

原著論文

ポスト・メソッド時代のポスト・コミュニケーションティブアプローチ —沖縄、日本における外国語としての英語の授業への示唆—

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Post-Communicative Approach in the Post-Method Era: Implications for English as a Foreign Language Classrooms in Okinawa and in Japan

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要 旨

本論考は、近年の英語教育の効果を高めようとする取り組みについて、一般的な政策的な側面、そして教員と生徒の視点から描写する。本稿は、国際語としての英語、言語教授法、日本の英語教育についてのこれまでの大きな流れを文献により分析し、まとめた。まず、日本の文脈での言語指導法の歴史と、近年の教育政策の改革について概観する。特に、コミュニケーションティブコンペテンスと、コミュニケーションティブな言語教授法 (Communicative Language Teaching) の理論的な背景に焦点を当てる。そして、現在の中学校、高等学校のカリキュラムと教育政策を分析し、ポストメソッドの言語教育アプローチの視点から、言語教授法の新しい方向性にかかわる問題を提示する。実際の教育現場と政策の間にあるギャップを小さくするために、日本の教育現場でCLT (Communicative Language Teaching) の導入に対する問題や障壁を論じる。将来的にCLTの限界点を乗り越えることも見据え、ポストメソッドやポストコミュニケーションティブアプローチという視点を日本の文脈から提示する。今後の研究に向けて、沖縄という特殊な場所ならではの問題についても触れる。

キーワード：英語教育、CLT (コミュニケーションティブ・ランゲージ・ティーチング)、カリキュラム、ポストメソッドアプローチ、ポストコミュニケーションティブアプローチ、国際語としての英語

Abstract

This paper describes Japan's most recent attempts to improve English teaching and learning at all levels of the education system both for students and teachers as well as for the public in general. I first review the history of language teaching methods in Japanese contexts as well as the recent changes in educational policies in Japan. This paper is based on a meta-analysis of existing literature on a wide range of subjects, including: English as an international language, teaching methodology, and English language education in Japan. I focus on theoretical backgrounds of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the concept of communicative competence. I then analyze current educational policies of the teaching curriculum for junior and senior high schools in Japan and some issues around new directions of teaching methodologies with a lens of “post-method” language teaching approach. As a possible solution to narrow the gap between policy and reality, I explore issues and obstacles incorporating CLT in Japanese contexts. The article suggests future challenges, including overcoming the limitations of

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communicative language teaching through perspectives of post-method and post-communicative approaches in language teaching in Japanese contexts. In conclusion, I further discuss context-specific issues in Okinawa for future research.

Keywords: English language education (ELT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), national curriculum, post-method approach, post-communicative approach, English as an international language

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“Students want to broaden their horizons through English, but what they are actually doing is studying for tests.”

(Wakabayashi, Chuo University online, 2020)

“I feel pressured to study English. Although I like learning English, [sic] too many tests and I had to study it for exams. It puts pressure on students.”

(Anonymous, student’s feedback, 2021)

1. Introduction

1.1. English in Japan, English in Okinawa

As globalization advances, an expanding circle of countries like Japan are placing increased emphasis on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) (Kachru, 1986). With the 2020 Olympics held in Tokyo, the needs for English language education seem to increase. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has continued its efforts to make English classes, as the nation’s default foreign language in compulsory education, more communicative. The last two years of the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting advance of technology seem to have accelerated the need for English as a “tool of communication” even in a virtual world, especially for young generations. This emphasis is linked to a common belief that English proficiency is essential for global communication in business, tourism, information technology, and other domains. As the first quote indicates, English

is often perceived as enabling communication with people around the world relying on the assumption that people in many areas of the world use English to communicate. Yet, the same quote also indicates a need for the means of assessment to match the learners’ reasons for studying English in Japan. It casts doubt on the common assumption that English is an essential tool for global communication (see also Kubota & McKay, 2009).

In Okinawa, the situation around ELT is different from that of mainland Japan. Due to Okinawa’s historical relationships and the politics of Japan and America, English serves different roles in Okinawa than it does in mainland Japan (Higa, 2017; Jacobson, 2003; Shibata, 2013). Modern ELT in Okinawa developed during the American military occupation (1945-1972) as a part of American military and political policy, and it continues to be greatly influenced by the United States and American English. As Jacobson (2003) noted, because of Okinawa’s experience as an independent kingdom (the Ryukyu Kingdom) and contact with mainland Japan and America, as well as its historical connections with other countries including China, “Okinawans are considered by many to be more comfortable around foreigners and more cosmopolitan than other Japanese” (p. 320). Under the American occupation, English, or more precisely, American English, became an important means of obtaining employment and social mobility because military government-related work was the mainstay of the war-decimated economy. Local Japanese nationals have been hired on military bases in fields such as construction, trading, restaurants, and house-keeping services to make their living.

It was reported that some Okinawan teachers had a negative view of English education during 1964-1970: because of the desire to become Japanese citizens again, speaking Standard Japanese was the

priority with the underlying “one-language-one-nation” ideology of nation building (Shibata, 2012; Heinrich, 2004). Since its reversion to Japan in 1972, Okinawa has remained under a strong American influence, including in education. One statistic from a local newspaper, for instance, revealed that in 2020, about 8557 people were hired for jobs on American bases (Ryukyu Shimpo, 2020). Different historical, political, and social developments have influenced the general attitudes of Okinawans toward English, and this has helped shape their identities and their attitudes toward English (Jacobson, 2003). Shibata (2012) adds to this argument suggesting that political and social situations in Okinawa influence both teachers’ and learners’ motivations, who are identified as “global citizens” and “Japanese” as well as “Okinawan” when they acquire and teach English. As languages are embedded in political and social contexts, it is crucial to localize ELT based on the realities of life in and around Okinawa.

1.2. Post-Method Era: Micro and Macro Strategies

As the first quote in this article demonstrates, students in Japan commonly feel pressured to acquire and learn English for exams. Although communicative language teaching (CLT) has been introduced in Japan, English is still taught using the grammar-translation method in Japanese middle schools and high schools (Rosenkjar, 2015; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011). As recent scholarship in TESOL (Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages) and language teaching suggest, the development of locally suitable and context-specific teaching methodology based on understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities in ELT is necessary. Although scholars argue for the importance of locally sensitive and context-specific approaches in teaching method in terms of theorization of language teaching methodology (e.g. Ellis, 1991; Kumaravadivelu, 2006), teacher and learner identities (Banegas et al., 2021; Miller & Kubota, 2013; Rudolph, 2018), and language policy and ideology (Kubota, 1998; Pennycook, 2010), little of the literature on these topics focuses on the context of Okinawa or on Japan.

One example of these arguments is the idea of post-method pedagogy that was initially put forward by Kumaravadivelu in 1996 (Kumaravadivelu,

2006). It emerged in response to the demand for an optimal way of teaching English that was free from the method-based restrictions. Kumaravadivelu viewed post-method pedagogy as a three dimensional system with three pedagogic parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility, and he proposed micro and macro-strategies for EFL classrooms (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The parameter of particularity requires that any language pedagogy must be “sensitive to a particular group of teachers and a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, pp. 33-34). The parameter of practicality refers to the relationship between theory and practice and the practice of classroom teaching. The parameter of possibility mainly comes from the educational philosophy of the Brazilian critical pedagogists, Paulo Freire. He and his fellow researchers point out that any pedagogy is closely connected with power and dominance and is implemented to create and sustain social inequalities. Thus, teachers and educators have a possibility to create, sustain or change social inequalities in the classroom.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), the post-method strategic framework for language teaching consists of macro-strategies and micro-strategies (see Figure 1). He further defines macro-strategies as guiding principles derived from historical, theoretical, empirical, and experiential insights related to L2 learning and teaching. A macro-strategy is a broad guideline, such as a national curriculum or the Course of Study in the case of Japan, that leads teachers to generate their own location-specific, need-based micro-strategies or classroom procedures (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Kudera & Nishiguchi, 2019). In teacher training course, it is important for educators to be aware of both macro and micro strategies. Based on this understanding of “post-method” approach in language education, I use the term pedagogy in a broad sense to include not only issues pertaining to classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation measures, but also a wide range of historical, political, and sociocultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence L2 education.

Figure 1.
Macro- and Micro-strategies

Macrostrategies	Microstrategies
-principles derived from historical, theoretical, empirical, and experiential insights -a broad guideline leading teachers	-location-specific, need-based strategies -classroom procedures

Considering the different political, social, and historical implications for ELT, the purpose of this article is to identify context-specific problems and issues that might present challenges for teachers and students of ELT in Okinawa and in Japan in general. In particular, I review the literature on language teaching methodology, including CLT¹ and the recent theoretical development of the post-communicative approach. By reviewing the history of ELT methods used in Japanese contexts, I aim to identify the gap between the reality of ELT in Okinawa and the national teaching curriculum known as *gakushū-shidō-yōryō*² [Henceforth, the Course of Study]. The following research questions will be discussed throughout the article.

1.3. Research Questions

Specifically, I sought to answer the following three questions:

- (1) How did the development of global teaching methodologies influence the principles underlying the national curriculum and Course of Study in Japan?
- (2) What are possible obstacles and issues teachers face when implementing teaching methodologies in local contexts in Okinawa and in Japan?
- (3) What questions and issues should local language teachers consider when teaching English in Okinawa?

2. Methodology

This paper is based on a meta-analysis of existing literature on a wide range of subjects, including:

English as an international language, teaching methodology, teacher training, globalization, and English language education in Japan. In an attempt to help language teachers build understanding, I first review educational reforms and changes regarding English teaching in Japan and describe Japan's most recent attempts to improve English teaching and learning at all levels of the education system, both for students and teachers as well as for the public in general. To answer Research Questions 1 and 3, I first review the literature on ELT and the history of language teaching methods used in Japanese and Okinawan contexts. Secondly, to answer Research Question 2, I review the literature focusing on CLT in Japanese contexts and discuss potential reasons that this teaching method has been implemented with limited success (e.g. Abe, 2013; Nishino, 2008; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). Finally, by employing theories of the post-method approach in language classrooms, I aim to suggest possible ways to integrate four skills in language classrooms. I further analyze the national curriculum, comparing current issues around CLT and further approaches of the English language education in Japan. I conclude this article with further discussion of issues related to specific local contexts in Okinawa as they relate to ELT.

3. Discussion

3.1. History of English Teaching Methods in Japan and in Okinawa

"In 2015, Japanese students' average total score on the TOEFL iBT was 71, the second lowest in Asia. The People's Democratic Republic of Lao ranked lowest at 66, while Singapore ranked

¹ I particularly focus on the concept of "communicative competence," drawing from the model of Canale (1983) (see more in Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). Hymes (1972) proposed communicative competence, adding social aspects of language learning to "linguistic competence" initially proposed by Chomsky.

² The Course of Study are the official teaching guidelines released by MEXT approximately every 10 years.

highest at 97” (Education Testing Service, 2016, as cited in Morita, 2017).

English education has been practically compulsory for 6 years in Japanese middle schools and high schools. Later, it became obligatory in elementary schools for fifth and sixth graders from 2011 onwards. In 2020, with the renewal of the teaching guidelines in the Course of Study, English became compulsory beginning in the third grade of elementary school, and English became an official subject for fifth and sixth graders in elementary schools (for more information, see e.g., Tokeshi, 2020). The new Course of Study recommends teachers in both junior high school and senior high schools to conduct English lessons in English. In Japan, young people who attend university receive a few more years of English language education.

The fact that Japan ranks low in TOEFL iBT average scores, despite all the years spent in English classes, English language education may not have been as effective as it could be (see e.g. Abe, 2013; Nishino, 2008; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008 for possible reasons for this). Some scholars argue that the continued use of the traditional grammar-translation method has been a contributing factor, especially in Japanese middle schools and high schools (Rosenkjar, 2015; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011). In this method, the main class activity involves translating English texts into Japanese. The teacher provides explanations on English grammar in Japanese, and students are required to laboriously translate English texts, word-by-word, into Japanese. These classes are extremely teacher-centered and focus on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student (see more in Rosenkjar, 2015).

This method originated in the second half of the 19th century, during the Meiji Era, when Japan wanted to acquire knowledge and practices from the West for its development. One way to achieve such acquisition was by reading English documents and translating them into Japanese. During the Meiji Era, the use of methods such as *Kaidoku* [question and answer learning community] and *Yakudoku* [read and translate] in learning Dutch provided an antecedent model of foreign language instruction that could be quickly and effectively adapted for teaching English (Shimizu, 2010, p. 9). Thus, when Japanese teachers taught English to Japanese

students using this traditional method, little attention was paid to pronunciation and, instead, focus was placed on the reading of English words and on reading comprehension. Although outdated and criticized, traditional grammar-translation seems to be still widely used in schools and universities, to the neglect of the development of communicative competences, intercultural awareness, and global perspectives (Whitsed & Wright, 2011).

A major turning point of ELT in Japan came with the end of the World War II. In 1945, after Japan’s defeat, and with the American occupation, the practical value of English increased, and English became extremely popular once more. English education drastically changed after the war, becoming a compulsory part of the curriculum. In middle schools, English was an elective course, but for all practical purposes, it was required, as entrance examinations for higher education required skills in English (for more comprehensive history of this period, see Shimizu, 2010). In addition, the Audio-Lingual Method and Oral Approach, introduced by Harold E. Palmer and C.C. Fries to Japanese teachers of English before and after World War II, played an important role in the development of methodologies focusing on mastering structures of languages through activities such as pattern practices (Imura, 2003 for more comprehensive history of methodologies adopted in Japanese contexts). Both the Audio-Lingual Method and Oral Approach spread among Japanese teachers of English after World War II. This era was the beginning of English as a school subject required to pass entrance examinations (Shimizu, 2010).

Okinawa, unlike the other prefectures in Japan, remained under the control of the United States until its reversion to Japan in 1972 (see also e.g. Kerr, 2000), and English—or more precisely, American English—became an important factor in obtaining employment and social mobility in Okinawa. In 1946, English education in Okinawa began in the first grade of elementary school (Higa, 2017; Shimoji, 2001). English was a mandatory subject in elementary schools, with 1 credit given to 1st to 4th graders, 2 credits for 5th and 6th graders and 3 credits for 7th and 8th graders in Okinawa (Yamauchi, 1995). The importance of ELT was made apparent locally when Okinawans who could speak English

were recruited from the civilian relocation camps to serve the interests of the U.S. military. The pervasive American presence in Okinawa, still evident in the present, has made ELT in Okinawa different from the rest of Japan: the ability to communicate in English meant work, and large numbers of laborers and aspiring professionals learned enough English to at least ensure their livelihood and, in some cases, even to prosper (see also Johnson, 2019 for ethnography regarding influences of the American military bases in Okinawa).

3.2. Communicative Competence and CLT

Knowledge of how second languages (L2) are learned and taught has expanded over the past five decades globally. The interdisciplinary nature of applied linguistics resulted in the development of different teaching methodologies for L2 learning in general. Research findings from a variety of disciplines, mainly those of linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics, have better established the complex nature of language learning: It has become clear that linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural factors interact and play a part in this process (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Reviews of past and current approaches to language learning often divide its history under three central theoretical positions: the environmentalist, the innatist, and the interactionist views of language learning (e.g., Brown, 2000; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Analyses of these three approaches have provided insight into how the view of learning a language has changed over the past five decades and how this view has affected language teaching. These findings have also shown that communication is crucial in the process of learning a language and that the degree of success achieved in this process depends to a great extent on how meaning is negotiated in particular acts of communication. As a result of the interactionist view of language learning, research highlights the importance of using language for communication purposes. Accordingly, principles underlying CLT gradually emerged in Europe in the 1970s in response to the increased demand for communicative competence due to the increase of social mobility among/from different nations in/to Europe. Applied

linguists such as Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson argued the need of communication skills in language education in Europe to match the social reality of linguistic diversity within and from outside Europe (see more in Sato & Kumagai, 2019).

On the other hand, in the U.S, the concept of communicative competence, initially introduced by Hymes (1972), has had a major impact on language teaching; the concept originated in the United States of America and Europe and then spread to all parts of the world. It has contributed to the reformulation of the aims and content of L2 pedagogy. Prior to the 1970s, the dominant methods (the grammar-translation method, the audiolingual method, the oral-situational method, etc.) emphasized the importance of formal linguistic knowledge, either as explicit rules or as habits that led to grammatically correct linguistic behavior. The content of language courses based on these methods was stated primarily in terms of the structural rules, which the learner had to master. With the emergence of the theory of communicative competence and the following adoptions in the field of L2 learning, a language teaching approach based on language “functions” and “situations” has been developed (e.g. Krash, 1986). This view of language learning explains the emergence over the last few decades of communicative approaches to language in which the main goal is to develop learners’ communicative competence in language classrooms (Hymes, 1972). Brown (2000), for instance, wrote about the goals of CLT, emphasizing communication beyond traditional classroom teaching procedures.

Beyond grammatical and discourse elements in communication, we are probing the nature of *social, cultural, and pragmatic features* of language. We are exploring pedagogical means for “*real-life*” communication in the classroom. We are trying to get our learners to *develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy* that so consumed our historical journey. We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance “out there” when they leave the womb of our classrooms. We are concerned with how to facilitate lifelong language learning among our students. (Brown, 2000, p. 42, emphasis added by the author)

This quote suggests that CLT emphasizes

communication beyond classrooms to practical situations to facilitate lifelong language learning. However, the implementation of a communicative approach is not a simple task. In fact, it presents a challenge to the teaching profession in different cultural and social contexts (e.g. Moore & Lamie, 1992; Nowlan & Samuella, 2020) since it requires a full understanding of what is involved in the L2 learning process. Especially, if “real-life” communication might not be relevant in an EFL country such as Japan, it is crucial to contextualize and localize teaching approach (Kubota & McKay, 2009) by revisiting the concepts such as communicative competence and CLT. The mere adoption of CLT into any cultural, social contexts without articulating differences between cultural, social and linguistic reality does not solve context specific issues.

3.3. CLT in Japan and in Okinawa

As Shimizu (2010) summarizes, the history of ELT in Japan tends to be the history of adopting language teaching methodologies and approaches from North American or European contexts. ELT in Japan has also been influenced by CLT as a general approach and communicative competence as a focus of ELT. Developing communicative competence, using CLT as a main teaching method, has been a long-standing goal of English education in Japan since the 1980s. For instance, in 2002, MEXT announced its proposal *Eigo ga Tsukaeru Nihonjin no Ikusei no Tamen no Senryaku Kōsō*³, a plan for developing communicative competence in English (MEXT, 2002). In the following year, the plan was put into action. The plan aims to produce positive results in English education by providing schools with resources within the limits of the official curriculum guidelines with new goals set for English language education. The new goals included principles that (1) English to be primarily taught in English, (2) to improve the teaching skills of teachers, and (3) support English

education at elementary schools (Shimizu, 2010).

MEXT revised the Course of Study in 2018, stating three main goals of foreign language as a subject. By foreign language, it usually means de facto, English. For instance, for senior high school education, MEXT designated as EFL a subject that should be taught at school and laid out goals for students to:

- (1) To deepen their understandings of phonology, vocabulary, expressions, grammar, and language functions and to acquire skills to apply these aspects of knowledge when they communicate (listening, reading, speaking and writing) based on the situations, purposes and contexts.⁴
- (2) To acquire skills to understand summaries, main points and/or details of given information, and/or meanings conveyed by interlocutors and to acquire skills to communicate in a foreign language, according to contexts, purposes and situations of communication.⁵
- (3) To deepen understanding on cultures as a background of a foreign language, and to nurture attitudes towards active, independent communication with a careful consideration for listeners, readers, speakers and writers, in a foreign language⁶

(MEXT, 2018, own translation)

As stated in these goals, “communication” repeatedly appears as a keyword in the teaching guidelines for junior and senior high schools in Japan. This is the result of the influence of CLT on national teaching guidelines for the English language. Furthermore, as Wada (2017, p. 159) summarizes, since their reform in 1989, fostering communicative competence has become one of the national guideline’s main goals. The recent change to emphasize “functions and situations of language”⁷ in textbooks was also influenced by CLT

³ 英語が使える日本人の育成のための戦略構想

⁴ 外国語の音声や語彙、表現、文法、言語の働きなどの理解を深めるとともに、これらの知識を、聞くこと、読むこと、話すこと、書くことによる実際のコミュニケーションにおいて、目的や場面、状況などに応じて適切に活用できる技能を身に付けるようにする。

⁵ コミュニケーションを行う目的や場面、状況などに応じて、日常的な話題や社会的な話題について、外国語で情報や考えなどの概要や要点、詳細、話し手や書き手の意図などを的確に理解したり、これらを活用して適切に表現したり伝え合ったりすることができる力を養う。

⁶ 外国語の背景にある文化に対する理解を深め、聞き手、読み手、話し手、書き手に配慮しながら、主体的、自律的に外国語を用いてコミュニケーションを図ろうとする態度を養う。

⁷ 言語の働きと使用場面

(Wada, 2017). In the certified textbooks used in junior and senior high schools, the number of dialogs and activities focusing on communication has increased compared to the past. Consequently, principles underlying the English language lessons have shifted toward a learner-centered approach favoring CLT.

In Japan, there have been efforts to introduce communication-based approaches since the 1980s, but with limited success in reality for different reasons (e.g. Abe, 2013; Nishio, 20008; Nishio & Watanabe, 2008). Although motivation to speak and communicate in English in classrooms might be high among students, the teachers lack confidence when it comes to actually using English in front of their students (Abe, 2013; Moore & Lamie, 1992). One solution would be for potential English teachers to spend a year of their training in an English-speaking country. In addition, many Japanese teachers spend only 2 weeks or a month on a teaching practicum in a 2- or 4-year teacher training course (depending on whether the training occurs in junior college or university), and they generally cling to the methods by which they themselves were taught and are reluctant to change the methodological status quo (Moore & Lamie, 1992). When trainee teachers go into schools, they are taken under the wing of one of the resident teachers (usually the most experienced, i.e., the oldest) and they are taught to teach exactly like that teacher.

The limited success of CLT in Japanese contexts is also due to its nature of student-centered learning, which is sometimes difficult for Japanese learners. As Abe (2013) states “Japanese students find it difficult to accept the individualism and freedom derived from Western values” (p. 51). Since CLT puts the focus on learner-centered instruction such as group activities and individual development, discussions and presentations are often incorporated. This could be problematic and difficult to adapt for Japanese contexts. Although teachers agree that students will improve their speaking abilities with more opportunities, the task of speaking can be stressful for students. Tanaka (2009) also discusses the difficulty of applying CLT in East Asia (e.g., Japan and South Korea), referring to the traditional

role of the teacher. She suggests that in Asian educational settings, the teacher is often viewed as an “authoritative expert,” whereas CLT positions the teacher as more of a “facilitator” (Tanaka, 2009, p. 112). This change to traditional classroom dynamics also extends to the students’ role in CLT classes. Therefore, in CLT, teachers need to adapt their ways of teaching to Japanese students and explain the effectiveness of group work (Abe, 2013).

Another reason for CLT’s limited success in Japan is the impact of the English portion of university entrance examinations, negatively affecting student’s motivation for learning English, as it continues to test mainly knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (Morita, 2017). The responsibility of preparing students for the grammar-intensive examinations might contribute to some teachers’ reluctance to change from “L1-based, teacher-centered instruction to student-centered CLT styles” (Otani, 2013, p. 289). As a result, no matter how much the educational authorities emphasize the importance of communication-based methods, teachers and students who are focused on university entrance examinations may continue to rely on grammar-translation methods (Moore & Lamie, 1992; Rosenkjar, 2015). The college entrance exam was reformed in 2021, and the future of language teaching methods in Japanese contexts may depend on the changes made to that assessment.

As a prefecture of Japan, ELT in Okinawa also follows the goals set in the Course of Study. In Okinawa, there is a scarcity in research focusing on the CLT approach and its practical implications in language classrooms. In 2021, the Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education published “Prefectural Plan to Improve English Language Education in Okinawa” (Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education, 2021). The report shows that due to the lack of lesson/unit plans based on specific goals,⁸ teachers tend to focus primarily on transmitting the contents of textbooks to students and as a result, students do not have enough time to engage in communicative activities. The report indicates that students in Okinawa spend an average of 6.7% less time on communicative activities in English

⁸ The Course of Study requires English teachers to have a “CAN-DO list” as a goal of each unit/lesson. This is based on CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) (Tono, 2013).

classrooms than do students in all other prefectures in Japan (Okinawa Board of Education, 2021). It also states that students in Okinawa seem to be reluctant to engage in output activities such as writing and speaking in English, as shown in the result of the national academic achievement tests (Okinawa Board of Education, 2021). The report suggests that the low achievement in English among students in Okinawa is related to the lack of goal-oriented lesson plans and the lack of communicative activities in classrooms. The underlying assumption of this report is that English classrooms should be “communicative” based on the principles of CLT and the recent suggestions from the Course of Study. Okinawa has repeatedly ranked lower than average for Japan in educational achievement, not only in English but also in other subjects (Fujiwara, 1995; Okinawa Prefecture, 2019). Due to the highly centralized educational systems in Japan, prefectural boards of education tend to look for solutions to close the gap by matching the requirements of the Course of Study.

3.4. Post-Communicative Approach in Post-Method Era

The recent suggestions from the Course of Study, involving “thinking⁹,” “judging” and “expressing” as measures of assessment in English as a school subject could be analyzed through a lens of post-communicative approach proposed in Sato (2019). Kudara and Nishiguchi (2019) analyzed the educational philosophy behind CLT, implying a radical change in teachers’ and learners’ positions in the classroom. By employing principles of CLT, such as the democratization of education, teachers can take initiatives in planning and practicing education in the classroom. According to Aoki (1991), CLT was developed in European contexts based on the educational philosophy of Paolo Freire (1970), student centered approach of Carl Rogers (1969), and Hopper’s (1981) social philosophy. The principle of democratization of education views that both teachers and students have the responsibility and freedom to plan, learn and practice education. Before the emergence of CLT, pedagogies and teaching methodologies were based on the teacher-centered

idea, viewing learners as “passive” subjects who are supposed to absorb “knowledge” given by teachers (Kudara & Nishiguchi, 2019, p. 35).

In current teacher training at in-service days, the principles behind CLT encourage setting a goal for students to be members of a target L2 community (e.g. assumed community of native speakers of English, usually “Standard” English speakers’ communities). However, in the post-method and post-communicative approaches in English language education, one of the goals is to allow students and learners to think critically about these aims. Students will be asked to critically engage in ideologies behind these goals. In the post-method and post-communicative approaches, the goal is not only to focus on practical aspects of language but also to provide a space for learners to crucially analyze current situations and strategies to communicate with each other to achieve these aims. The goal is not to “master” a new language, but to “add” to learners’ existing linguistic repertoire as based on CEFR’s principles of plurilingualism. As Canagarajah, (2011) suggested, the goal of language education is to raise metalinguistic awareness and increase learners’ sensitivity in interactions with diverse communities, not only native speaker communities but also local, and diverse communities and speakers of Englishes from different communities.

4. Conclusion: Implications for EFL classrooms

In this article, I intended to answer the following three questions:

- (1) How did the theoretical development of teaching methodologies influence the principles underlying the national curriculum and the Course of Study in Japan?
- (2) What are possible obstacles/issues when teachers implement teaching methodologies in local contexts?
- (3) What are questions and issues for local language teachers to consider to teach English in Okinawa?

Bearing in mind that not every lesson can be

⁹「思考・判断・表現」の観点とは、それぞれの教科の知識や技能を活用して課題を解決すること等のために必要な思考力・判断力・表現力等を児童生徒が身に付けているかどうかを評価するものとして設定されている（MEXT, 2019）。

fully effective and not every class can be a perfect experience, these questions focus on teachers of English in local contexts and are embedded in intersections of macro-strategies of language policy (e.g. Course of Study, national curriculum) and micro-strategies in the classroom and beyond. In English language education in Japan, the Course of Study plays an important role in deciding the goals and direction of lessons. By analyzing the development of teaching methodologies and how they are applied in the Course of Study in Japan, we can understand some limitations of CLT in local contexts. I raised three main points related to problems with implementing CLT: teachers' lack of self-confidence in speaking English communicatively; cultural barriers regarding different roles of teachers in East Asian contexts; and the grammar-intensive nature of college entrance examinations in Japan. Although some research has been conducted in mainland Japan, there is a limited amount of research on CLT and its application in actual language classrooms in the Okinawan context. Future research should further investigate the historical development of language teaching methods in Okinawa, where the sociohistorical and sociopolitical situations are different from those of mainland Japan (Figure 2).

For instructors and students alike, there are some implications that can be applied in the classroom. Current and future teachers should understand that they do not need to rely only on methodologies but can be creative in teaching language skills. The most important accomplishment is probably motivating students to want to contribute and be involved in the classroom using a variety of

essential language skills, thereby increasing their English ability over time. Scholars have previously argued that students and teachers in Okinawa might have more opportunities to encounter "American" English, and hence, idealizing "American" English as an ideal model without critically understanding its implications on their language ideologies within and outside the classroom (Higa, 2017; Jacobson, 2003). Future research should investigate ways local teachers can create space for context-specific "particularity," "practicality" and "possibility" for language teaching¹⁰.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), the post-method condition enables practitioners (classroom teachers) to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice. The conventional method is based on a centralized top-down system of pedagogic decision making, while the post-method condition enables practitioners to produce local, specific, and novel practices. For classroom teachers who teach English in Okinawa and in Japan, it could be possible to discuss the issues related to diversity within English and resulting power relations in ELT with assistant language teachers (ALTs) and gradually introduce small elements of local aspects into their lessons. Making students aware of their local cultural, historical contexts could benefit both teachers and students. With a post-method lens in this teaching approach, both Japanese teachers of English and ALTs, who also know World Englishes spoken globally, can benefit from overcoming restrictions of "methods." By being critically aware of the lesson content, students will not only be able to avoid being confined to American English, but they will

Figure 2. Micro- Macro Strategies for ELT in Okinawa, Japan

Macrostrategies	Microstrategies
-principles derived from historical, cultural, sociopolitical contexts of the region	-location-specific needs for communications in the region.
-mediating national guidelines	-needs to develop measures to solve.
-incorporate skills to teach English aligning with the nature of entrance examination	(1) teachers' lack of self-confidence in speaking English,
	(2) possible cultural barriers regarding different roles of teachers

¹⁰ Higa (2017) proposes, for instance, using a local-oriented book called EAT OKINAWA which introduces Okinawan local vegetables, recipes and indicates where to source those vegetables in English class (Higa, 2017).

also grasp the concept of diversity within English. Learning diversity with pluralistic understanding of identities can foster a better understanding towards other cultures, people, and different values beyond language classroom. If Americanised/Westernised mindsets in education are prevented from dominating and instead diversity is embraced and encouraged through localizing and globalizing in ELT, students and their effect on society, not only in Okinawa but also around the world, could stand to benefit for themselves and others in the future.

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