The effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system in the acquisition of English in Primary school

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Abstract:

Research about the effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system for the acquisition of a second language is currently scarce. Moreover, education systems in Spain have not made significant changes from the traditional one functioning in Primary and Secondary schools. Therefore, this thesis aims at investigating the effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system for the acquisition of a second language in Primary School to analyze whether other systems and methodologies can assist in the learning of English. The experimental research consisted of a comparative study about the academic outcomes of students in two schools in Catalonia: one with a traditional system and one working with the Amara Berri's system. The exam chosen to analyze the students' academic performance in the areas of reading, listening, and writing was the Basic Competences exam of 2018-2019. The T-test revealed that students in a traditional system obtained higher marks than students in the Amara Berri's system in the listening and reading competences. Nonetheless, these results raised questions about the elements that could have influenced this outcome. Such questions were extensively discussed to find out which aspects are beneficial for students in the Amara Berri's system.

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1. Introduction

Research done about the effectiveness of Amara Berri's system indicates that it is a successful system because it has as its major quality the ability to increase students' intrinsic motivation, a factor which is known to heavily impact the students' learning process (Landa,2016). In addition to increasing students' motivation, this system offers an individualized coaching for students with different needs. In other words, Amara Berri prioritizes the learning styles and paces of students and promotes adaptation of materials for those learners who present difficulties, being internal or external.

Sauret (2016) conducted a study whereby she collected data through observation and interviews about the effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system of 4th grade students in a Public Primary school in Tacoronte (Canary Islands). Interviews were done to former students, parents from the AMPA association and teachers to know the degree of satisfaction learning with the Amara Berri's system in the field of Mathematics and Languages. The results obtained from the interviews to former students determined that Amara Berri had been an effective system not only for the students during their academic years, but also after they had reached adolescence and adulthood, when they could still recall the benefits they obtained from it such as the ease to work in groups, greater independence and organization skills. Moreover, Emilio Martín (2006), the school principal of the Public school Amara Berri in San Sebastian confirms that it has been proven that when students arrive at high school they do not perform lower than their peers and are better prepared in other aspects. Interviews done to parents also suggested that students were highly motivated and never opposed to the idea of going to school. However, both students and parents agree that there was a necessity for family support to keep track of the students' work pace and individual needs.

Regarding traditional methodologies for second language teaching, they can vary depending on the schools' preferences and teachers' styles of teaching. Nevertheless, the main characteristic found among traditional systems is that classrooms are teacher-led, that is, the teacher is the main source of knowledge. Students in traditional systems play a passive role in their learning processes because they wait for the teacher, the main authority in the classroom, to transmit knowledge to them (Chen, 1999). This teacher-led classroom environment is demonstrated not to work for all students, as Chen (1999) argues; "effective learning depends on the learners' constructing their own knowledge, not on knowledge recording or absorption" (p.70). Another characteristic found in traditional systems is that the grammar presented to students in the majority of coursebooks (reading and listening exercises) often does not correspond to the real-world language. For this reason, the samples of language to which students are exposed to and use are unrealistic, and this might be one of the reasons why students find it hard to communicate in English outside the classroom.

In the English language acquisition field, both systems have their advantages and disadvantages. Nonetheless, there is a large number of studies claiming a need for alternative approaches to the traditional methods of teaching an L2. For this reason, this study is focused on finding out whether Amara Berri, an alternative system, is effective for the acquisition of English in the context of Primary education.

1.1. Rationale for the study

Studies done about the effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system to learn English in Primary school has been focused on the study of the motivational and structural aspects that enhance the effectiveness of the system. However, little research has been done on

the academic outcome of students in this alternative methodology for the teaching of a second language in Primary school. For this reason, this thesis aims at investigating the academic effectiveness of Amara Berri's system in the acquisition of English in 6th grade students through an English Basic Competences test. This test is formed by two listening exercises, which form part of the oral comprehension competence, two reading comprehension exercises, and one writing task. In order to investigate the academic success of the mentioned system for English language learning, an independent T-Test was carried out to compare the results of the students in two schools, one with a traditional approach for English language teaching and one using the Amara Berri's system.

In the forthcoming sections the main characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of traditional methods and the Amara Berri's system for second language learning will be argued to have a clearer idea of the present perspectives about the effectiveness of these methods. The main objective of this thesis, however, is to investigate the academic effectiveness of the alternative system Amara Berri used in Mas Clariana, the only Public Primary school in Catalonia that uses this system.

1.2. Research questions and hypotheses

The following research questions were asked in this study: 1) Is the system, Amara Berri, more successful than the traditional approach to learning English in the Primary school context? 2) Which factors influence positively its effectiveness? To answer these questions, the paper is organized as follows; first, a brief review of the traditional approaches to teaching a second language will be done to analyze the advantages and disadvantages, and their effectiveness. Second, the origins, characteristics, organization, and values that support Amara Berri's system will be disclosed to have a clear idea of

how this system works. In addition, several studies about the Amara Berri's system will be reviewed to investigate the factors that make this system successful and the aspects that might be disadvantageous. Then, the methodology of the study will be presented; its characteristics, setting, participants, data collection instruments and procedure. After that, the results of the experimental research will be commented and discussed to answer the main research questions previously stated. Finally, the key findings and limitations will be summarized, and recommendations for future studies will be suggested.

According to the literature, there are many elements of the Amara Berri's system that enhance the acquisition of the English language (e.g. motivation, collaborative learning, etc.) In addition, insightful observations of this open system functioning during an internship in Mas Clariana were made, and conclusions were taken that the Amara Berri's system is successful and can perhaps be more effective than traditional systems for English learning. Therefore, the hypothesis (H1) for the first research question is that the Amara Berri's system is more successful than traditional methods for the acquisition of the English language. Once the first hypothesis is confirmed or rejected, the second research question will be answered by looking at the results of the three dimensions in the Basic Competences exam (reading, listening, and writing) of each group. In this way, conclusions can be taken about which factors could have influenced those results. Considering what the literature reveals, opportunities for communication, both orally and written in the L2 are higher in the Amara Berri's system, as it is student-centered, and learners are in constant interaction with the language through the activities and through communicating with the teacher and among each other. Also, as activities are contextualized and carry a real-life purpose, students are exposed to realistic and meaningful language constantly. Moreover, students are used to looking for the meaning

of words by themselves, creating their own vocabulary lists and, consequently, increasing their vocabulary repertoire. Therefore, learners in Mas Clariana school are expected to obtain higher results in the writing competence than learners in the school with a traditional system. For this reason, the hypothesis (H2) for the second research question is that one of the factors that makes the Amara Berri's system successful is the contextualized use of language through the activities.

2. Theoretical background

Having briefly mentioned studies supporting the effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system, the focus now is on connecting the research with own observations made about the system working, and on examining the academic outcomes through a comparative study about the results obtained from a traditional school with the results obtained from the alternative system Amara Berri of 6th grade students. Hence this study aims at filling in on the gap of experimental research about the academic effectiveness in English in the context of Primary education.

2.1. Context

The context of this thesis is the effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system for the English language acquisition in the Primary school context. Mas Clariana, the only Public school in Catalonia applying this system, is the school chosen for the analysis of the academic performance of its students in 6th grade. In the forthcoming sections, details about the characteristics of this system will be stated. It is worth mentioning that the main features of the system are universal to all schools. This means that the forthcoming observations

about the system working and the organizational structure of classes and time should be relatively equal in all schools using the Amara Berri's system.

2.1.1. Traditional methods for L2 teaching

In traditional methods to teaching a second language students are presented the content daily by the teacher through long expository narratives. Therefore, students in this traditional system act as passive figures who receive information and are always expected to be listening, taking notes, and always obeying the teacher's orders (Cuesta,2018). The role of the teacher, on the contrary, is not that of a monitor of the students learning process, but that of the authoritarian figure who transmits the knowledge. Another common characteristic in traditional schools is that students sit individually and arrangedin orderly rows. In this way, students are facing the teacher, who is usually found at the end corner of the classroom. Moreover, in traditional classrooms, the textbook or coursebook is the main tool for teachers to guide the students through the different units and for students to use in class or at home, to practice the content explained in class and to study. Regarding grammar books, there has been an increasing number of textbooks that seek for the best balance between grammatical content, culture, and vocabulary, listening, speaking and pronunciation exercises that help learners develop the competences in the language smoothly. Textbooks in general, however, often present language that does not correspond to the real-world language that native speakers use. Students, nonetheless, are expected to memorize and apply rules in the exercises they arepresented in the coursebooks, often forgetting the importance of oral communication fora deeper understanding of their use. As White (1988) claims about traditional teaching methods for L2 "there is no oral or pronunciation work, since it is the written language,

which is taught, and 'mental discipline' is stressed rather than any ability actually to use the language" (as cited in Boumová, 2018, p.14). In line with this, teachers and students often rely on translation into the learner's L1 to better understand concepts rather than trying to discover rules and building knowledge by using the L2. Therefore, the use and the opportunities for oral expression and comprehension in the L2 are drastically reduced. These characteristics can be observed, generally, in traditional schools regardless of the teaching approach or methodology used in the classroom (P.P.P, Direct instruction). Nowadays, however, more schools either following a traditional or alternative system, are implementing technology to enhance and assist the learning of a second language. Teachers have adopted a more innovative view for teaching aspects of the L2 in a more engaging way using more audiovisual materials, games, and encouraging students to use technology as a tool for language development. Additionally, the English language is now being used to teach more subjects in both traditional and alternative education systems. An example of this is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) which is a relatively new and innovative approach for teaching English. Thanks to this approach to teaching, students not only acquire knowledge in subjects such as Science, Mathematics or Geography, but they also acquire proficiency in the second language. In addition, new methods such as the 'Flipped classroom' method are being implemented as a new way of increasing students' independence in their learning progress.

2.1.1.1 Advantages

First, it is important to review the advantages of traditional approaches for L2 instruction to young learners observed by researchers. One of the most common characteristics among traditional systems, is the teacher-led classroom, and, although it is not considered

the most engaging strategy, it has its benefits. One of the benefits is that students are presented all the necessary content to learn the language before putting it into practice. In this way, they save time and can revise the lesson at home using the notes they took in class or using the course book. In addition, they can ask questions in class during or after the lesson to clarify any doubts they might have at that time. Regarding other advantages that teachers benefit from a teacher-centered class, they can control students' engagement in the class by calling the attention of those who are less attentive as well as maintaining the silence in class. One last advantage of a teacher-led class is that students are asked to work relatively at the same pace, so it will be easier for teachers and students to follow a specific schedule. Apart from these characteristics, in traditional systems it is common to see teachers speaking in the learners' L1 to teach a second language, especially in Primary schools. One of the advantages of translation mentioned by experts such as Xu (1993) is that "doing a little bit of translation and using students' native language in class, if appropriately, is both economic and effective in explaining a concept" (p.14). It seems reasonable to confirm that in the Primary school context where students are maximum 12 years old translation is a good tool to help learners understand explanations faster and more effectively. Another advantage about traditional methodologies for L2 teaching is the use of a course book to guide students through the lessons. Grammar books are an excellent tool for teachers and students, because both can benefit from them in many aspects. In terms of organization, both students and teachers will know exactly what lesson they are in and the aspects that they must learn. In consequence, students will save time because they do not need to look for extra information or material from external resources to practice and study, and teachers do not need to spend time creating their own materials. Moreover, following the structure of a course book will help students when

they arrive at High School because, normally, in higher education the system or methodology followed is also the traditional teacher-centered classroom. In line with this, Primary school students also benefit from this system because their understanding and knowledge of the L2 is measured via tests. In this way, learners are aware that they need to study in order to pass the tests, and they can also have a visual representation of the aspects that need improvement. Moreover, this summative assessment will also be used in their future academic years in High School.

2.1.1.2. Disadvantages

Traditional systems, as the terms themselves indicate, are those methodologies that emerged in the past and are still somehow present and applied in our current society. Our society, however, has evolved, and learners' differences, learning styles, and needs are nowadays being more considered in the classrooms, not only for language learning. Also, teachers are becoming more aware that, as the society changes, the approaches, and methods for teaching need as well modification for them to be suitable for all types of learners. However, this section is not aimed at criticizing traditional methodologies, but it is aimed at analyzing critically the aspects that are not beneficial for learners, especially for Primary school learners aged 11 to 12. For this reason, mentioning Xu (1993) seems appropriate to express that all methods are valid as long as they work for the students and the teacher: "Is not whether a method is good or not, but whether the teacher knows how, for what purpose, for what kind of students, and in what language situation a particular method is used to enhance learning effectively" (p.2).

Following the same order of appearance of characteristics in traditional schools, the first one mentioned in the previous section is that classrooms are teacher centered. In

teacher-led classrooms students tend to work and practice the grammar learned by themselves. This factor can hinder the learners' communication and social skills because they don't get the chance to work collaboratively nor to solve problems while communicating in the L2 (TheShareTeam, 2020). Also, with the technological advances that exist nowadays, students need more engaging and stimulating strategies to maintain their level of attention and motivation as high as possible. For this reason, a teacher-centered classroom environment is usually boring for students. One last important aspect that makes a teacher-centered classroom instruction not effective, especially for young learners, is that it does not allow students to express themselves and direct their own learning, that is, that students are responsible for their own learning progress and self-discovery. Students normally feel more motivated when they can measure their own learning progress and when they feel they have done their best independently to achieve their goals. In a teacher-centered classroom it is the teacher who is the judge and is the one who assesses the learning progress of students through progress or achievement tests. Thus, students' proficiency and skills are only measured through tests, giving less attention to their progress in the organization skills or social and communicative skills they show in class, that is, outside the official forms of summative assessment that the teacher might impose. As (Heath,2020) mentions, "traditionally, passing exams brought the confidence, but in the SL approach, exams may not carry the pressure they once did when you allow parts of the courses to be assessed via continuous assessment and decide or participate in their learning process" (p.1). Furthermore, as Ellis (2006) claims, there is evidence about the efficacy of explicit instruction in promoting L2 learning, yet it is not clear whether explicit knowledge transforms into implicit knowledge nor it contributes to the development of the L2. Another disadvantage is that traditional

systems, more so in the past, did not consider the need for adapted materials for the students who present learning difficulties or other external issues that hamper their learning progress. Lastly, as the main objective of learning a second language is to communicate effectively, students in traditional schools will struggle accomplishing that goal outside the classroom because they are not used to being in contact with real-world language. Contrarily, students in the Amara Berri's system are advantageous in that aspect due to their constant contact with natural language through the tasks they are required to carry out.

2.1.2. Amara Berri's system

The Amara Berri's school was created in 1979 in Donostia by Loli Anaut. However, the idea originated in 1972 as the Durango Project (1972), designed by a group of teachers willing to change the system and the concept of school. They tried to implement this proposal in a school in Biscay, but it was not until 1979 when Loli Anaut, currently considered the promoter of the Amara Berri's system, that it started to work and grow. There are currently 21 centers working with this system, some of them are found in Navarra, Zaragoza, the Canary Islands and in Catalonia (fun4us, 2017), where the school Mas Clariana is found. Initially, the Amara Berri's system was designed to be implemented in Preschool, but it was later on that this system was applied to Primary school. As Cuesta (2018) explains, in these centers students do not learn using mainly textbooks, but their learning takes place through real experiences. Therefore, learners perform tasks that carry a real and meaningful objective, and students must arrive at that final result using the resources and strategies they suit the best to their learning capacities. Moreover, children of different ages and levels are grouped in the classrooms for them to

learn from each other, work collaboratively, and to respect everyone's working and learning rhythms. The main objective of this system, As Cuesta (2018) perfectly summarizes is that "learning situations should be offered in the same way we face situations in real life" (p.16).

To better understand the concept of system, Loli Anaut (2004) offers a great definition in her book *Sobre el Sistema Amara Berri,* which is essential to have a grasp of the principles and values that support this system. To sum up the definition, the author defines 'system' as the consistent interaction of human, physical, educational, and organizational structures to create a stable and adaptable work system.

The Amara Berri's system belongs to the "New school" category. In an alternative system, as Jiménez (2009) states, learners are conceived to have the capacity to educate themselves. "New schools" enhance experimentation, and teachers are only mediators in the pedagogical process (p.106). One characteristic to highlight about new schools is that they contribute to the development of the child's personality and self-esteem establishing an emotional and affective relationship among teachers and students (Cuesta, 2018). Thus, teachers are prepared in getting to know the students' personal situations and in developing their personalities by encouraging children to exploit their best qualities. The relationship between the school and the family plays a crucial role in this issue. Therefore, meetings between the teacher and the student's family are necessary to keep track of the student's development and personal background that can affect their learning progress. Moreover, meetings between teachers of different subjects are necessary to keep a record of the student's behavior, motivation, and overall progress in all the areas to improve those aspects that need more attention. Another characteristic that new schools are known for is the design of classrooms. As Cuesta (2018) explains, the space is designed to

stimulate children in their learning process. This means that classrooms are prepared to fulfill students' needs with materials and resources that will help assist the learning of the L2. As opposed to traditional systems, new schools prioritize dynamic practices instead of formal, theoretical practices. This means that the set of activities are designed taking into account the students' interests. By doing this, learners will be motivated and will develop their "personal, physical, emotional and intellectual autonomy" (Cuesta, 2018). The Amara Berri's system is best known for this latter mentioned aspect and because students work in groups and, within these groups, students can choose individually the activity or material that they prefer working with. In line with this, another characteristic emerges from this flexibility in the materials they are offered to use, that is playing as the basis for learning. Primary school students work best if they feel that they are playing, which is generally, the most motivating activity for them. Therefore, preparing activities that involve learning at the same time as playing, are the best for students to learn unintentionally but effectively.

2.1.2.1. Advantages

The approach for L2 teaching used by the teacher in the Amara Berri's system can be compared to the focus on forms or 'skills-learning' approach for L2 learning. They share common characteristics such as:

1. "Providing understanding of the grammar by a variety of means (including explanation in the L1, pointing out differences between the L1 and L2

2. Exercises entailing using the grammar in both non-communicative and communicative activities for both comprehension and production.

3. Providing frequent opportunities for communicative use of the grammar to promote automatic, accurate use" (Sheen, 2002, p.303).

This approach offers students a balanced number of opportunities for understanding grammatical concepts through explicit instruction and for practicing the grammar and vocabulary learned through written and communicative activities. In addition, the tasks the students work reflect realistic and meaningful language, which will be useful for them to communicate outside the classroom environment.

Regarding the students' role in the classroom, as opposed to traditional systems, they have an active role. In fact, they are the responsible subjects of their own learning, and they obtain the knowledge using the strategies they consider the most suitable for them depending on the task they must do. Meyer (et al.,2008) reviewed the benefits of the learners' independence in their learning progress and the research revealed many benefits of this strategy such as "improved academic performance, increased motivation and confidence, greater student awareness of their limitations and their ability to managethem, enabling teachers to provide differentiated tasks for students, and fostering social inclusion by countering alienation" (pp. 1-2).

Another advantage of this system is that it educates children about the value of looking for information using reliable and useful sources on the Internet. Also, as schools deal with young students learning how to use the Internet, the dangers of it are also given great emphasis to avoid inappropriate or problematic use. Thus, as the Internet and other available materials such as dictionaries and the media library are the principal tools for obtaining knowledge, the textbook is only used as a secondary resource. As Cuesta (2018) mentions, students learn from an early age to contrast the information they get from different sources and to be critical (p.24). Also, students are highly trained about new

devices and online webpages and materials for them to use for their presentations. In addition, in the English classroom, the teacher and the students can interact through an application and online resource called "Class Dojo" and through google Classroom, an accessory for them to share interesting and useful content.

Collaborative work is one of the most remarkable aspects of the Amara Berri's system, and is actually considered beneficial for many reasons. This system, in addition, advocates playing as a form of learning. Therefore, the organization of activities within the contexts are not only motivating and engaging for students but are also purposeful and trigger the use of real-world language. According to (Liang et al., 1998) "Research in the second language classroom indicates that cooperative learning is potentially beneficial for ESL students in a number of ways. It can maximize second language acquisition by offering opportunities for both language input and output. It can also help students draw on their first language while developing second language skills. It includes opportunities for the integration of language and content learning" (p.21). However, as the authors mention, more research must be done to determine whether cooperative learning is beneficial for the student's development of academic language. This issue, nonetheless, is worth investigating in intermediate to advanced learners of a second language. Considering that the Amara Berri's system is currently working in Early childhood education and Primary Education, it is more likely for group work to have positive effects on learners at these stages.

It is essential to mention as an advantage the close relationship between students and teachers. Students, for the most part, do not consider teachers as authoritarian figures to not be relied upon, but as monitors who serve as inspiration, and as assistants who can give advice about their academic or personal issues. Also, cohesion among teachers of

the three cycles is present to keep track of the student's progress and issues in every subject. In this way, teachers keep a record of the strengths and weaknesses of learners and can adapt the materials accordingly to their necessities or solve any problems they may have with them or with their families.

Formative assessment is another aspect that is beneficial for learners in the Amara Berri's system. Students' absorption of contents and overall progress and performance in all competences are evaluated in a continuum. This means that evaluation is personalized and individualized according to the personal situation, cognitive characteristics, level of development and other aspects that encompass the student itself.

Own observations made in the internship in Mas Clariana during Practicum I (from the 12th of January to the 15th of March) can confirm all of the mentioned benefits in the 3rd cycle, which is formed by 5th and 6th grade students distributed into 5 groups (A, B, C, D, and E).

2.1.2.2.Disadvantages

As all the systems and methodologies, the Amara Berri's system has its weaknesses for the teaching of an L2, especially to students this young.

First, it is important to mention that, as stated in the previous section, in the first session (also called workshop 1) the teacher introduces the grammar and vocabulary through explicit instruction. Nonetheless, a single session dedicated to grammar and vocabulary teaching is sometimes not enough for learners to really internalize and understand the uses of the structures. For this reason, children tend to imitate what they have written down in the previous session to complete the exercises without paying much attention to meaning. Observations made in Mas Clariana confirm the theory that children

in the present era of constant technological development, tend to perform actions automatically, without thinking too much about what they are doing or saying. Therefore, a solid base of grammar and vocabulary is needed for children to perform the activities more meaningfully rather than applying rules they do not quite understand.

Although it is beneficial for learners to work in groups, they tend to speak in the L1 among themselves to carry out the tasks. This fact is detrimental to their development in the English language, as they only use it in the warm-up period at the beginning of sessions, to talk to the teacher, and to present their projects. These opportunities for speaking, however, are very punctual and not enough for their speaking skills to fully develop.

In addition, in the Amara Berri's system, the common ground is that children are barely given any homework, nor do they do exams. Although children are motivated and hard-working in class, it is necessary for them to adapt to this kind of lifestyle of working at home and doing exams because, in this way, they will get used to the methodology that High Schools use. Moreover, exams are beneficial for students to push and prepare themselves to study. Tests are also beneficial for teachers because they can have a better visual representation of their student's skills and weaknesses. This year in Mas Clariana, however, due to the coronavirus disease, a few teachers decided to start doing exams as an additional tool to analyze students' progress and understanding of concepts. These exams serve students as additional tools to process the contents and teachers to evaluate them.

In regard to the students' autonomy to work at their own pace, this aspect is controversial. It is certainly positive that the school is flexible with the individual needs of each student. However, this aspect can become problematic if not carefully monitored.

For this reason, the main disadvantage of autonomous work is that there is a need for constant monitoring and supervision by the teacher for the student to work accordingly to his/her capacities without rambling too much. According to own observations, and to the results Sauret (2016) obtained from interviews with parents about their degree of satisfaction with this open system, it is necessary for more than one teacher to control everyone's progress and work rhythm. This is the reason why it is sometimes also difficult to keep track of the progress of students with more severe difficulties such as the inability to understand the schools' vehicle language (Catalan), disorders such as dyslexia or hyperactivity, or difficulties to read. These problems become more obvious when students are the responsible ones to figure out what to do. Nonetheless, students usually do not hesitate to ask for help. In order to fix this problem of a single teacher controlling a group of 25 students divided into 4 groups and with a few students with difficulties, in Mas Clariana teachers dedicate two hours a week in supporting other teachers in the classroom. Hence, the English teacher dedicates two hours a week in supporting the Catalan teacher, and this methodology is applied to every teacher.

2.2. Literature Review

Studies made about the Amara Berri's system are limited in two aspects; the first issue is that the literature review is not very extensive, and the second issue is that the research done is mainly qualitative. Research on the effectiveness of this alternative system is mainly focused on observation of the system working and interviews to students, parents, and teachers. Sauret (2016) analyzed the degree of satisfaction of former students, teachers and parents working with the Amara Berri's system. The answers obtained from the interviews conducted to teachers reveal the common agreement that teachers were

convinced of the effectiveness and goals of this system and that, although it took time to adequate the classroom and the new methodology, it was worthwhile. Also, they assumed their roles of monitors in the learners' learning process rather than the main instructor and knowledge carrier, a factor that makes this system remarkable and successful. Parents highlighted the fact that there is a need for an innovative method that enhances motivation, and this was one of the reasons they allowed their children to join the schoolwith the Amara Berri's system. They all agreed with the fact that their children were motivated to attend classes due to the system's enhancement of playing as an assistance of learning. However, the disadvantages mentioned by families regarding this alternativesystem are also worth mentioning. One of them was the need for family support for theirchildren to complete class activities, or in fostering pleasure for reading. Another factor that parents believed not to have had enough consideration is the students' limitations. They agreed that the system functions properly when the class is homogeneous, but whena student presented difficulties, there was a need for a more direct, structured, and explicit intervention for that learner to be able to continue learning. Finally, interviews carried out to former students in the Amara Berri's system disclose their overall satisfaction and helpfulness of this system in their future academic years. Interviewees agreed that working with this system helped them become more independent, creative, and fearless of public speaking. Moreover, they recall their experience as being positive due to the close relationship they had with their teachers and classmates, which helped them discover their needs. Sauret's study (2015-2016), however, only focused on the personal experiences as a measuring tool for determining the effectiveness of this system in one school in Tacoronte, where she analyzed 4th grade students working in the area of Language and Mathematics. On the other hand, Landa (2016) focused her study on the

motivational aspects that enhance the efficacy of the Amara Berri's system in the learning of English in second cycle students (3rd and 4th grade students). Landa (2016) defends that motivation is a key aspect that affects the learners' learning process, especially the intrinsic motivation, which is usually the most difficult to trigger from students. Intrinsic motivation is the one that emerges from the students themselves through the realization of tasks without any external rewards that motivate them to want to pursue their objectives. Landa (2016) describes three motivational components that play a role in the learners' learning processes; first, the value's motivational component, which she describes as the learning goals that students seek (p.3). These goals can be classified into the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation spectrum, the former can be triggered by the desire to obtain high grades or by the willingness to transmit a specific image to parents or teachers, for example, and the latter can be triggered by the learner's curiosity or interest in the topic. In this issue, the tasks given to students play a crucial role in increasing students' motivation. For students to be intrinsically motivated, tasks must not be memory-based, repetitive, decontextualized or without a final purpose (Landa, 2016). In the Amara Berri's system, tasks are contextualized and designed to enhance students' creativity, freedom, and independence. Then, the author explains the motivational component of expectations; those that students put upon themselves. Here Landa (2016) brings an interesting point, which is that students with low self-esteem often relate their success to a matter of luck or chance and their failures to incapacity. On the contrary, students with high self-esteem attach their goals and failures to their own actions. In the Amara Berri's system, one of the main aspects that are most valuable is the close relationship among teachers and students. This factor helps students to trust teachers and to seek for help and ask for advice whenever they need it. Also, teachers can analyze the

strengths and weaknesses of their students with the objective of enhancing their best qualities and abilities, helping them improve the weaker aspects, and raising their self-esteem whenever they show progress. In sum, close relationships among students and teachers brings confidence towards teachers and towards students themselves. Finally, an important motivational component Landa (2016) mentions is the affective and emotional one. Here she mentions that not all positive emotions lead to positive results, neither negative emotions lead to negative results. The author mentions an example of anxiety as a negative emotion. A student with anxiety can feel that he or she is unable to finish an activity, and this feeling can stop the student from being creative or finishing the task. Nonetheless, this anxiety can be compensated with a high motivation to avoid the student to feel powerless and unable to improve. In situations like this one, teachers play an important role in managing students' frustrations by rewarding them with positive affirmations of the aspects the students are good at. Another crucial factor that prevents children from being demotivated or from losing confidence about their capacities is the evaluation method. In the Amara Berri's system evaluation is a continuum and several aspects are taken into account when assessing students' performance and academic outcomes. Students are not only evaluated by the teachers, but by their classmates, who offer constructive criticism for their peers to correct the aspects they need to improve and to highlight the aspects that they have done correctly or surprised them the most. In addition, students' progress, interest, and participation are also highly considered in the evaluation.

All the studies mentioned have analyzed the Amara Berri's system in terms of the aspects that are different from traditional systems, the characteristics and values that support the system, the factors that are remarkable and make this system successful, and

degree of satisfaction of those working and learning using it. Nonetheless, there is a gap in the investigation of the academic outcomes of Primary school students learning English in the Amara Berri's system. For this reason, this study will fill in this gap by analyzing the results obtained from 6th grade students in two schools, the only school in Catalonia that uses Amara Berri's system (Mas Clariana) and one school with a traditional approach for L2 teaching.

2.2.1. Characteristics of the system

According to Cuesta (2018) the fundamental ground from which the organization of an Amara Berri center is governed is through an open system that provides the necessary tools to reach each student (p.17). Therefore, the materials and resources available in classrooms are essential tools for students to organize and create their own learning strategies independently or with the help of the teacher or other peers.

One of the most important axes of the system are students. The Amara Berri's system considers students as:

- A global being: the student is not a static being. It is a global being living in constant interaction with the surroundings, life, and social experiences (Landa, 2016).

- With their own interests and motivations: it is important that the school proposes topics and tasks that fit with the interests of students to trigger the motivation and interest in them. To achieve this, teachers must develop a close relationship based on trust.

- With a determined conceptual and emotional scheme: each child starts from his or her own life experiences, from what he/she has already learned and from his/her own conceptual and emotional schema.

- A being who possesses his/her own potential: based on it, the school is the one in charge of adapting its system to the child's potential and level. From this point schools need to schedule, intervene, and evaluate accordingly (Cuesta,2018).

As previously defined in section 2.1.2., the system is a set of dynamic elements that work simultaneously. Therefore, organization among teachers is crucial to make this system work smoothly and effectively. Loli Anaut, the promoter of the Amara Berri's system organized the structure of the center in order to form an open system where the flexibility, decision-making, organization and planification were key aspects for the system to work optimally for students and teachers. Thanks to this flexibility of constant modification the Amara Berri's system is capable of being adaptable to the students', families, and teachers' circumstances accordingly (Cuesta, 2018).

2.2.2.1.1. Methodological principles

As Anaut (2004) defines, the methodological principles are the ideas that intentionally govern our educational action. The author also claims that a school is what its principles tell (p.27). However, as Anaut (2004) states, the principles that characterize the Amara Berri's system are not invented by her, they reinterpreted them from the "Active school", a similar system which prioritizes the learners' autonomy and self-discovery in the learning process. The seven principles that rule the Amara Berri's system are the following:

1. The principle of individualization: This principle can be attributed to both teachers and learners. Students, thanks to this principle, will be able to carry out the different tasks considering their personal characteristics, level of development, age, or any other individual issues. (Cuesta, 2018). Teachers, to fulfill every students' needs, should take into account the diversity of learning styles and allow students to progress at their own pace. To achieve this goal, materials need to be adapted for students who need it, constant and personalized monitoring should be done, and, finally, individualized intervention and evaluation of each student must be done for a classroom with diversity to work.

2. The principle of socialization: The structure of the classrooms is designed for students to develop social skills through cooperative work. In this way both teachers and students learn how to work in teams, and they will, in addition, know how to cope with different personalities and learning styles. As Landa (2016) defines in her paper, students should discover the benefits of group work and overcome differences among the members, which consequently will trigger their maturity (p.13).

3. The principle of activity: Tasks are designed to encourage reflection for students to solve problems. In this way, students will become interested and motivated in carrying their tasks for the classroom. However, it is necessary that learners are conscious that their efforts are worthwhile, both individual and as a group, and that they have an effect in achieving a goal.

4. The principle of creativity: Creativity is one of the characteristics that all children have as an innate capacity. Therefore, offering opportunities for learners to create something new or transform something they already have to adapt it to their needs is essential to further develop their creativity. In this principle it is also important to bring back the motivation and the freedom that learners must feel to create without any external

restrictions. For this reason, high self-esteem is crucial for students to express themselves freely with no fear of being judged or feeling unequal to their classmates.

5. The principle of freedom: Children have all the materials and resources available in the classrooms, the spaces they share during the journey. As Cuesta (2018) mentions, children feel responsible for taking care of the materials and spaces when they feel they belong to them. In addition, students will eventually get to know their own limitations and capacities through the activities and tasks. Once children realize their own strengths and weaknesses they begin to work without hesitation.

6. The principle of globalization: This principle must be understood as a vital process that develops within the school with an open system, where all the components are in constant interaction. Situations are created whereby students can learn as social beings.

7. The principle of normalization: This principle is addressed to both teachers and students. The school is an extension of society, not an isolated place where events are experienced differently (Cuesta, 2018, p.20).

2.2.2.1. Contexts

The Amara Berri's system is scheduled around activities which are contextualized. These tasks are similar to short projects that carry a real and meaningful purpose. In addition, these projects must be presented in different ways depending on the context students are working in; individual or pair presentations in the classroom for the other students, broadcast in the school's radio or television and/or publication in the school's magazine or/and website (Landa, 2016). These activities conform the social, stable, and complementary contexts. As Landa (2016) explains, the contexts are social because they

seek social relationships, they are stable because they are preserved throughout two

courses and complementary because the sum of all of them conform the curriculum (p.14).

Figure 1. Adapted from Ms. Saavedra, 2020-2021.

CONTEXT: YOUNG WRITERS
Method:
In this context students produce creative texts such as postcards, comics, stories, descriptions, or texts related to the social and natural areas. They are provided modelsfor them to get inspiration from to create their own works. They publish their work inthe school's press (magazine) or present it to their classmates. (Saavedra,2020). The activities created in this context are designed to develop students' writing skills. Students have 6 folders with the corresponding tasks and their working methods.
CONTEXT: LET'S TALK
Method:
In this context students listen to and read short skits, songs, and dialogues that they memorize and perform for their peers, either individually or in pairs. Moreover, students are provided scaffolding activities such as filling the gaps with the corresponding words that are missing from the lyrics of a song. They also perform interviews or conversations that they created. The activities in this context are designed with the aim of working on the phonetic characteristics of the language (listening) and speaking skills.
CONTEXT: BOOKLAND/GAMES
Method:
In this context students work with their activity books. The aim of this context is to develop students' grammatical and listening skills through the activities which are compulsory to complete. Furthermore, the activity book offers a final project whereby

students prepare a short text about different topics related to the unit studied, e.g. a short text about their daily routines, jobs...

CONTEXT: STORY TELLER

Method:

In this context students elaborate biographies, short reports, and recipes as well as reviews of stories, comics, funny news, postcards and letters, descriptions, or recipes. The aim of this context is for students to focus on accuracy (writing and grammatical competences).

Each context has its own folder with the necessary models and examples of the tasks that students must create themselves. Moreover, the procedures (instructions) are given to every student for them to follow the steps they must do to carry out the task. First, however, learners must use the resources they have available to understand the instructions, which are always provided in English.

Students change contexts every five sessions, that is, the day after the presentations or, as they call it "Show Day". Further details about the organization of sessions will be stated in section 2.2.2.1.1. The focus of this section is to explain the function and objectives of the contexts in the classroom.

The "vital" activities or tasks are the triggering elements for learning. Students carry out the different work proposals in groups of 5 or 6 people, which are distributed indifferent corners of the class. These corners, as Cuesta (2018) explains, are also called contexts, and are flexible, that is, they are open to possible modifications if necessary, always with the aim of being as enriching for the students as possible, adapting to their

interests and needs (p.23). They are also complementary and stable throughout the academic year.

Regarding the effectiveness of group work, it has been further demonstrated that it is beneficial for learners, especially over the years in Early Childhood Education (Cuesta, 2018). However, few schools decide to maintain the structure of groups in Primary Education, as Amara Berri does. For this reason, children of other schools who transition from Infant to Primary education notice a significant change in the organization and methodology of the class because they go from group work with a main focus on playing to individual work abruptly. Group work allows students to work in different styles; individually, in small groups or in pairs, depending on what the activity demands or because of personal choices. In addition, cooperative learning is beneficial for students who are more advanced to further develop their intellectual or leadership capacities, and for weaker students to learn from others and to grow their confidence at their own pace. Group work is beneficial for enhancing all types of potentials and it allows different types of intelligences interact, which will enrich the learning environment. Also, it is generally known that children, that is, primary school students usually enjoy more working with their peers because they are more motivated to do activities as a group rather than individually.

2.2.2.1.1. Organization of time

The sessions usually follow the same order; Workshop 0, Workshop 1, Workshop 2, Workshop 3, Workshop 4 and Show day. These workshops can be extended if necessary, but for students to have a clear calendar to work accordingly, the sessions are structured in this style. Sessions have a duration of 60 minute. However, the first 10-15 minutes are

dedicated to the Warm-up section, when students present their DWNP (Date, Weather, News Plan), which will be later mentioned. During these 10 to 15 minutes students are also allowed to engage in a short conversation in English with the teacher about a topic that interests or, for instance, worries them. On occasions, they also talk about what they did on the weekend, or the teacher takes the opportunity to talk about special events such as, for example, the International Women's day and students provide their opinions and thoughts about it. The rest of the class time is for students to work on the activities and for the teacher to monitor and help the groups whenever necessary. During this working time, the teacher also can provide feedback, solve doubts, correct activities, make sure that they have done their homework and assess students' overall progress. The first day, also called workshop 0, is when the grammar point, and the vocabulary are introduced to the students through explicit instruction. The teacher briefly summarizes the grammar point and the vocabulary to be learned which corresponds to the one that appears in the unit students will practice in the activity book at that time. The grammar lessons tend to be taught in the English language. Nonetheless, the teacher does not ban translation into the learners' L1 for those who do not understand the explanations completely. In Mas Clariana, students from 2nd and 3rd cycle do not own the coursebook individually, they share the coursebooks they have available in each class to do the activities from the activity book. However, the coursebook is barely used, as most exercises do not require it to be completed, except the ones that contain a reading comprehension activity where the text is found in the coursebook. Therefore, students only use the activity book to do the activities of the unit, so the grammar lesson explained in workshop 0 must be written down in their notebooks by students themselves. Sometimes a dossier is provided for them to have the grammar lesson already summarized, as the teacher does in class. The

grammar and vocabulary that students learn in this first session will not only be useful to carry out the activities from the activity book, and the projects from the different contexts, but it will also serve as guidance to complete what they call the "news composition". In the area of the foreign language, students are required to bring to each session what they call the "Date, Weather, News, Plan" (DWNP). Each student must write on their notebooks the date and the weather on that day, the news, which is a short sentence using the grammar and vocabulary learned in the workshop 0, and the plan, which is the day in the calendar they are in, e.g., workshop 1.

In Workshop 1 the procedure is provided to students. The procedure is the sheet that contains the instructions for learners to follow. The procedure is always written in English and in the 1st person. Thanks to this inductive format, students are encouraged to use the necessary tools and materials such as the dictionary to understand the steps they need to follow to complete their activities within the contexts. Once students have highlighted and noted down the meaning of the words they do not understand, and once they comprehend what they have to do, they go ahead and look for the corresponding folder of the context to take the models and sheets they need to complete.

Figure 2. Let's Talk procedure. Author: Ms. Saavedra (2020-2021).

EntS
EscolaMasTariana

ENGLISH 3. CYCLE

PROCEDURE

LET'S TALK. CONVERSATIONS

Radio program

1. I choose the conversation.
2. I read it and I look up the words I don't understand in the dictionary.
3. I write down their meanings in the notebook.
4. I create our script:

- First, I say hello
- I say the name of our program
- I introduce myself
- I tell the date
- I tell the WEATHER
- I tell the news: Our conversation with a famous person.
- I end our program
- I say goodbye

5. I show it to our teacher. I correct the mistakes
6. I record our program.
7. I learn the text and prepare it for the Show Day.

In the next workshops (2, 3 and 4) students continue working on their projects by themselves. The students from the Bookland context dedicate the four sessions to completing the activities and the final project of the unit found in the activity book. The other students from the other three contexts, however, must also complete the compulsory activities that the teacher has previously asked them to do. The compulsory activities are found at the end of the activity book, where students have glued a sheet of paper that contains all the activities from all the units that they must finish. The obligatory exercises are divided into units and terms. In this way, students have an organized calendar which contains the months that the term is formed by, and the exercises they need to finish by the end of that month. Finally, the fifth session is dedicated to the presentation of their projects. In this last session, also called Show Day, not all the students present their

projects, only the ones who have finished on time, are willing to do it, or have never done a presentation are the chosen ones to present. However, each student's decisions are respected, whether they decide not to do it because they feel they are not prepared, or because they prefer doing the presentation in the next context. The next session after the Show day, students rotate contexts. By doing this, every group has the opportunity to work in different projects, consequently developing different competences.

2.2.2.1.2. Organization of the classroom

The organization of schools is done according to the characteristics of each center, and the PEC (Proyecto Educativo de Centro) is the document that keeps record of the organization of these centers. The Amara Berri's structure and organization pretends to be suitable for the whole education community, that is, students, families, and teachers (Cuesta 2018). One of the most remarkable characteristics of the organization of classrooms is the mixture of ages and abilities within them. Students are distributed into three cycles; 1st cycle is formed by 1st and 2nd grade students, 2nd cycle is formed by 3rd and 4th grade students, and finally 3rd cycle is composed by 5th and 6th grade students. By doing this, the differences between students' levels are more obvious and, in consequence, teachers and students themselves are more conscious of the need of individual intervention for those who present difficulties or differences regarding learning capacities or paces. To handle the variety of levels and personal needs in a classroom, adapted materials are offered to cover each student's necessities and to respect the particular working paces and learning styles. For this reason, it is necessary that the schedule is maintained open for the students to develop their capacities at their own rhythm. (Cuesta,2018). Moreover, the students who are already familiar with the functioning of

the system can help their peers, while the teacher can also give personalized attention to other learners. Apart from the mixture of students of different ages in the same classroom, students are also divided into 4 groups of 5-6 people. In these groups, students work in different tasks depending on the context they belong to. It is important to mention that, as a result of students working in groups with classmates of different ages and abilities, they all learn how to work collaboratively and will develop principles such as empathy, patience, tolerance and communication skills among others. (Cuesta, 2018).

2.2.2.1. Evaluation

Formative assessment is the principal method used for evaluation in the Amara Berri's system. According to Qiang (2002) "Formative assessment is expected to be used as the major method of assessing students' achievement in English. Variety in forms of assessment and opportunities for pupils to choose from the different forms according to their own strength and interests should be the characteristics of the new assessment system for primary schools." (p.101). This type of assessment allows for more flexibilityin the evaluation of everyone's learning process. Formative assessment permits individualized evaluation because it encompasses many factors that can be measurable through monitoring and observation rather than only through traditional forms of evaluation such as exams. Summative assessment, on the contrary, focuses the attention to academic success (grades) as a form of measuring students' understanding and absorption of concepts. However, this type of assessment is not suitable for all types of students. It does not consider learners' efforts and progress regarding their cognitive capacities and difficulties.

In the Amara Berri's system, the teacher makes observations and takes notes daily to keep track of the student's progress in aspects such as speaking, writing, reading, or listening skills in the classroom as they interact. In addition, in the last session (usually session 5 or 6) the children show their work in different ways: through the press, radio, live performances or presentations in the classroom or through the school's internal television (Cuesta,2018). Children, thanks to this method, learn how to explain to other people in their own words what they have learned. In addition, students practice oral speaking in the L2 at the same time they get used to public speaking, which will be most useful in their future academic years. One of the aspects that the Amara Berri's system highly encourages is evaluation through constructive criticism, both from students towards their peers and towards themselves, and from teachers. All the students are subjected to positive feedback and to receiving comments that will help them improve in the aspects they need to practice more. The teacher not only evaluates students' performance, but also the way their peers provide feedback to them. This method of evaluation aims at highlighting the positive qualities of students' performance, and it is never aimed at judging other's work. As Cuesta (2018) states, the teacher's role in this section is to collect information he/she has gathered both from his/her own analysis and from other students who have participated in the evaluation of the process. In this way, the teacher obtains a more objective and contrasted vision of the learning that each student has developed (p.27). Finally, after the student or group of students have presented, they are also encouraged to give an opinion on their own overall performance and the aspects they consider that could be improved for future presentations.

With all the material gathered, and from the overall experience in the duration of the five sessions, the teacher will take his/her own conclusions and will continue working

towards offering each learner the best opportunities for them to be motivated and to continue developing the competences according to their capacities and skills.

3. Methodology

In order to determine whether the Amara Berri's system is effective for the acquisition of English in Primary school, two public schools were selected to compare the results obtained from 6th grade students performing a Basic Competences Exam. The school that has the Amara Berri's system is located in Cambrils, Tarragona, and is the only school in Catalonia working with this open system. The other chosen school is also located in Cambrils and it works with a traditional system. Nonetheless, the latter school mentioned prefers to remain anonymous. This study is motivated by the lack of research in academic performance of students in the Amara Berri's system in the context of Primary school, specifically in the area of second language acquisition. Studies about the Amara Berri's system have mainly focused on three elements; the motivational aspects of this alternative system that enhance the acquisition of the English language in the context of Primary school (Landa, 2016), in the elements that makes this system remarkable (Sauret,2016 and Cuesta 2018) and in the aspects that differentiate this alternative system to traditional systems (Cuesta,2018). Therefore, the gap in research in the academic outcome of this open system remains unfilled. For this reason, this study aims at finding out which aspects make the Amara Berri's system successful by comparing the results of a traditional system, which is most commonly used in Spain, and the Amara Berri's system. To achieve this goal, quantitative and qualitative data were obtained to have a more specific analysis of the results.

3.1. Data collection instruments and techniques

For the quantitative data, a Basic Competences Exam from 2018-2019 was chosen for 6th grade students to analyze students' proficiency in the three dimensions of the English language; reading, listening, and writing. Students must finish the test in one hour and without external help. For this reason, they were told in advance the day the test would take place in order for them to be settled and ready to start the test on time. The test consists of two reading activities, two listening activities and one writing exercise, which normally asks students to write a response to an e-mail or letter. At the back part of the dossier there is a sheet to transfer the answers students have written in the dossier. This answer sheet will be useful because the correction of the test will be easier and faster than going back and forth in the pages of the dossier. The conditions under which students take this exam are the following: students must use a pen exclusively, they must finish itin one hour, and they cannot ask questions related to meaning of words nor any other doubts can be clarified further than the reformulating the statement of an activity.

The qualitative data instruments used were two: own observations of the system working in Mas Clariana, and a questionnaire provided to 6th grade students in Mas Clariana to analyze their overall degree of satisfaction working with this system. The questionnaire consisted of three closed questions and three open questions. However, while the notes taken about this system working were useful to have a visual representation and analysis the system, the questionnaire had to be eventually rejected from the study due to a number of reasons. Such reasons will be commented in section 6.2.

3.2. Procedure

The tests were given to 5th and 6th grade students in Mas Clariana on different days, as they are separated into 5 groups. Therefore, each group spent 1 session in doing the exam. Although all 5th and 6th grade students took the exam, only the students in 6th grade were the ones chosen for the study, hence this study is focused on 6th grade students' academic performance in the Amara Berri's system and in the traditional one from a different school. There were approximately 10 students of 6th grade in each class, making a total of 50 students. In all 5 sessions, students were under observation of their English teacherand me to make sure that the subjects did not cheat nor distract others during the exam.

In the school with a traditional system, 6th grade students are separated into 2 groups of 20 6th grade students each, making a total of 40 subjects for the study. Therefore, in order to maintain the same number of subjects for the study, one group of Mas Clariana was removed from the study. The group which was removed from the study was selected at random. Contrarily to Mas Clariana, the school with the traditional system did not allow external people to enter the classrooms due to the Covid 19 restrictions. For this reason, the subjects were only under the surveillance of their English teacher, a factor which might have influenced the results if the conditions and the rules were not properly respected.

3.3. Subjects

The subjects chosen for the study are 80 6th grade students in total. 40 of them are studying in Mas Clariana, the school that uses the Amara Berri's system, and the other 40 in a school with a traditional system. Both schools are public, and they are located inCambrils, Tarragona.

All the groups; the 5 groups in Mas Clariana and 2 groups in the other school, contain students with mixed abilities and levels, which make the groups heterogeneous. All the participants range between 11 to 12 years old, and their levels of English vary depending on each students' background both economic and social, cognitive characteristics, personalities and other personal or external factors such as attitudes towards the English language or motivation. Therefore, factors such as students practicing English outside the classroom environment (in language academies) or perhaps students with English speaking relatives might enhance their English proficiency. Other learners, on the other hand, might be less advanced for many reasons; personal or cognitive difficulties, or lack of motivation among others. External elements can also prevent or benefit students' progress in the learning of the English language such as problems due to a non-supportive social background or frustration caused by the learning system.

3.4. Data analysis

First, all the exams from the subjects in Mas Clariana, the experimental group, were corrected. There were 50 students of 6th grade, hence 50 grades were noted in an excel document. Then, the exams of the traditional school were given to me, and the results of the 40 subjects were calculated and noted in the same excel document, specifying that the subjects formed part of the control group. As there were 50 subjects in the experimental group and 40 in the control group, 10 students from the experimental group (Mas Clariana) were eliminated to maintain the coherence and for the results to be accurate and fair.

The results were calculated taking into account the evaluation criteria of the English Basic Competences tests. The reading section was worth 50% of the total mark

and it was composed of 24 items to be completed. The listening section was worth 35% of the final mark and consisted of 14 items. Finally, the writing exercise was worth 15% of the final mark and the maximum punctuation to be obtained was 6. The final grade of each student was obtained through applying the following formulas:

Being "α" the number of correct answers in each section.

$$(\frac{\alpha}{24} \times 10) \times 0,5 = Result\ Reading$$

$$(\frac{\alpha}{14} \times 10) \times 0,35 = Result\ Listening$$

$$(\frac{\alpha}{6} \times 10) \times 0,15 = Result\ Writing$$

$$Result\ Reading + Result\ Listening + Result\ Writing = \textbf{\textit{FINAL MARK}}$$

Once all the final marks of the experimental and the control group have been collected, the descriptive statistics were obtained to analyze the statistic values (mean, mode, median, skewness, std. deviation). However, the decisive measure that will determine which group performed better is the T-Test. For this reason, to shed light to the first research question; Is the system Amara Berri more successful than the traditional approach to learning English in the Primary school context? a T-Test was performed to compare the results and to analyze which group performed better academically. Yet, the remaining research question needs to be answered considering isolated elements. Therefore, the means of the results obtained by the experimental and the control group in

the three areas of language proficiency (listening, reading, and writing) were calculated to analyze the performance of both groups individually. These results were calculated using the following formula, where (N) is the total number of participants in the control and experimental group respectively, and $x_1 + x_2 + x_3 + \cdots x_n$ are the subjects' correct answers in the area of language analyzed (e.g. listening).

$$\bar{x} = \frac{x_1 + x_2 + x_3 + \cdots x_n}{N}$$

4. Results

RQ1: Is the system Amara Berri more successful than the traditional approach to learning English in the Primary school context?

According to the means obtained from the results of the control group (7.780) and the experimental (7.577) group, the former obtained better results than the experimental. Thus, the H1 can be rejected, and it can be confirmed that the participants from the school with a traditional system performed generally better. In addition, the p-value obtained from the T-Test shows that the difference is significant, hence the null hypothesis can also be rejected.

Descriptive Statistics

| | Scores | |
	Control	Experimental
Valid	40	40
Missing	0	0
Mean	**7.780**	**7.577**
Median	8.300	8.100
Mode	10.000	9.800
Std. Deviation	2.029	1.960
Skewness	-0.658	-0.880
Std. Error of Skewness	0.374	0.374

Minimum	2.900	2.700
Maximum	10.000	10.000

Independent Samples T-Test

	t	df	p
Scores	0.454	78	**0.651**

Note. Students' t-test.

Nonetheless, when calculating individual means of the results obtained from the three categories or dimensions analyzed (listening, reading, and writing) one can observe that the experimental group performed better in the latter category. This fact can contribute to the confirmation of the hypothesis for the second research question; RQ2: Which factors make Amara Berri more successful?

In this open alternative system, learners are in constant exposure to the English language through translating the 'procedures', doing activities or creating and producing their own samples of language through the projects help them acquire proficiency in writing more efficiently than practicing isolated and decontextualized grammar or vocabulary exercises in the coursebook. In fact, students from Mas Clariana are constantly using contextualized vocabulary and grammar through preparing presentations, writing postcards, recipes, describing objects or animals, writing reviews or interviews. This might be the reason why these learners who are producing language regularly obtained greater results than the subjects from the control group.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the participants from the control group performed better in the listening and reading areas. For the listening dimension, the

control group obtained a mean of 11,9, in contrast with the experimental group which obtained a 11,2. In the reading competence, students from the control group also obtained better results, as the media shows (18,9). Contrarily, students from the experimental group obtained a media of 17,9.

Listening experimental mean → 11,2/14

Reading experimental mean → 17,9/24

Writing experimental mean → 4,2/6

Listening control mean → 11,9/14

Reading control mean → 18,9/24

Writing control mean → 3,2/6

5. Discussion

Although the first hypothesis was rejected, many interpretations can be extracted from the unexpected result. The first element that might have influenced the result is the fact that students in a traditional system are more used to the exam layout because they are more used to taking exams regularly. In addition, as students use the course or grammar book daily, they are more used to seeing and listening to the grammar and vocabulary found in the reading and listening exercises. In contrast, the students in the Amara Berri'ssystem take exams punctually, as the main form of assessment is formative, and emphasisis put into the entire progress of the student. Also, students in Mas Clariana are less trainedin listening and writing activities found in coursebooks. Nonetheless, the students are more used to listening and reading more natural or real-life language samples in class through the tasks they must develop (Cuesta,2018). This fact can be controversialbecause,as it is positive for the acquisition of fluency in the second language, students will also struggle in higher education because High Schools usually work with a traditional system,which is less focused on communication skills outside academic use

of language in presentations. Nonetheless, it can be argued that students in the traditional system would struggle more if changing from a traditional system to the Amara Berri's system because it requires them to work independently, using real-world language while working collaboratively to accomplish the tasks. In line with this, the results obtained from the writing competence reveal that students in Mas Clariana are more used to seeing and writing in activities that involve a more informal language such as letters or emails. According to own observations in the school, students are encouraged to write a postcard or letter to different schools in the US and the UK every month. Apart from this, thanks to the tasks that involve writing interviews, reviews, recipes, or TV program scripts students acquire a broader language and vocabulary use. Hence, this might be the factors that have benefited the results of the writing competence obtained by students in Mas Clariana. Finally, it is worth mentioning that students in a traditional system usually work individually in class. Consequently, they are used to rely on their own criteria and knowledge to do the exercises or exams. In the Amara Berri's system students work collaboratively every day, encouraging them to ask questions and solve doubts with the team. This might be one of the reasons why students performed slightly poorly, due to the incapacity of solving doubts themselves by relying on their own criteria.

6. Conclusions

The effectiveness of the Amara Berri's system in the acquisition of English in the Primary school context has been proven to be legitimate in some respects. It has been argued that no system nor methodology is perfectly suitable for all the students, and that the optimal approach for teaching English as a foreign language is a mixture of tools and strategies that are flexible and adaptable for each student. In this aspect, the Amara Berri's system

is greatly known for, as the system encourages change and adaptation of materials according to the needs of students and teachers for a better learning process. Motivation is a key aspect in students' progress, and it has been demonstrated in Landa (2016) to have an effect on the learners' willingness to attend classes and being engaged. Motivation is triggered by the learners' autonomy in their learning process, the stimuli produced by the engaging tasks, the close relationship between teachers and students, the formative assessment, or group work among other aspects. In regard to the academic outcomes, students in the Amara Berri's system performed slightly poorly than students in a traditional system. However, many elements influenced this result: personal factors in students such as economic and social background of students this year, intellectual capacities and difficulties, attitudes towards the L2, or external factors such as motivation or lack of it produced by the system or school, consideration of students' needs, and different ways of approaching the teaching of English.

6.1. Key findings

The key findings of this study have been the following: first, that there is very little literature investigating the academic results of students in the Amara Berri's system, especially in the field of second language acquisition. Therefore, this study fulfilled the gap in the literature by analyzing the results obtained from students in a traditional school and Mas Clariana, which uses the Amara Berri's system. The second finding is the fact that traditional systems, although are currently changing and evolving into more engaging methodologies and teaching approaches, they share the main core characteristic, which is the teacher-centered classroom. As previously mentioned, this characteristic can bring advantages and disadvantages. However, an extensive number of researches agrees with

the fact that cooperative learning and a student-centered approach are more effective and motivating for students. Another key finding is that students in the school with a traditional system obtained higher results in the reading and listening parts in the Basic Competences test. Therefore, the first hypothesis was rejected. This outcome proved the fact that students in a traditional system are more used to the exam layout, and that they are accustomed to seeing and hearing the language used in coursebooks. Nonetheless, students in a traditional school are generally less trained in using more conventional and natural language in tasks. For this reason, students in Mas Clariana obtained greater results in the writing part of the test. This result was useful to discover one of the aspects which influenced positively the effectiveness of this system, which is the extensive use of real-world language to perform purposeful tasks such as creating a radio or TV program script or writing recipes and letters.

6.2. Contributions and limitations

Regarding the limitations, it is worth mentioning one of the factors which affected not only the nature of this study but the entire world, Covid-19. This pandemic brought restrictive measures so as to prevent the spread of the virus. In the case of Mas Clariana, students were not allowed to go to different classrooms which are specifically designed for every subject. Teachers had to move to the different classrooms to teach instead of students moving to the classrooms. Therefore, students could not use the media classroom, where the TV and radio program are usually recorded. In the case of both schools, students had to be confined for many weeks, an event that affected their study patterns. Moreover, when schools reopened, many positive cases among students and teachers eventually appeared and they had to be confined for security purposes. The

intermittent confinement periods and the restrictions in classrooms severely influenced the academic year of all schools. In the case of the traditional school, only teachers and students could access the school and only punctually could parents or people outside the school users enter. For this reason, I could not access the school when the subjects of the study were doing the Basic Competences test. Hence the person responsible for making sure that the conditions and regulations of the exam were being applied was the English teacher. This factor might have influenced the authenticity of the results obtained from 6th grade students in the school if the rules were not respected carefully. In addition, due to the irregularities in the curriculum and pace of learning, students this year lost track of their learning progress. Therefore, the subjects of the study in both schools might have been less trained than if the situation had been ordinary. Another limitation to be mentioned is the validity of the qualitative instrument to investigate the degree of satisfaction of students and English teachers in both schools working with a traditional system and the Amara Berri's system. The initial idea was to provide a short questionnaire to both schools of 6 questions, 3 closed questions which consisted of students and teachers scoring from 1 to 10 in a Likert scale the degree of satisfaction working with the system, the motivation level when attending the English class and finally the level of difficulty learning and teaching (in the case of teachers) English with this system. In addition, 3 open questions were provided to investigate on the elements that students and teachers would modify about the system in their school, the advantages and disadvantages of studying English in the school and finally to investigate on the aspect or aspects that make the school they are in successful or outstanding. This questionnaire, however, was not included in the study due to several factors: the first one is that only the students and the English teacher of 3rd cycle in Mas Clariana were willing to answer this questionnaire. It

is worth mentioning that the questionnaire was not initially proposed to the traditional school chosen due to their strong reluctance towards the study of their students' results. For this reason, more schools with a traditional system were contacted and offered the opportunity to answer the questionnaire. Unfortunately, no feedback at all was provided from them, resulting then in the exclusion of this questionnaire from the study. Nonetheless, due to the subjects' age and maturity level in Mas Clariana, the answers obtained from the questionnaire were not conclusive enough to analyze their opinions critically. Moreover, the study would be inconsistent if only one school answered the questionnaire.

Regarding the contributions made in the existing literature, this experimental research investigated the academic performance of students in the two systems, a gap which until nowadays had not been fulfilled. This study also shed light to the fact students learning a second language with a different system do not perform excessively lower than the students traditional in schools.

6.3. Future recommendations

The principal recommendation is for the research to be undertaken with the optimal conditions to guarantee full authenticity in the results. As previously mentioned, many obstacles appeared during the course of the study which hindered the ordinary circumstances expected for the research to be successfully developed. The crucial areas for investigation now are:

1. Qualitative research that investigates the degree of satisfaction and motivation of students studying in the Amara Berri's system and in the traditional one. In

addition, open ended questions are necessary to analyze the advantages and disadvantages and the aspects the subjects would improve about the systems.

2. Teachers' perspectives about the system they are working in: what they would modify, what aspects they deem are beneficial for students, and level of difficulty and motivation teaching with the system.

3. Research about the academic performance of the subjects learning in the Amara Berri's system in Primary school in the following academic years (High School), to investigate whether they show struggles or perform lower because of the change in the system.

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8. Appendices

Experimental Group (Amara Berri)

	Listening (35%)	Reading (50%)	Writing (15%)	Grades
Student 1	9/14	13/24	2/6	5,4
Student 2	9/14	17/24	4/6	6,8
Student 3	12/14	6/24	0/6	4,3
Student 4	11/14	18/24	6/6	8
Student 5	8/14	13/24	3/6	5,5
Student 6	5/14	14/24	6/6	5,7
Student 7	13/14	23/24	5/6	9,5
Student 8	14/14	23/24	6/6	9,8

Student 9	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 10	14/14	18/24	4/6	8,3
Student 11	8/14	15/24	2/6	5,6
Student 12	11/14	18/24	5/6	7,7
Student 13	11/14	19/24	5/6	7,9
Student 14	3/14	7/24	2/6	2,7
Student 15	13/14	22/24	6/6	9,3
Student 16	14/14	22/24	6/6	9,5
Student 17	11/14	23/24	3/6	8,3
Student 18	5/14	6/24	2/6	3
Student 19	12/14	15/24	1/6	6,4
Student 20	13/14	22/24	3/6	8,6
Student 21	10/14	20/24	6/6	8,2
Student 22	9/14	8/24	0/6	4
Student 23	8/14	14/24	2/6	5,4
Student 24	12/14	16/24	4/6	7,3
Student 25	13/14	18/24	6/6	8,5
Student 26	14/14	20/24	4/6	8,7
Student 27	14/14	15/24	5/6	7,9
Student 28	11/14	12/24	1/6	5,5
Student 29	11/14	21/24	4/6	8,4
Student 30	14/14	21/24	3/6	8,6
Student 31	14/14	23/24	6/6	9,8

Student 32	7/14	23/24	6/6	8
Student 33	14/14	20/24	6/6	9,2
Student 34	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 35	14/14	22/24	6/6	9,6
Student 36	14/14	22/24	5/6	9,8
Student 37	13/14	24/24	6/6	8,5
Student 38	10/14	15/24	5/6	6,9
Student 39	9/14	19/24	5/6	7,5
Student 40	13/14	23/24	6/6	9

Control Group (Traditional system)

	Listening (35%)	Reading (50%)	Writing (15%)	Grades
Student 1	5/14	8/24	0/6	2,9
Student 2	8/14	11/24	1/6	4,5
Student 3	8/14	14/24	1/6	5,2
Student 4	14/14	19/24	4/6	8,5
Student 5	14/14	23/24	6/6	9,8
Student 6	12/14	13/24	4/6	6,7
Student 7	11/14	9/24	0/6	4,6
Student 8	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 9	14/14	23/24	6/6	9,8
Student 10	12/14	18/24	6/6	8,3

Student 11	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 12	14/14	22/24	6/6	9,6
Student 13	7/14	13/24	1/6	4,7
Student 14	13/14	22/24	3/6	8,6
Student 15	14/14	23/24	6/6	9,8
Student 16	11/14	16/24	1/6	7,3
Student 17	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 18	14/14	23/24	5/6	9,6
Student 19	9/14	18/24	2/6	6,5
Student 20	10/14	20/24	1/6	6,9
Student 21	12/14	18/24	0/6	6,8
Student 22	11/14	22/24	5/6	8,6
Student 23	14/14	23/24	3/6	9
Student 24	10/14	17/24	2/6	6,5
Student 25	13/14	16/24	1/6	6,8
Student 26	14/14	22/24	5/6	9,3
Student 27	13/14	23/24	1/6	8,3
Student 28	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 29	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 30	13/14	19/24	4/6	8,4
Student 31	13/14	19/24	4/6	8,2
Student 32	13/14	18/24	4/6	8
Student 33	14/14	23/24	5/6	9,6

Student 34	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 35	13/14	17/24	1/6	7
Student 36	12/14	13/24	1/6	6
Student 37	14/14	24/24	6/6	10
Student 38	11/14	19/24	0/6	6,7
Student 39	9/14	8/24	0/6	3,9
Student 40	6/14	16/24	0/6	4,8