language should be used as a vehicle for communication being more than a couple of words and structures to be studied. Both explanations of forms and communicative activities should be carried out in the L2.

Summarizing all these concepts and principles that different authors have highlighted for CLT all over their studies, let's define the main recommendations/principles for this approach:

Table 1. Principles of CLT (Richards, 2006, p.13)

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING
Make real communication the focus of language learning
Provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know
Be tolerant of learner's errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence.
Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency
Link the different skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing) as it occurs in the real world.
Let students induce or discover grammar rules

These principles serve as a guide to start analysing and planning classes following the communicative approach. But, which is the place for the teacher after all these guidelines? What about the learner?

CLT establishes the role of the learner and that of the teacher during the teaching-learning process. This approach is learner-centred, that is to say the learner is the main actor into the classroom. The student is in charge of his or her progress, building knowledge and establishing connections with the context, being an active element of the learning process. Richards and Rodgers (2001) underline the cooperative

approach in CLT, thus reminding us of the importance that communication and grouping have in communicative methods. They also take into account that failures are not the fault of the speaker nor listener, but successful communication is their merit and for both's knowledge acquisition (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Breen and Candlin (cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 166) indicate that the learner has the role of negotiator, being the intermediate between the group and the classroom dynamics. The same authors also describe teacher roles. The teacher is thus the one in charge of facilitating the communication process between the participants and the materials and contents, being also one of those participants that takes action into the learning path. It is very important as well that the teacher stays updated, acting as researcher and learner, acquiring appropriate knowledge, abilities and experience of the nature of learning, and organizational capacities (Breen and Candlin, 1980). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), other roles that are related to the teaching profession are: needs analyst (in charge of responding to learners language needs), counsellor (facilitating communication between the speakers and listeners, exemplifying messages so every part of the conversation gets into the same interpretation) and group process manager (organising, monitoring, encouraging and avoiding the unnecessary gaps).

Once the human resources that sustain this approach have been laid out, it is necessary to include the syllabus schema into the general vision of the CLT. Brumfit (1984) collects some ideas from different authors, experts in the field, to create a model for a syllabus under the communicative approach. Figure 1 shows a scheme of the main characteristics for a CLT syllabus. A complete scheme can be found on Appendix I.

Figure 1. Characteristics of the syllabus in CLT (adapted from Brumfit, 1984, p. 75-76)
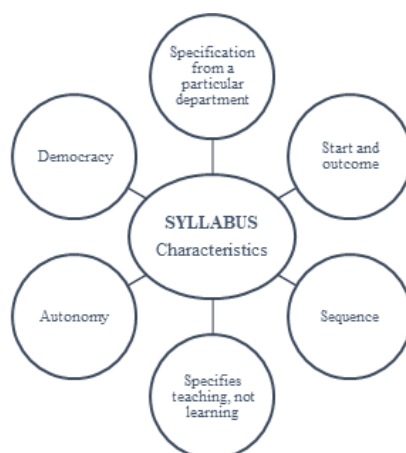
Brumfit bets for a syllabus that includes grammatical aspects (relating with the capacity for communication) among notions (forming mechanistic habits), functions (developing abilities to interpret the intentions of the speaker), communicational activities and grouping, developing the communicative competence and including social elements.

In our case, it is necessary to talk about two syllabuses, the one adopted by the Spanish educational system and the one from Japan. The first one has the CEFR (2020) as guide and model for the creation of the syllabus for English language teaching. This framework establishes some guidelines, recommends methods, techniques, activities and grouping structures, according to the principles of the communicative approach. It also proposes "linking teaching and learning, objectives and evaluation, the individual and the social, the classroom and the world beyond" (Piccardo, 2014, p. 13). In addition, the CEFR (2020) affirms that language use can be seen as the set of actions made by people as social agents developing a range of competences, in which we must include the communicative competence.

Another important element of the CEFR is the distinction between proficiency levels, which are well structured, taking into account the progressive evolution of learners, being able to understand the different capacities of each one. There are six levels of proficiency in which the language skills are also considered. Every level includes descriptors that describe the abilities that the speaker must have according to the level. These descriptors are written in a positive form, announcing what the learner *can* do; they are precise for the consultors to know what they are asking for. Finally, they must be clear and brief, making understanding easy and concrete. Descriptors are not only used to assess, showing the capacities of the learner in a certain language, but also can serve as an indicator of achievement, seen as goals for the students. What is interesting for us at this point, talking about the syllabus, is that the creators of each program could incorporate these descriptors to organise the content and its introduction in classrooms. The focus will be specially on methodological choices and how they are going to be implemented.

Many language learning methods, activities and techniques that fulfil the principles of the communicative approach can be found at present in the field, due to the huge volume of literature dedicated to collect the methodologies that follow these principles.

Some are more popular and have been studied deeply, so they are considered as the most representative of this approach. As many people have experienced with these activities and techniques, the objectives are clearly structured and many empirical studies about the implementation of these communicative methods can be found.

2.3. Teaching Methods

In addition to CLT, there are other methods reflected in the communicative approach, such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Service Learning, Content-Based instruction (CBI), Text-Based Instruction (TBI), Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT), Task-Based Learning (TBLT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), among others. The information and descriptions have been extracted from Richards (2006) and Richards (2015). These methods are going to be described next.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) are not used exclusively for language learning, but they can be employed to work on any disciplinary area. They have been extensively studied for implementation in other subjects in Primary School (such as Literature, Natural Science or Social Science) and interdisciplinarily. These methodologies can also include different methods mentioned above, such as TBLT or principles of the communicative approach, such as information-gap activities. In addition, PBL can be incorporated into the planning of a CLIL program which takes a whole approach to teach language, and in which different methods can be combined.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) was born as a method to work on different situations in medical schools in the 50s (Hung et al., 2007), but it was widely developed as a learning method during the 80s. As it can be seen, the main focus is not language but solving the presented problem. The application of this method for language learning is then carrying out the processes to solve the actual problem using the target language. During this process, language needs appear, so the students learn new language content while trying to solve the problem.

In the same line, Project-Based Learning (also called PBL) was designed during the 50s in order to acquire knowledge about a certain topic through projects. It could be

employed for language learning if the target language is used to carry out the project. It is linked to the idea of learning while doing (Dewey and Dewey, 1915) and "is characterised by use of authentic language (Fried-Booth 2002), emphasis on communicative competence and relevance (Hutchinson 1991), and promotion of language learner autonomy (Little 2007)" (Gibbes and Carson, 2013, p. 2).

There exist some curricular programs that can be included in the communicative approach, according to its principles, like English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Service Learning. In 1980, Robinson described EAP as a synonym of working on skills. Duff (2014) states that the focus of EAP is on communicating in a foreign language effectively for academic or professional purposes. In terms of procedure, students analyse real-world problems or work on different projects of their interest, being teamwork a key element (Duff, 2014). Other kinds of activities seen as communicative are those integrated in Service Learning. By these activities, learners use the language while helping speakers of that language, being immersed in their community. This program serves to acquire advanced linguistic material and to better understand the context of a language (Duff, 2014). This type of methods do not tend to be used in primary education because of children's cognition, as they would not be prepared to afford such specific content. Also, they may not feel interested in learning academic uses of language, as children feel motivated to learn about their immediate reality.

If the focus on language learning is on the final product, Richards (2006) suggests a kind of approach denominated Product-Based. Among these we can find Competency-Based language teaching (CBLT) (see Table 2 for a description of the approach) and Text-Based Instruction (TBI) (see Table 3 for a description of the approach).

As it can be seen, TBI has its focus on analysing forms through written texts, linking its content with its context. These texts are the starting point for the development of the rest of the skills, and the elaboration of units of work around the text's topic and contents. The main objective is to fulfil the outcomes of these units.

Table 2. Characteristics of CBLT (adapted from Richards, 2006, and Richards, 2015)

Competency-Based Instruction **Competency-based language teaching (CBLT)**
Outcomes of learning trigger teaching and learning. Not much focus on methodology or processes.
Features, from Auerbach (1986) (cited in Richards, 2006, p.42): ● Focus on successful functioning in society. ● Focus on life skills, not just language. ● Task oriented instruction. ● Modularized instruction: use of meaningful chunks. ● Outcomes are made explicit. ● Continuous and ongoing assessment. ● Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives. ● Individualized, student-centred instruction.
Starting point: Identification of the task and language demands, including also the competencies needed.

Table 3. Characteristics of TBI (adapted from Richards, 2006, and Richards, 2015)

Text-Based Instruction (TBI) **Genre-based approach**
Communicative competence is achieved also by controlling different types of texts (spoken and written), analysing their language.
TBI involves, according to Feez and Joyce (1998) (cited in Richards, 2006, p. 36): ● Teaching explicitly about the structures and grammatical features of spoken and written texts. ● Linking spoken and written text to their cultural context. ● Designing units of work which focus on developing skills in relation to whole texts. ● Providing students with guided practice as they develop language skills for meaningful communication.
Phases: 1. Building the context. 2. Modeling and deconstructing the text. 3. Construction of the text. 4. Independent construction of the text. 5. Linking to related text.

There are a number of methods centred on facilitating language learning processes. These are CBI, TBLT and CLIL. In Table 4, the main characteristics of the CBI method are listed.

Table 4. Characteristics of CBI (adapted from Richards, 2006, p. 27-30)

Content-Based Instruction (CBI)
Content as the driving force of classroom activities, linking it to the different dimensions of communicative competence.
Use of language as a means of acquiring information.
As it sets certain content, there is a clear framework to work on, linking and developing all the language skills.
It is usually used as: ● Framework for a unit of work. ● Guiding principle for an entire course. ● A course that prepares students for mainstreaming. ● Extra knowledge for teachers in order to work on some school subjects.
Different versions in North America: ● Theme-Based language instruction. ● Sheltered subject-matter instruction. ● Adjunt instruction.

Another communicative approach-related methodology is TBLT. The focus of this approach is to create bigger proposals around a task with an outcome, establishing a whole process for learning. Despite the task's outcome, TBLT must focus on the process developed to achieve the final products. In order to be as complete as possible, tasks must include working on different skills, contents and competences. Grouping and time to reflect and practice are other elements necessary to structure sequencing of tasks. TBLT tries to engage learners in tasks by requiring them to focus on forms and language use (Richards, 2015).

As the name of this approach announces, the primary unit of the TBLT is the task. Richards (2015) takes the definition of task given by the Council of Europe (2020) who describes a task as an action of everyday life, involving different strategies and cognitive activations, to achieve a specific outcome. In relation to language, tasks can be carried out by using the existent language resources while acquisition also occurs. They must involve a focus on meaning and must be relevant to learners' needs, according to the principles of the communicative approach. When carrying out the task, learners need to communicate, using communication strategies and interactional skills. Table 5 summarizes the principal characteristics of the TBLT.

Table 5. Characteristics of TBLT (adapted from Richards, 2006, and Richards, 2015)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)
Language learning results from designed instructional tasks.
Key assumptions (from Richards, 2015, p. 90):   - Language is learned through engagement in interactive processes that involve purposeful and meaningful communication.   - Tasks are vehicles that can be used to create their processes in the classroom.   - Tasks can be specially designed pedagogic tasks or tasks drawn from the real world outside the classroom.   - Tasks can be sequenced according to difficulty and in terms of their language demands and characteristics.   - A conventional grammar syllabus is not needed since grammar can be addressed as it arises in relation to task performance.
Benefits of TBLT (Leaver and Kaplan, 2004, p. 61):   - Greater motivation.   - Opportunity for repetition without boredom.   - Greater curricular flexibility.   - Promotion of learning how to learn.   - An opportunity for natural error correction.   - Promotion of risk-taking.   - Higher proficiency results.   - Increased student satisfaction and better programme-evaluation results.
Activities that include an information-gap and information-sharing can be considered tasks.
Types of tasks: - Pedagogical tasks: require the use of specific interactional strategies and types of language.   - Real-world tasks: Real uses of language and seen as a rehearsal.   Willis (1996) also proposes six kind of tasks: - Listing.   - Sorting and ordering.   - Comparing.   - Problem-solving.   - Sharing personal experience.   - Creative tasks.
TBLT can be used as: - Framework for course planning and delivery.   - One component of a course.   - A technique.

Willis (1996) proposes a structure for the creation of task activities including the tasks as the main element. It is called Task-cycle, and it follows the schema shown in Table 6. For a more extensive description, look at Appendix II.

Table 6. Task-Cycle

PRE-TASK	TASK	POST-TASK
Introduction to topic	Task	Analysis
Introduction to task	Planning	Practice
	Report	

TBLT can be used as an isolated approach, but it can also be combined with other methods and approaches, such as part of a CLIL classroom, or TBLT as a tool to follow the different tasks. Also, it is very chameleonic as it is easily adapted to the different context of learning, so the TBLT can be included in many school curricula (Richards, 2015).

Lastly, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLL) will be included as a method to achieve language communicatively, despite its principal focus that is content. That is to say, CLIL is a methodology that works contents through a foreign language, so students are learning the content of a specific subject by using a different language, in order to improve both knowledge. This method could be related to CBI, as their focus is on content, but for CBI content is established as a framework to work on language, while CLIL has its focus on acquiring knowledge about certain topics, usually a series of school subjects, whose learning is led through communicating in the target language.

During the 90s, the relevance of CLIL increased due to the weaknesses in language education and the need to elaborate new paths in order to improve language teaching. In 1994 the European Commission proposed a change in policy and they developed a more detailed and wide method called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Coyle et al. (2010) define CLIL as "a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (p. 1). Compared to previous communicative approaches, CLIL includes some differences, even though it is set according to the principles of the communicative approach. In CLIL, content is the main organiser of the course and language is learned through that content, and not separately. Richards (2015) defines content as the information or matters that learners work on while communicating through language.

This method is not seen as a way to teach language exclusively, but as a way to teach disciplinary content in English.

However, CLIL applications for English learning have differences with other methods used exclusively to work on language. CLIL uses language in other subject classes, for example in Science or Arts and crafts. Besides, this method is not seen as an immersion program, as it permits the use of the L1 in order to secure meaningful communication (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). CLIL is used in Europe to work on disciplinary content subjects through the L2 (Coyle et al., 2010) in order to promote bilingualism. Coyle et al. indicate that:

> Much CLIL classroom practice involves the learners being active participants in developing their potential for acquiring knowledge and skills (education) through a process of inquiry (research) and by using complex processes and means for problem solving (innovation). (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 5-6)

Therefore, as an approach, CLIL includes a lot of skills, not only the ones related to language and the own content of each subject, but also related to the learner as an individual, working on social and cultural competences. Coyle et al. (2010, p. 42) describe seven objectives of using CLIL:

1. Content is about personalising learning, letting students create their own knowledge and developing skills.
2. Content is related to learning and thinking.
3. Thinking processes need to be analysed for their linguistic demands.
4. Language needs to be learned in relation to the context and content, being transparent and accessible.
5. Interaction is fundamental.
6. Intercultural awareness is key.
7. CLIL is embedded in the wider educational context in which it is developed, taking into account its variables in order to be realised.

In CLIL, meaning, the comprehension of the concepts and its relation with the real world, is the focal point of planning. That is why the L1 is permitted in class, if it helps the students to reach the knowledge. There exists a misunderstood idea that L1 use is

forbidden when teaching using CLIL, when it is the other way around. This idea of meaning as an essential element of the learning process and the roles of L1 and L2, are related with the principles of the communicative approach. CLIL shares other characteristics with this approach such as work on the culture or interaction between the participants, where the learner is the main character.

In conclusion, the communicative approach for language learning focuses on developing communicative competence in the students, working on the different skills that compose language (writing, reading, speaking, and listening). Communication implies all forms of transmission of information, so it is important to make clear that it not only refers to oral production, but to being able to communicate effectively. Meaning is the central point that structures learning, that is why connection with reality is essential. The learner is in charge of discovering the language, its forms, uses and meanings, making him or her the main performer of the learning process. Teacher would be a guide to facilitate that path and approach the tools to the student. Many different methods are structured according to the principles of the communicative approach, as shown in this section.

In the next section, the methodology of this End of Degree Project will be described. Then, an analysis that aims to identify principles of the communicative approach in Japanese and Spanish policy documents that regulate the teaching and learning of English in schools will be presented. In addition, findings from empirical studies that focused on the implementation of these principles in the classroom according to teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the communicative approach will be discussed.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the literature of communicative approach and the syllabus for ELT in Spain and Japan. There are two types of studies included in the literature review. On the one hand, the theory of the communicative approach to language teaching has been surveyed. On the other hand, the literature review focused on empirical studies that examined perceptions and attitudes of primary school teachers on the use of the communicative approach to ELT in Japan and Spain.

Therefore, based on the analysis of these published studies, this contrastive study aims to obtain reliable evidence to achieve the established objectives set forth in the introduction. What interests us the most are the principles of the communicative approach, with the purpose of being able to identify their implementation in the Japanese and Spanish educational systems. More specifically, this study was carried out to identify the implementation of these principles in policy documents and in the English language classroom. The policy documents analysed here have been: *The Foreign language Activities and Foreign Language English section on the National Curriculum Standard* by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2008) for Japan; and for Spain the *Order CD/686/2014* published in the Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE, 2014) by the Ministry of Education and Professional Formation (MEC). The Japanese documents analysed are English translations of the *National Curriculum Standard,* for the subjects of *Foreign Language Activities* (for primary school) and *Foreign Language* (for Junior highschool), directed to Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). To obtain information on the implementation of the communicative approach in the English language classroom, an analysis of published empirical studies using interviews and surveys with teachers in primary school was conducted. It was hoped that this analysis would lead to a reliable comparative study of the implementation of the communicative approach in two different societies with so many cultural differences.

The initial hypothesis of this study was that the Asian country follows traditional approaches to the teaching and learning of English, and that the European one, in turn, has adopted methods and techniques to teach English more communicatively. In order to check this hypothesis, the first step was to examine the evidence for current

educational trends in the main policy document for ELT in both countries, Spain and Japan.

Next, the most renowned theoretical studies published in the field of ELT on the topic of the communicative approach and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) were identified. I have also looked for studies that examined the history of ELT in Japan and Spain. The last ones were needed to learn about which methods included in the communicative approach have been used in these countries. Finally, I looked for empirical studies that carried out interviews with teachers to gain insight into the implementation of language teaching methods in the English classroom.

The tools used to obtain all the information were databases such as *Web of Science, Scoups* or *Science Direc*t. Also, online libraries were consulted, such as Biblioteca de la Universidad de Zaragoza (*Alcorze*) and *Dialnet*. It has also been really useful, in order to establish connections between the studies, to cross-check the information available on the above-mentioned databases against the information on the search engine of *Google Scholar*.

The keywords employed were: Primary (or Elementary) School, Japan, Spain, Method*, Approach*, Language Teaching Methods, English teaching, Communicative Approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Experience, Teacher Perception, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), AICLE. These keywords led to very useful results, containing the exact information for the research. However, if the content was too general, I checked the abstract or the results part of the paper so as to verify that the topic was relevant for the study. To find other relevant studies, I also explored the references sections of these papers. That is why most of the information used for this paper has been selected from different studies extracted from the bibliography of the papers found on the data bases. One of the criteria to select those papers was the year of realization of the study, as they should be recent, so the comparative is made for the same period of time. For the perceptions of the English teachers in Japan, the year search started in 2003, with the implementation of the Action Plan. That date was settled for Spanish studies too, even though most of the studies were made since the implementation of the *LOMCE* (2014).

The original idea of this research was to focus on the implementation of the communicative approach in primary school, nevertheless studying English in Japan (as a foreign language) is not included in the curriculum until 5th course on primary. For this reason, the analysis is going to reflect the implementation of the communicative approach for young learners, including high school students until 15 years old (8th grade). This change in the learners age range was also motivated by the search made about the perspective of teachers. Very little research has been found about using CLT in Primary Schools in Japan. Surveys and interviews were principally directed to English high school teachers who shared their opinion, possibilities, and recommendations of teaching this language focusing on communication.

4. RESULTS

The main aim of this End of Degree Project was to carry out a contrastive analysis of the implementation of the communicative approach in Spain and in Japan. This section presents the results of the analysis of education policy documents at primary education level and of empirical research published in the field. The focus of this analysis was on how students' communicative competence in English is developed, if they are learning about the language to achieve the entry exams for senior high school or university, or if they are learning the language to be able to use it in meaningful contexts. To do so, I have tried to identify the principles and procedures of the communicative approach that the research found as specific to the ESL classroom in Japan and Spain. The following pages are going to pursue the objectives of this work, that is to say, to compare the implementation of the CLT principles at the level of educational policy documents and at that of the methods and teaching style found in the classroom. Following these results, the strengths and weaknesses of this practice in both regions will be highlighted in a SWOT analysis (See Appendix III).

The first step was to review and understand the history of ELT and the current legislation that regulates foreign language education in both Japan and Spain. Next, the results of the analysis of research published in the field will be discussed to highlight the perception of teachers who use the communicative approach in their English classes. In the final section I will try to summarize good practices and difficulties and the potential of this approach for the students to learn and be competent in English language, and for the teachers to feel comfortable when teaching a foreign language.

To really appreciate how Japan and Spain have arrived to include the communicative approach into their educational system, next we will take a brief look at the history of ELT in these countries.

4.1. Brief overview of educational policies for ELT in Japan and Spain

To comprehend the present legislation for Foreign Language Teaching in Japan and Spain, it is relevant to know how this need has entered the country and the different laws that have led to the implementation of ELT in elementary schools and junior high schools. Junior high schools are going to be analysed too because of the starting point

for English learning as a compulsory subject in public schools in Japan, as children do not get in contact with a foreign language until 5th grade. In addition, it was not possible to limit the scope of this review to English learning in primary school since most of the studies were directed to junior high school teachers and students.

To start, let's retake the main principles of CLT, as they are the target for the search in the practices in Japan and Spain. First of all, the communicative approach has meaning as the main focus, building knowledge by making it useful and real, making the learner use the language by really understanding what is going on and meaning something for him or her. Connected with this, the content must be of the interest of the students and the teacher should know the needs and likes of his or her students, approaching the context they are working on. As CLT is applied referencing the real world, all kinds of grouping and conversational dynamics can be applied. Also, fluency and accuracy are targeted and worked by developing the four main language skills. In conclusion, the purpose of the communicative approach is to achieve communicative competence. But, as shown in Table 7 and Table 8, we must take into account that the CLT approach is quite recent compared with other ELT methods implemented in Japan and Spain.

4.1.1. English Language Teaching in Japan

The information presented for this section has been resumed from Table 9 (Appendix III), that describes the history of Japanese policies for foreign language learning and teaching.

The 1989 and 2002 reforms are considered key to the curriculum as it is nowadays. The 1989 *Course of Study* established the need of developing communicative abilities on English education (O'Donnell, 2005), and encouraged the study of this language by working on language skills. Later, in 2002, with the *Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities* (MEXT, 2003), *Foreign Language Activities* was added as a subject in elementary school. It is considered the first contact with English language learning in compulsory education. The interest of this subject is on knowing Japanese and foreign cultures, paying attention to their language. Even though it is called *Foreign Language Activities*, the main language recommended is English, so it is considered as the first contact with this tongue (at school).

So, English can be studied as a subject included in compulsory education from 5th to 12th grade, as its teaching is included and detailed in the curriculum. The relevance in both sections (elementary and secondary) is quite different, including the orientation that teachers give to it. But, at the current time, English teaching includes a focus on communication, and goes beyond the required vocabulary and grammar for the entrance exams.

At the present, the educational policy document *Course of Study* (MEXT, 2008), revised in 2018, sets the following objectives for the subjects *Foreign Language Activities* (elementary school) and *Foreign Languages* (lower high school). The overall objective for the *Foreign Language Activities* subject (5th and 6th grade of elementary school) is:

> To form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages. (MEXT, 2008)

Other specifications are made in order to highlight the importance of communication, such as:

> Instruction should be given on the following items in order to help pupils actively engage in communication in a foreign language: (1) To experience the joy of communication in the foreign language. (2) To actively listen to and speak in the foreign language. (3) To learn the importance of verbal communication. (MEXT, 2008)

It is clear that Japanese education emphasizes communication as the central point of this subject, but there are some references to communicative competence or the communicative approach such as communication abilities, attempting to proactively communicate in foreign languages, the references to learn a language though familiar and daily life matters (meaningful and real concepts), grouping activities, use of audio-visual materials to facilitate meaning and a section destined to develop abilities to think, make decisions and express themselves. There is also a paragraph speaking about developing communicative competence:

> Enable pupils to anticipate and reflect on the learning by clearly establishing purposes, scenes and situations where communication takes place and clearly specifying the

competencies that should be developed through the language activities when engaging in instruction of each unit and in each lesson. (MEXT, 2020, p.9)

Despite that, relations between these ideas and CLT are difficult to be established by teachers. In other words, the teaching style is key in order to implement the communicative approach in class, applying its principles and using the proposed techniques. It depends on each teacher to get into that ship or not, as the communicative proposal shown in the curriculum can be interpreted in many ways.

On the other hand, as the student advances a pair of years, the interests for language learning changes. The overall objective for lower high school for *Foreign Languages* is "To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages." (MEXT, 2008, p. 1). The four language skills are mentioned and seem connected with the communicative competence; they also specify the grade of relevance on the specific objectives for English language:

(1) To enable students to understand the speaker's intentions when listening to English. (2) To enable students to talk about their own thoughts using English. (3) To accustom and familiarize students with reading English and to enable them to understand the writer's intentions when reading English. (4) To accustom and familiarize students with writing in English and to enable them to write about their own thoughts using English. (MEXT, 2008, p. 1)

It should be noted that for each section (5th and 6th grade of elementary education and junior high school), foreign language teaching includes different skills, paying attention to different aptitudes four each subject. Language skills are included for elementary school: listening, speaking (presentation and interaction), reading and writing. For junior high schools, foreign language includes just three skills: listening, speaking (presentation) and speaking (interaction). They try to focus more on oral communication as learners are more able to manage the language (MEXT, 2008).

The contents selected in order to develop each skill are also described, paying special attention to symbols and the alphabet used, in addition to the sounds and pronunciation, as they are elements that differ enormously from the students' mother tongue, Japanese.

Even though the content is indicated in the *Course of Study*, the syllabus is designed by every school and the design of the Unit Plans is assigned to the teachers. So, it is on them to organise and structure the course so the students can get interested in the subject. Teachers are also free to choose the methodologies and techniques they want to introduce in the classroom. It should also be pointed out that this document does not give information about the language that teachers must use in class for instruction. It is true that students are encouraged to communicate using a foreign language, but it is not specified how they are going to learn the language: Is the teacher giving them the grammar rules, vocabulary, etc? Or are the students the ones that, by using the language, discover and understand how it works and its functions?

Making an overview of the language policy document *Course of Study* of 2008, revised in 2018, there is a clear intention of making foreign language learning a communicative subject, enhancing the importance of the use of the language to master it, get familiar with it and boost the students' confidence when learning a different language.

4.1.2. English Language Teaching in Spain

The information presented for this section has been resumed from Table 10 (Appendix III), that describes the history of Japanese policies for foreign language learning and teaching.

Starting with the *LOGSE*, many changes have been introduced in the education system regarding foreign languages. The current law, the *LOMLOE* (*Organic Law that Modifies the Organic Law of Education*) modifies the previous *LOMCE* (*Organic Law for the Improvement of the Educational Quality*).

Since *LOGSE*, many changes have been done about education, changing and introducing new laws. The current law of education is the *LOMLOE* (*Organic Law that Modifies the Organic Law of Education*) which modifies the previous *LOMCE* (*Organic Law for the Improvement of the Educational Quality*). In terms of age, it recommends introducing the first contact with a foreign language in the second cycle of preschool education (4 years old), especially in the last year of this preschool education cycle (5 years old). For primary education, second language learning is compulsory and depends

on the selection of the school. This second language can also be a co-official language of the territory; it is not paramount to be a foreign language. 2020's educational law also reflects the necessity of adapting the language learning methodology to the individual needs of the students, especially if they have difficulties for comprehension or expression. The official languages are allowed when it is difficult to access meaning (BOE, 2020).

The age specifications are included in the *LOMLOE*, but the description of what implies the study of a foreign language remains in the *LOMCE* document, as the actual law is a modification of this one. It reflects the need of studying foreign languages which reflects the impact of globalization on education systems. Following the recommendations of the European Union, it highly recommends the inclusion of plurilingual programs, supporting the incorporation of second language study into the curriculum (BOE, 2014).

On the other hand, the *Order CD/686/2014* (BOE, 2014) describes the need to include foreign language as a subject in the primary curriculum in Spain. The interest in communication is clear as this document reminds us of the importance of the pluricultural and plurilingual context in which the ability of communication is essential. It is also stated that, to achieve this valuable communication, language learning in the classroom must be meaningful and simulate real contexts that the student can recognise. The order also highlights the benefits of learning a second language in early ages, working on auditive abilities, developing other competences, or developing transversal aspects related to communication. Of course, they signal sensitivity through diversity in this global context in which we all live.

This order also includes the methodological orientations, reminding that communication should be the main focus in language teaching. It considers learning as training for the active use of the target language. The methodology used must be learner-centred, paying attention to his/her needs and possibilities. The main goal of the learner must be on producing and understanding texts (written and oral) in the real world. In addition, this document includes the syllabus and assessment criteria according to the descriptors recommended by the CEFR. The CEFR is the European language education policy document that also serves as a guide for the content and structure of the different cycles in primary education in Spain. The criteria and

standards related with the language descriptors listed in this document can enable primary school teachers to assess the level of acquisition of the students, as stated in the *Order CD/686/2014* (BOE, 2014).

4.2. Reflection of the CLT principles in the national curriculum of Japan and Spain for ELT

4.2.1. CLT principles in Japan and Spain

This section presents the findings of the analysis of which CLT principles described by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2003) appear in the Japanese and Spanish curriculum documents for ELT, namely the *Course of Study* (MEXT, 2008) and the *Order CD/686/2014* (BOE, 2014). These findings are summarized in Table 7 below. The main principles taken into account for the analysis were: teacher roles, student roles, the role of L1 and L2 in the classroom, reference to the characteristics of the teaching-learning process, the goal of teachers who adopt the communicative approach, the nature of student-student and teacher-student interaction, the management of student's feelings, the view of language and the view of culture, the areas and skills of language emphasized, evaluation, and the teacher's response to students' errors. If the principle listed was described in the text of the document, this has been signalled in the table by *Yes*; if there was no reference to the principle, this has been signalled in the table by *No*.

What can be seen comparing these results (see Table 7) is that the Spanish curriculum is designed according to all the principles of the communicative approach; while the teacher roles, roles of L1 and L2, the kind of interaction between students and the teacher, student's feeling management, and the assessment are not reflected on the Japanese curriculum.

Table 7. Analysis of the presence of the principles of CLT in language learning policy documents in Japan and Spain (Official legislation)

	Japan *Course of Study* (MEXT, 2008)	**Spain** *Order CD/686/2014* (BOE, 2014)
	Yes/No	*Yes/No*
Teacher roles	No	Yes
Student roles	Yes	Yes
Role of L1 and L2	No	Yes
Characteristics of the teaching-learning process	Yes	Yes
Goals of teachers	Yes	Yes
Nature of student-student interaction	Yes	Yes
Nature of student-teacher interaction	No	yes
Student's feeling management	No	Yes
View of language	Yes	Yes
View of culture	Yes	Yes
Areas and skills of language emphasized	Yes	Yes
Evaluation	No	Yes
Teacher's response to student's errors	Yes	Yes

The aim of this analysis was to appreciate the differences between the communicative principles found in the Japanese and Spanish official legislation in the field of English language teaching. These policy documents have an impact on which principles of the communicative approach will have to be obligatorily implemented in the ELT classroom. However, to obtain a broader perspective on the uptake of the communicative approach in Japan and Spain, it was deemed necessary to survey empirical studies that have looked for answers in relation to which communicative principles are put into practice in the classroom and the attitudes of English language teachers towards this approach. The results of this survey will be presented in the next section.

4.3. Revision of the empirical studies: Perception of teachers about the implementation of CLT

The results of the analysis of the state laws that give the legislative framework for English language education in Japan and Spain showed that special attention is given to elements that focus on the development of the communicative competence and the communicative approach such as the role of the students and view of language and its culture.

The interest for the communicative approach is due to the fact that it is the trend that leads language teaching globally at the present. Holliday (1994) signals that "an appropriate methodology depends on learning what happens between the people in the classroom" (Holliday, 1994, p. 161). This capacity of analysis and flexibility, adapting the classes to the students' needs and cultural contexts, is key for the communicative approach. Holliday's words also highlight the relevance of context and the cultural differences and how they affect the dynamics used for English teaching and learning. For him, a methodology to be appropriate needs to adopt a culture-sensitive approach and pay attention to the context, since the "[l]earning process is very much a situation-specific matter as the relationship between people will be different in different educational environments" (Holliday, 1994, p. 161).

The implementation of the communicative approach in Japan and Spain depends then on the classroom context, apart from the official curriculum recommendations. If the law dictates the objectives for English language teaching, the context must be considered when implementing these objectives in the classroom. We must consider, then, the perspective of the teachers who are responsible for implementing communicative principles to teach English in their context. For this analysis of surveys of teachers' perspective on the implementation of the CLT in these countries, the classification of communicative principles made by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2003) has been adopted. This classification pays attention to teacher roles, student roles, role of L1 and L2, characteristics of the teaching-learning process, goals of teachers who use the method, nature of student-student interaction, nature of student-teacher interaction, students' feeling management, view of language, view of culture, areas and skills of language emphasized, evaluation and teacher's response to students' errors. To obtain a comparative perspective of how these principles are applied

by teachers in Japanese and Spanish English classrooms, the results of the analysis of published empirical research studies that investigated this topic have been summarized in Table 8. The same structure of the analysis tool used in the case of the Japanese and Spanish educational laws has been used. Therefore, Table 8 presents a summary of the analysis of research studies about the teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes in relation to the communicative approach in the EFL classroom in Spain and Japan.

Table 8. Analysis of the implementation of the principles of CLT in the EFL classroom in Japan and Spain (Empirical studies)

	Japan	Spain
	Yes/No	*Yes/No*
Teacher roles	No	No
Student roles	No	No
Role of L1 and L2	No	No
Characteristics of the teaching-learning process	No	Yes
Goals of teachers	No	Yes
Nature of student-student interaction	No	Yes
Nature of student-teacher interaction	No	Yes
Student's feeling management	No	Yes
View of language	Yes	Yes
View of culture	Yes	Yes
Areas and skills of language emphasized	Yes	Yes
Evaluation	No	No
Teacher's response to student's errors	No	No

This table has been completed based on a survey of published quantitative and qualitative empirical studies that were available in the databases used to search for literature in the field, as described in the Methodology section. The findings reported here are based on the following literature: MEXT, 2011; Otani, 2013, Tahira, 2012, Seargeant, 2007, Steele and Zhang, 2016, Littlewood,2007; Taourite and Ruiz, 2020, Méndez, 2012, Durán-Martinez and Beltrán-Llavador, 2014, Halbach and Fernández-Fernández, 2011, and Roothooft, 2017. In table 8, the results obtained from

the empirical studies show how important is concretion in the curriculum, being explicit and giving feasible recommendations. It can be appreciated how Japanese teachers teach only taking three principles into consideration: View of language, View of culture, and the development of some areas and skills of language. On the contrary, Spanish teachers lack work according to their roles and the students', the role of L1 and L2, and the evaluation and teacher's response to students' errors.

A noteworthy finding that appears repeatedly in the literature survey is that there is a misunderstanding between the specifications on the *Course of Study* and the interpretations of teachers in Japan. The information is not clear enough, as it does not specify the kind of classroom activities and teaching methods that could be used (Tahira, 2012). Each teacher can think about the MEXT recommendations in a different way, applying their teaching style and trying to adapt (more than adopt) the communicative approach to their usual classes, maintaining their own contextual autonomy (Samimy and Kobayashi, 2004). This misunderstanding can be also due to the lack of knowledge and training in CLT, as the English language teachers have no formal education on the communicative approach and its principles, as they are trained in the principles of traditional methods (Tahira, 2012). Moreover, teachers' English proficiency is not good enough for them to feel comfortable with the language, creating limits when designing the classes and choosing the grammar and vocabulary used. In June 2011, the MEXT conducted a survey to analyse the current situation of implementation of the *Five Proposals and Specific Measures for Developing Proficiency in English for International Communication* (2011). The main topics they highlight are:

1. Student's English ability and learning attainment target.
2. Stimulating student's motivation for English learning.
3. Providing students with more opportunities to use English.
4. Improving English skills and instruction abilities of English teachers, and the strategic improvement of English education at the level of schools and communities.

The fourth point reflects that there is a need for teacher training in Japan. This training should include a focus on how to use different teaching methods, as well as an increase in their language proficiency, as the following finding shows:

The English proficiency of 27.7% of the teachers was above STEP Grade Pre-1, TOEFL (PBT) score of over 550, iBT score of over 80, and a TOEIC score of over 730.

Out of the teachers who have taken external certification tests, 36.8% have passed either one of the above examinations. (MEXT, 2011, 4. On improving English skills and instruction abilities of English teachers, and the strategic improvement of English education at the level of schools and communities (in relation to Proposal 4))

The reference in the Spanish law to the Common European Framework of Reference for the study and teaching of languages (CEFR) is very useful to clarify all those possible misunderstandings or lack of information that the national curriculum documents can produce. The Spanish Order for primary school, *Order CD/686/2014* (BOE, 2014), specifies the importance of the communicative competence and the use of the communicative approach in the classrooms, and so does the CEFR. There are lots of indications, including different objectives and competences to be achieved, since the principles of the communicative approach are at the core of these policy documents. As a result, there are few differences between these documents and the findings of studies that investigated teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the implementation of the communicative approach in the EFL classroom. Also, the CEFR gives lots of recommendations, advice, different uses for the language, etc. so the teachers have great support to organise their English courses according to CLT principles.

However, as regards teachers' perceptions, the literature suggests that Spanish teachers have the same concerns that Japanese teachers. First, Spanish teachers consider that they lack training on using the appropriate methodologies to introduce English in a communicative way in primary school classrooms. There are references in relation to communicative methodologies for bilingual education and the implementation of CLIL. The results of different studies (Durán and Beltrán, 2016; Halbach and Fernández, 2011) carried out in various Spanish primary schools with a bilingual programme, most of the participants (teachers) agreed on the need for more training in order to be prepared to teach content in English following communicative principles. They believed that their language skills are high, but not enough to be used in order to teach such a global amount of content, including in diverse contexts. According to Durán and Beltrán (2016), "(m)ethodological concerns ... still constitute a day-to-day priority for teachers who demand very practical responses to endless specific needs emerging within very different classroom settings" (p. 84).

The motivation of teachers and students is also another element that must be considered in the Japanese and Spanish context. The importance of English language today cannot be questioned. Speaking this language represents an opportunity for everyone. According to a survey made by the MEXT in June 2011, "in order to provide students with opportunities of using English out of school, 40.3% of the schools conduct speech contests and debate matches. Schools conducting events such as English camps, however, remain limited at 4.0%" (MEXT, 2011, 2. On stimulating student's motivation for English learning (in relation to Proposal 2)). This result is related to the motivation in students learning this language (point 2), but also indicates how they also try to implement the communicative approach in Japan by introducing real interactions. Motivation is also noticeable in Spanish bilingual schools, for teachers and students. Those who get into these programs and focus on learning through communication and meaningful contents, agree that motivation increases on both parts of the teaching-learning process (Halbach and Fernández, 2011).

There are also other elements that influence these differences between the idealization of the communicative approach and its possibilities as reflected in the policy documents that were analysed here, and the reality of the classroom. A very important one is the society, the interactions between the participants and its organization (talking about hierarchy and traditions). For example, in Japan, this kind of approach is interpreted differently than in Spain, or any Western society. This is due to their interpretation of the term *communicative*, as it can gain a deeper meaning depending on the kind of relationship that is established between the participants. Ho (2004, cited in Littlewood 2007, p. 244), finds that CLT in East Asia is viewed as additional communicative activities, giving learners situations in which to practice English. But the communicative approach should go farther than that. It implies culture, society, and personal development, apart from knowing a language. This interpretation of including little interactions between the students can be extracted from those objectives of the *Course of Study* about the students "speaking about themselves and their feelings". But, do these kinds of situations reflect the real world? Could they be meaningful? Samimy and Kobayashi (2004) stress on how a remaining focus on form difficults this perception of language teaching being meaningful. The type of tests required for the university entrance examinations may be one of the reasons for this focus on form in the EFL classroom in Japan. These exams include grammar,

vocabulary and reading comprehension, which relate to form basically (Gorsuch, 2000; Samimy and Kobayashi, 2004; Butler and Iino, 2005).

Moreover, the role of the teacher being a guide for the students to discover the language is difficult to take on. The relevance of traditional approaches is still noticeable and there exists a lack of confidence of the teacher in his or her own capacities managing the language. As it has been said before, many teachers have learned English by using traditional educational methods, and so they teach. Their confidence in their abilities to use the language communicatively to teach seems to be low, therefore it would not be possible to transmit that need of communication to the students under the circumstances (Littlewood, 2007). The use of new methodologies connected to the implementation of bilingual programs, might also result in a decrease of confidence in teachers in relation to what they need to know about language in order to use it effectively in class (Durán and Beltrán, 2016). So, both Japanese and Spanish teachers may feel insecure not only because of their language proficiency, but also because of the new context that the use of communicative methodologies and techniques provides. This lack of confidence may be overcome by relying on textbooks that contain up-to-date information in the field of methods and techniques to teach English communicatively. There are textbooks that provide examples of dynamics that can be included into the EFL classroom, but teachers have to be cautious because these dynamics can also limit students' ability to answer and complete the tasks (Carless, 2004). In the study made by Ramiro Durán and Fernando Beltrán (2016), some teachers also added that the materials that the administration of the programs give are not enough to cover all the necessities. They are not very useful, nor wide, nor affordable, nor innovative. The teachers must invest so much time in completing those materials with their own or any other that they find, to make them useful for their topic and context, and interesting and appealing for the kids. Kanatani (2012) also adds the fact that the proficiency level required by some textbooks could be much higher that the level of the students, which results in the inability to work on the contents communicatively.

In connection with the previous idea, that of the lack of appropriate teaching materials and resources, there is a conception of lack of time between the teachers, who may feel that they spend lots on organising and preparing the materials. Coordination and collaboration between them seems key to overcome that lack, and more specifically

teachers should prepare the materials together and work at the same pace. Collaboration in the form of peer-observation of classroom teaching may be useful as peers can give feedback to the other teachers about how the class is reacting and what they can do to improve their materials or classroom management. In studies made in Spanish primary schools (Durán and Beltrán, 2016; Halbach and Fernández, 2011), it has been found that teachers believe that coordination and cooperation among them has been very positive, even helping them to get more involved in teaching (despite the time-consuming preparation).

When focusing on working in another language, especially when learning it through content, some needs or difficulties could go unnoticed because of the fact of not mastering the language. These problems clearly originate in a very low proficiency level in the target language. Teachers should pay attention to learners, analysing their reactions to the presentation of the contents and the dynamics used. In order to attend to every student's need and difficulty when learning English, it is recommended to reduce the size of the class. In Japanese classrooms the huge number of students does not help the teacher to be aware of their progress and struggles when learning, which constrains the application of CLT (Otani, 2013). Japanese teachers' lack of proficiency in English and poor analysing skills also make it difficult to learn about these students' specific needs (Shirai, 2012). A solution to this problem seems to be provision of teacher training and development programs, as Otani (2013) states: "Japanese junior high school teachers should be more aware of what constraints they face, and to accomplish this, those teachers need to be provided more in-service training opportunities to learn how to assess student's needs" (2013, p. 297). But the same problem has been identified in the Spanish classrooms. Research studies on Spanish teachers' perceptions about the difficulties they encounter in the EFL classroom (Durán and Beltrán, 2016; Halbach and Fernández, 2011) have shown that teachers demand smaller groups of students, as this may make coordination easier and a result in a good atmosphere when working in groups or pairs. Moreover, the teachers interviewed in these studies also signalled that this would enable them to provide a personalised attention to every student.

Another negative aspect of the already mentioned lack of confidence when it comes to using the target language is not using the target language. Classes could be taught in the mother tongue, introducing some grammar and vocabulary in English. But this is not

in line with the principles of the communicative approach. It is important for the learners and the teacher that they communicate in the L2 as much as possible, while the L1 should be used only to facilitate meaning. Otani (2013) also highlights that state school students have problems understanding even the basic grammar rules of this language. This result points to the problems specific to not being exposed to a communicative language teaching methodology and not using the L1 in the classroom. There can also be other problems associated with the students' knowledge of the L1. For example, when students are learning new concepts in English and they do not understand them, this may happen because they do not know those contents in their language either, as it was found by studies carried out in Spain (Halbach and Fernández, 2011).

Despite all these difficulties and problems when implementing the communicative approach while teaching English, there appear to be more pros than cons when it comes to enhancing students' learning of the language and proficiency level and confidence in using the language. The benefits for the students were linked with the development of key competences and the different language skills and cognitive abilities (Durán and Beltrán, 2016; Halbach and Fernández, 2011). The studies which have been reviewed here showed that the communicative approach may also be good for the teachers as it can make them feel more and more comfortable teaching in English, more motivated and less anxious, as both teachers and students get used to this approach. In conclusion, there are differences between the objectives for teaching according to the principles of CLT reflected by the educational policies of Japan and Spain, and the real implementation of these principles in the classrooms. The main challenge would be the comprehension of these principles, trying to find methodologies that could be well received in these societies. For example, here it was found that in Japan, the focus for the implementation of the communicative approach should be directed especially at the role of language and culture and the development of the four skills. In contrast, in Spain, there seems to be difficulties with the roles of the participants, the excessive use of the L1, the understanding of the feelings of the students while learning in English (under a bilingual program), the evaluation of the competences of the students and the lack of attention to their errors. The main origin of these problems seems to be lack of time.

4.4. SWOT analysis: Strengths and weaknesses of implementing the communicative approach in Japan and Spain

This final section is going to summarise the main strengths and weaknesses of each country when implementing the communicative approach. This section is based on the results presented in the previous section, and the complete SWOT analysis that is shown in Appendix IV (Table 11 and 12).

In relation to Japan's policies and practices for ELT, it was found that the government has interest in incorporating communicative practices, developing all language skills, and discovering the culture of the language. But these ideas are not concrete enough, which makes teachers adapt their own teaching styles to the recommendations in the curriculum. More importantly, because teachers' proficiency using the language and managing communicative methods is not sufficient, this can undermine the implementation of the communicative approach. On the other hand, students do not feel comfortable either producing English and they try to focus exclusively on the outcome of the activity. The teacher-centred classroom style makes it even harder for the students to focus on their own learning process and try to feel active participants. The main issue to address, however, is that trying to implement concepts imported from abroad can create sociocultural mismatches that cannot be fixed easily. Therefore, it seems advisable to adapt rather than adopt the approach's principles to the context in which it is being incorporated.

On the other hand, Spain's policies and practices in relation to English language teaching target the development of the communicative competence and teaching and learning applying communicative methodologies and activities. There is an important number of bilingual schools, so most of the studies that have been reviewed here were focused on CLIL and its implementation in elementary schools. Some of the strengths linked with the implementation of communicative methods in Spanish classrooms related to motivation in learners and teachers, to the increase of cognitive skills and critical thinking. An important difference between Japan and Spain seems to originate in the fact that the communicative principles that educational policy documents established as objectives have been taken up by teachers and communicative activities that work on the four language skills and the aim to develop communicative competence have been put into practice in the classroom. Another key to this coherence

between policy and practice may be the impact that the CEFR guidelines, which work as a standard between European learning and teaching practices, have had in the field of English language teaching in Europe and in Spain. However, teachers still need training and professional development programs to be sure of the communicative principles and feel comfortable with the methodologies they should use. There is also a misconception in relation to the use of L1 and L2, more specifically, related to their possibilities and limitations on English language learning. Other elements such as grouping, materials or the type of activities, must be selected according to the context. The selection and creation of materials can be really time consuming. The exigency that requires to prepare lessons including interactive activities, being aware of the communicative principles, using the best materials and resources trying to guarantee quality teaching, can be really tiring, putting teachers in danger of suffering burn-out.

5. CONCLUSION

This research reflects on how the differences between Japanese and Spanish societies affects planning and implementing English language teaching in a communicative way. To compare these contexts, an analysis of education policies of each country and teachers' experiences and opinions has been made. To carry out this comparative study, the central elements have been the principles of the communicative approach for language teaching and learning. To contextualize the results of this comparison, this End of Degree Project has also looked at how English language education has evolved to arrive at the point in which we are today, in terms of focus on language and the interaction with and between the students.

The main hypothesis that would be the basis for the study is that English language education in Spain is already following a communicative approach. This could be due to the structure of its society, the lack of a rigid hierarchy. In contrast, Japan seems to move slowly to a conception of language learning as a whole process that goes beyond learning grammar and vocabulary, as it used to be decades ago. The analysis of the policies confirms that both countries stress on the importance of teaching communicatively, but at different levels. Spanish curriculum clearly references principles of the communicative approach which can be found throughout the document. They can be found, for example, in the objectives, the methodological orientations, the contents and evaluation standards, even in the description of the subject itself (BOE, 2014). On the other hand, the initiative to incorporate communicative principles in the Japanese curriculum (*Course of Study*) is present, but there is no clear orientation about how to teach or what to prioritize in the classroom. Teachers can make their own interpretations of these communicative recommendations, adapting them to their teaching style. However, the lack of clear guidelines may result in lack of confidence about introducing innovation in the classroom and applying CLT principles.

As far as teachers' perceptions and attitudes are concerned, the difficulties of implementing the communicative approach methods were emphasized, but also the advantages. The common problems for both countries would be the lack of confidence and the huge amount of time that is needed to prepare the classes properly. The self-confidence of teachers when speaking the language or implementing communicative methodologies in a foreign language has a huge impact on their

practices. It was found that teachers may feel limited because of their proficiency in English and the different interpretations that the principles of the communicative approach can led to. In addition, teachers need training and professional development programs in order to improve their teaching skills for the communicative classroom. Both the lack of self-confidence and lack of proficiency may have an impact on the use of the target language. As a result, an overuse of L1 in the English language classrooms, more specifically to explain concepts or grammar rules, may be detrimental to learning. The communicative approach permits communication in the mother tongue if meaning is difficult to achieve. However, teachers and students should use English language as much as possible, to foster communicative competence.

The limitations of this study would be related to the number of empirical studies available for review and analysis. The type of study and method used has also had an impact on the results of the analysis presented here. There was also a noticeable difference between the contexts of both countries and the methodologies used. On one hand, English bilingual schools that work on content and language by implementing CLIL approaches are common in Spain. On the other hand, the use of communicative methodologies is limited in Japan to communicative activities (with a focus on meaning, interaction and connected with reality and cultures) and some features of Task-Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT) (Littlewood, 2007). The relation of these methods with the context seems to be the result of the policies of each country in relation to English language teaching. For example, the Japanese curriculum does not specify which principles or methods the teachers can follow; while Spanish educational laws are oriented and prepared to support bilingual education and promote the introduction of teaching disciplinary content in a foreign language.

Other limitations that should be highlighted have to do with the language in which the studies relevant for this analysis were published. The research that was reviewed for this analysis was written in English. Therefore, there may be studies written in Japanese that I did not include in the review because I do not have sufficient knowledge of the language. Of note, I was not able to find research on the topic written in Spanish. As a result, future research on the topic of this Final Degree Project should include results of research written in Spanish.

Apart from these limitations, the present study could be relevant because of its strengths. In the first place, the results have been obtained from two types of documents: education policies established by the countries' governments, and the research studies that combine perceptions of teachers and professionals obtained using multiple instruments of analysis. This is also a strong point of the study: the number and variety of studies revised to obtain the results, including perceptions and attitudes of English language teachers and empirical studies through observation.

As regards the practical applications of the results of the analysis conducted here, the main application could be that of understanding the context of English language teaching in Spain and Japan in view of future collaboration and joint projects. The findings presented here can help identify the differences in the use of communicative methodologies as well as differences in the legal framework that have to be taken into account so as to enable collaborations between Japan and Spain to carry out joint projects and introduce innovation in the English language classroom. An important sustainable development goal on the Agenda 2023 of the United Nations is that of establishing global partnerships. A Spanish-Japanese partnership that would involve both teachers and students could be established to work towards a context-sensitive implementation of the principles of CLT in the English language classroom. For example, Japanese teachers could reflect on the goal of teachers while working or observing a Spanish classroom. On the contrary, Spanish teachers could incorporate more projects to work on the culture of anglophone countries and organise exchanges with the help of Japanese students.

However, none of these collaboration scenarios would be possible without a thorough consideration of the fact that the context influences practically completely the teaching methods that the educational system is going to incorporate in its curriculum. Also, the syllabus each school (or educational centre) is basing the content for their classes is related to the real world the students are facing. In order to understand teachers' and students' practices, it is needed to take into account previous studying and teaching styles, interests, traditions and cultural trends. It must be considered too how families can support students when learning a foreign language. The communicative approach is suitable to be applied in any classroom, as it holds the belief that each individual is an important element of the process, and so is its context and the

environment it generates. This consideration is global, taken into account for every region applying the communicative approach which starts with the evaluation of the context in order to make learning meaningful and real in that particular setting.

To conclude, this study has analysed the uptake and implementation of the communicative approach in Japan and Spain. The social dynamics specific to these countries may be deemed responsible for limiting the possibilities when trying to apply communicative principles for English learning and teaching. This leads to an unequal implementation of the principles of the communicative approach. There is still a long way to go until English language classes in both countries, especially in Japan, are taught communicatively according to the main characteristics of the communicative approach, focusing on the learner and with meaning and communicative competence as the staples of effective classroom practices. There is hope, however, in the possibility of establishing global partnerships. More contrastive studies are needed to pave the way for such partnerships.

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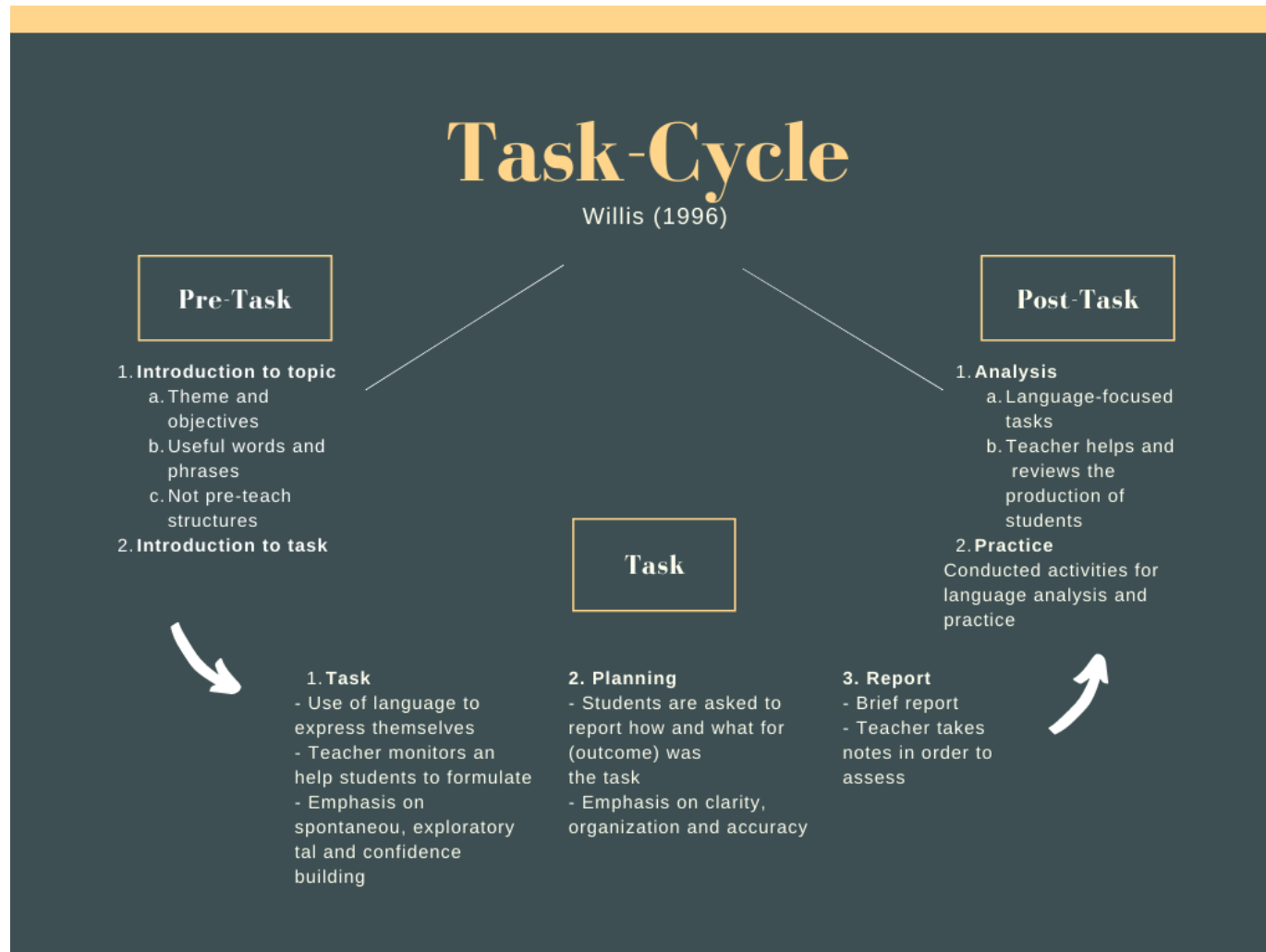
Appendix I: Infographic for Brumfit's Syllabus model

Figure 2. Syllabus model infographic according to Brumfit (1984, p. 75-76).
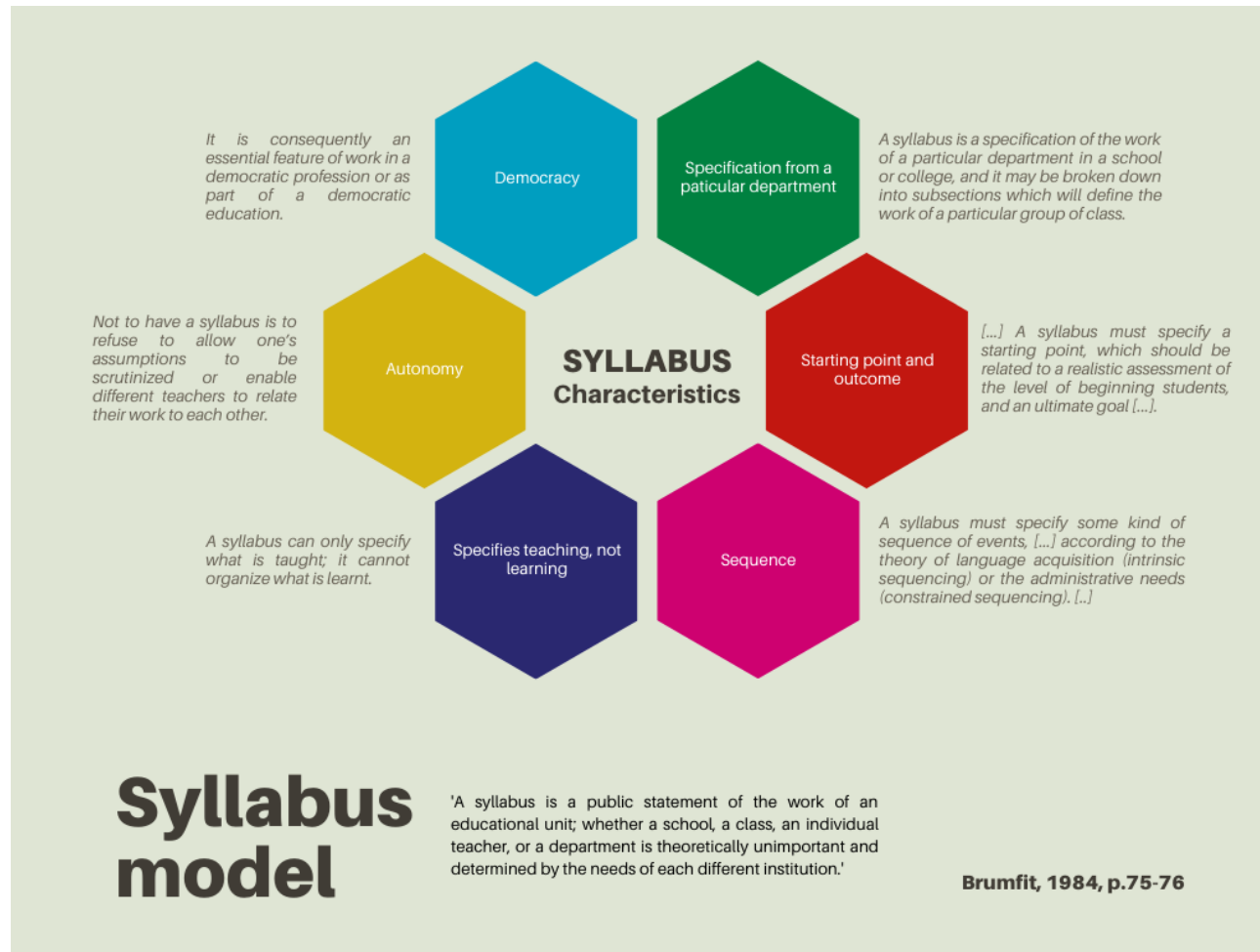
Appendix II: Willis' scheme for Task-Cycle

Figure 3. Description of the Task-Cycle stages, according to Willis (1996).

Appendix III: Brief overview of ELT policies in Japan and Spain

Table 9. Brief tour of ELT policies in Japan, adapted from Butler and Iino (2005) and Seargeant (2008)

Meiji Restoration Japan-US treaty of amity and commerce (1858-1900)
During the Meiji era, the government of Japan decided to open the country's doors to "modernization", receiving influence from foreign models. There were two ways to learn English: - *Seisoku* (regular way): Oral learning with English native-speakers. - *Hensoku* (irregular way): Learning through reading and translation. In the 1890s foreign language teaching was included in the education system for secondary schools.
War period Resurgence of nationalism (1900-1954)
Westernization (modernization) goes down while nationalism goes up. Hensoku gets more relevance, and so does the use of Japanese to study foreign languages. English learning moves to academic intentions, focusing on entrance examinations, learning by translating (yakudoku) rather than communicating. With the start of World War II, the perception of English changes and is viewed as the enemy's language. But with the reform in education in 1947, English is considered as a tool for practical communication and re-entries as a subject of high schools. In 1954, English became more important and became part of the entrance examinations.
To Present Getting into communication (1954-2003)
The communicative approach started rising between language professionals, and so did the need to break with the grammar-translation method. 1989 and 2002 Reform Acts included this necessity. They even included the JET Program (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program), that highlighted the importance of immersion to foster communication. The Action Plan, published in 2003, puts emphasis on practical English, including communicative characteristics: - Acquiring sufficient communicative abilities are goals. - Reassure the figures and measures. - Give autonomy to the implicated parts. - *Foreign language activities* in elementary schools.

Table 10. Brief overview of ELT policies in Spain, adapted from Madrid, Ortega Martín and Hughes in Tsuchiya and Pérez Murillo (2019)

Before and after the first educational law *Moyano Law* (1857) (1857-1931)
During this period, language learning was a subject for high society, interested in diplomatic connections and business. With the creation of the *Law of Public Instruction* (*Moyano Law*) in 1857, the study of living languages was included for the students from 10 to 11 years old. In 1926 the *Royal Decree* amplified this language learning period to three years of French (from 12 to 14 y.o.) and two years of English, German, or Italian (15-16 y.o.). Thanks to this reform, institutes of languages were created (Morales, 2009).
Go and Stop Spanish Second republic (1931-1936) and dictatorial period (1939-1975) (1931-1975)
The Second Republic supposed an improvement in education, also relating to language teaching. English (or German) was added as a second language, during the last two years of secondary education. Use of the Grammar-Translation method and the Direct Method, so classes were more practical, included cultural aspects, but also focused on the written use of language. In 1945, training for foreign learners and foreign language learning was provided for the foreigners to learn Spanish and vice versa. The legislative reform made in 1945, included an introductory course of foreign language in eighth grade (ages 13-14). They will learn language systematically in secondary school with help of specialised teachers.
Europe's influence Increase of English Relevance (1960-1970)
Economic growth and tourism in Spain and the establishment of the *European Cultural Convention*, favoured the exchange of ways of educational trends (among other things). Foreign language teaching focused on developing student's oral and written communication, recommending the use of Audio-Lingual Method. Interest on English language increased, English departments were created in universities, and a training period for teachers was established, offering the possibility of studying English language in primary school.

Getting into the communicative approach
From 1970 to present

The General Education Law (1970) saw foreign languages as a tool for communication, favouring exchanges with other cultures. This acquisition was generally through Audio-lingual Method and the influences of behaviourism. This law includes foreign language learning at earlier ages, from 8 years old.

It was during the next decade (1980s) when language functions and its use for content learning appeared in Spanish classrooms.

In 1990 a focus on the communicative approach can be observed in the *General Organic Law of The Educational System (LOGSE)*, through directives such as working on meaningful topics and contents, real context experiences and not only focusing on grammatical aspects of language. Communicative Language Teaching was the leading trend for foreign language teaching in Europe and in Spain.

Many approaches and methodologies have been developing from those days, until present, adapting their characteristics to the needs of the students and societies.

Appendix IV: SWOT analysis: Communicative approach for ELT in Japan and Spain

SWOT analysis of the implementation of the communicative approach for English Language Teaching in Japan and Spain.

The results for Japan are based on Otani (2013), Tahira (2012), Seargeant (2007), Steele and Zhang (2016), Littlewood (2007).

Table 11. SWOT analysis of communicative approach for ELT in Japan

Communicative approach for ELT in Japan			
Strengths	The Ministry of Education (MEXT) shows a clear concern about teaching and learning a foreign language under a communicative view, highlighting the relevance of communication and culture at the present, and proposing communicative activities to be included in ELT classrooms. Japanese education is very conscious of the role of culture in their society. Teachers and students are aware of this, and that is why ELT activities reflect the cultural concern that characterises the communicative approach. English learning is seen as a way of modernization, in relation to the opening of their borders, so Japanese people can make informational exchanges thanks to the capacity of communicating in English, the passport language. Development of the four skills (writing, reading, listening and speaking) are included in the *National Curriculum Standards* for *Foreign Language* and *Foreign Language Activities*	Japan has recently opened its borders to the influence of the societies around. If citizens learn English in order to communicate and be proficient enough, Japanese society could expand, sharing their strengths and learning of other cultures. Combining the possibilities of the communicative approach with those that ICTs can offer, Japan could create very interesting programs according to their advanced development of technologies. There are lots of teachers that have not tried yet to implement any methodology under the communicative approach, so there are still lots of opportunities for them to find a method or practice that they could adopt to their teaching style. Learning through this type of approach, focused on developing the communicative competence,	**Opportunities**

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	subjects. This reflects a need to work on communication in all its levels, trying to fully develop communicative competence. The communicative methods are gaining relevance and interest between educators, which influences an increase of their practices in the Japanese classrooms.	attached to meaning and interaction between the parts, students are more prepared for the real world. Real communication in a foreign language can be achieved while learning communicatively.	
Weaknesses	National policies are not concrete enough, so they mention some aspects that could be related with the communicative approach, but teachers are free to interpret the standards in their own way. The *Course of Study* does not mention any recommended method that could lead to a communicative learning. Teachers are not proficient enough to teach according to the communicative approach. They feel insecure because of a lack of formation under its methodologies and for not being sufficiently competent to communicate in English. University teacher training courses should improve so future teachers could increase the quality of ELT. There exists also a misinformation or misinterpretation of the concepts and characteristics of the communicative approach, believing that it consists of teaching only by speaking or orally interacting. Communication also implies writing and reading skills, as the curriculum tries to show, and this is something that maybe is not clear for Japanese ELT teachers. Communicative activities should include practice in the four language skills.	If the *Course of Study* does not give specific materials for teaching in a communicative way, many teachers will not know how to prepare them or will not have enough time to do it. If the communicative approach is not taught in universities, teachers could feel lost and insecure due to their lack of knowledge about this approach. Sociocultural context in Japan limits interactions between students and teachers, existing a register and a selection of content that will not be shared. As it is an approach from western countries, the different society and culture could mismatch. Usually, people in Japan do not share thoughts or emotions openly, so those activities that imply opinion sharing are very difficult to implement. Education in Japan remains teacher-centred. If this tendency does not change to a learner-centred practice, the roles of the teacher and students will never be followed, imposibiliting two of the main principles of the communicative approach.	**Threats**

	The class sizes and the limited time settled for English classes make monitoring their learning process difficult, so learners' needs do not receive the necessary attention. Students feel anxious when they try to produce in a foreign language, because of their proficiency level on English language, because of social conventions, or just because of their personality. This challenges the good practices of the communicative approach, as if students do not try to produce they cannot improve or develop the communicative competence at all. From this point of view, the communicative methods could be intrusive. Learners try to avoid producing due to their insecurity communicating in English, so they focus on the outcomes of the task or activity, in order to complete it, but not paying attention to the use of language. University entrance examinations limit a lot the grammar and vocabulary the students should learn in order to pass it. Learners' minds are structured in order to pass those exams, so they are not interested in communicating, but learning about the language. That is why this approach gets into conflict with the actual purposes of ELT in the classrooms.	English teaching in Japanese continues as the usual practice to explain grammar or even the activities. This creates a conflict with the principles of the communicative approach, as it recommends to use the L2 as much as possible, limiting the use of L1 only when meaning comprehension is problematic. There is still a tendency to use the Grammar-Translation method, which confronts the principles of the communicative approach. Teachers should leave these practices so they can implement communicative methods without conflicts; or maybe they could make an analysis about the advantages of the first method and try to find them a place under the communicative approach principles. This leads to a focus on form, instead of a focus on forms, fostered by the communicative approach.	

The results for Spain are based on Taourite and Ruiz (2020), Méndez (2012), Durán-Martinez and Beltrán-Llavador (2014), Halbach and Fernández-Fernández (2011), and Roothooft (2017).

Table 12. SWOT analysis of communicative approach for ELT in Spain

Communicative approach for ELT in Spain		
Strengths	Spanish curriculum is very specific about communicative practices and focuses on developing the communicative competence in almost every section (objectives, methodological orientation, contents and evaluation standards). The principles and characteristics are reflected on the documents, supported too by the references to the CEFR. CEFR describes all the elements that should be taken into account for language learning (for the European context). It is structured according to the communicative principles, so this document serves as a guide for teachers and students to comprehend their purposes as active elements while teaching and learning communicatively. To develop communicative competence, four language skills are reflected on the curriculum, being all of them tangibly evaluable. Teachers design their classes in order to improve the students' capacities in all of them, choosing the best methods and activities to do so.	Students may feel motivated because of the activities, tasks or projects that are presented, but also because they can be conscious of their improvement, appreciating the changes in their use and comprehension of language. The communicative activities and tasks can include use of games, stories, ICTs, songs, and many more materials. Teachers in Spain have these possibilities in mind, so, if they can invest time and effort, these are really motivational tools to create interaction opportunities. Recommended materials can be used, mixed, adapted and completed in order to attend to every student's needs, and also creating favourable situations for a concrete context (different classrooms). Different kinds of grouping are appreciated in class. This permits the learners so many opportunities to start a communication process, varying the challenge depending on the tasks or activities. It	**Opportunities**

	Teachers focus on input and interaction in English by establishing real and meaningful communication through active participation. Group work is motivational as they are learning together, completing tasks, carrying out projects or playing or singing. Communicative methods, such as CLIL, help the students to acquire high-level thinking cognition, thanks to the incorporation of critical thinking to the class dynamics. The students are conscious of their learning process, but also social processes are established, with the incorporation of cultural issues to ELT.	could be also combined with the whole class in order to vary, offer different opportunities of interaction, and as an adaptation to those who cannot work in groups or pairs (because of their cognitive development). Teachers want their students to learn a language in a different way of how they were taught. They believe in the possibilities of innovative and communicative methods, leaving the traditional approaches behind. This approach permits teachers to improve too, developing their professional capacities and attitudes.	
Weaknesses	Proposed materials, especially textbooks are not completely prepared to teach under the communicative approach. These materials are not usually suitable for teaching specific purposes, and should be adaptable to the context, offering collaborative projects independently of geographical boundaries. Assessment may be difficult as the teachers must pay attention to lots of productions and interactions in order to evaluate students' progressive learning. The assessment tools are difficult to create according to the different contexts and the focus of each lesson. Grouping work is not always effective. It depends on the dynamics the students are used to and their age, because if they are too little, their mind is not ready to work effectively and learn from the process and by analysing it.	There exists a misinterpretation in relation with the use of the mother tongue, as teachers believe that it is forbidden, and productions should be carried out only using the target language. But it is proved that the use of the L1 reinforces the acquisition of the L2, by clarifying meaning and scaffolding. The exigency that requires to prepare lessons, being aware of the communicative principles and using the better materials to do so, can be really tiring, and that is why teachers can suffer from burn-out. Teachers may not feel support from the administration as they do not receive any	**Threats**

	The size of the classes makes it difficult to attend all the students' needs and implement group dynamics. Lack of support from the administration, either in order to provide good materials or to offer training programs to secure capacities. Getting into CLIL or bilingual programs, teachers may not be proficient enough to teach content through the target language; or on the contrary, classroom teachers with a certain level of proficiency in English are not capable of teaching the language (Literacy subject). For example, in order to teach Science in a communicative way, it is needed to look for diverse materials that could also help with target language acquisition, designing lessons taking both objectives into account (Science content and English use). Teaching only using the target language under the CLIL methodology implies also a deep negative aspect: Students learn the concepts in English, but they do not know them in Spanish. Some teachers are still unsure about using communicative methodologies, as they do not feel comfortable or they are not confident about the results.	compensation (not only speaking about a monetary one). If any student does not get into the communicative dynamics, either because of his or her personality, individual needs, interest on English language, capacities for language learning, or just because he or she has arrived late to school, it could be really difficult to incorporate him or her to the normal class' pace. If teachers do not receive appropriate methodological and linguistic training, the possibilities, communicative methods could be misinterpreted and lead them to wrong conceptions according to their implementations. Self-reflection on their own practices is essential to teach correctly in line with the communicative principles.	