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CHAPTER 4: TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING¹

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In teaching as well as other settings, the digital revolution is taking place. Schools need to keep up with major developments in the world, and the language education field has not been left unaffected either. Technology and the opportunities it offers for language teaching/learning are very much in line with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the method which is aimed at equipping language learners with the communicative competence and skills necessary for functioning in various situations and communication modes, which these days embraces personal as well as digital interactions.

The abundance of research articles dealing with Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) emphasizes the importance of online communications in language teaching these days, and is another indicator of the fact that another revolution in the field of language teaching might be taking place. However, the situation this time is somewhat different: it is not the major methodological principles or philosophy of how languages are learnt that has been changing, but the interpretation and value attached to the concept of communication itself. Consequently, the goals of CLT as well as the means to achieve these goals have broadened considerably.

Chapter Overview

The importance of technology-enhanced language teaching is described in Section 4.2. Section 4.3 deals with various forms of technology tools that can be exploited in CLT to make it more modernized and relevant to learners' modern-day communicative needs. It provides some introductory comments with regard to what 'blended' teaching/learning means and aims at and how the technology resources can be categorized in the light of language learning/teaching purposes. Issues and difficulties associated with the successful adoption and application of technology-enhanced language teaching are summarized in Section 4.4. Section 4.5 provides recommendations regarding the important points which should not be overlooked while trying to combine more conventional language teaching with technology-led teaching experiences. Section 4.6 concludes Chapter 4 with a summary of important points made throughout the chapter.

¹ Parts of this chapter are based on an article called "Technology as a Tool Towards Educational Reform: Implementing Communicative Language Teaching in Georgia" (Edisherashvili & Smakman 2013).

4.2 IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING TODAY

Modern technologies have entered all aspects of human life and language teaching is not an exception. As was claimed by an education expert Chapman, computers are transforming communications and the economy, and every child should be exposed to this technology to understand the significance of this transformation (1998:2). Every high school graduate should know how to use a computer and the Internet, have some grasp of how to find information on the Internet, and have general knowledge about how computers are used by businesses, governments, educational institutions, as well as by people in their homes (Chapman, 1998:2). Taylor and Fratto (2012) emphasize the importance of technology use in education and note: “Our education systems must reflect our students’ world or we will not only miss the opportunity to capture their attention, but also forgo their full potential to learn and grow” (2012:8). As for the use of technology in the language classroom, it has reportedly been claimed to be beneficial, contributing to making learners more motivated and engaged in the study process, which is also made much more learner-centered (Stepp-Greany, 2002:165).

CLT is claimed to be an approach maximally oriented at satisfying the practical language needs of the learner. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:151). The needs named these days are writing e-mails, navigating the Web, finding information online, chatting online, to name a few. Technology makes it possible to practice the language to meet these requirements. For example, while students in the past would practice their writing by producing a letter addressed to an imaginary person, now an e-mail format is recommended for informal writing purposes; instead of reading a text from a coursebook, there is a possibility to get online and read updated, recent information which would match the learner’s needs and current interests. All of these possibilities make the learning/teaching process more authentic and reflect students’ real-life needs. Warschauer and Meskill (2000) make another interesting point about the integration of technology and language teaching:

New communication technologies are part of the broader ecology of life ... much of the reading, writing and communication is migrating from other environments (print, telephone, etc) to the screen. In such a context, we can no longer think only about how we use technologies to teach a language. We also must think about what types of language students need to learn in order to communicate effectively via computer (2000:310).

Looking back at the history of language teaching, it can be noticed that each method was accompanied by some form of technology or innovation of that time. For example, the Grammar Translation method, which primarily focused on “one-way transmission of information” (through translations, provision of

grammar rules and linguistic theory), made great use of the blackboard (since the 1840s). Later, the overhead projector (since the 1960s), another excellent tool for teacher-dominated classroom instruction, also came into use, and is still employed in schools for various purposes; audio tapes were quite popular among the practitioners of the Audio Lingual Method (1960s). Currently, technologies need to be used in a more interactive way than previously, however. The time for Interactive White Boards, Multimedia software and many more Computer- and Internet-based resources has come (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000:303-304).

Considerable efforts have also been made at the education policy level to support technology-integrated education in Georgia, which together with other efforts made on the Georgian government's part to transform language teaching in the country will be discussed in the following chapter (see Sections 5.4 and 5.5 below).

4.3 VARIOUS FORMS OF TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) can be described as blended teaching and learning. In TELL Technology-based resources can be exploited and blended with the more conventional practices of Communicative Language Teaching and the face-to-face classroom component can be integrated with some online teaching/learning opportunities. Accordingly, it can be characterized as an efficient teaching mode combining the best of the teacher with the best of the technology to offer the best mix of course delivery modes and an optimal language learning experience (Sharma, 2010:457).

Despite the efficiency and convenience that fusing online and face-to-face teaching components offers, there are some challenges associated with combining these two different teaching modes. According to Sharma (2010), application of TELL without a principled approach may be seen as an 'eclectic' blending together of the course components, and can result in a chaotic course structure. Face-to-face and the online components of a course need to be well-coordinated and balanced, with the teacher always assuming the main role and driving force in the lesson (2010:456).

Two categories of technology resources can be classified within CLT according to Warschauer and Meskill (2000:4): the ones that contribute to the enhancement of the cognitive knowledge of a language (e.g. language practice software, multimedia software, etc.), and the ones that can be used for the development of socio-cognitive competence in a language (e.g. the Internet). The first category can be referred to as Computer-Assisted Language Instruction (CALI), whereas the second qualifies more as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the former implying more of a teacher-centered, and the latter more of a student-centered approach of teaching, exploiting

digital resources for more communicative and social purposes (Davies & Higgins, 1982:3). Both categories can be referred to as Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), as the term encompasses the concepts of both types of technology use in the process of language teaching. Since the focus in the present study is on Communicative Language Teaching, below only CALL tools will be looked at and the advantages and challenges related to using such technologies in the framework of Communicative Language Teaching will be analyzed.

4.3.1 Online communication opportunities and CLT

As already mentioned above, these days online communication has become as important as person-to-person interaction. Thus, employing online communication in language teaching becomes not only a tool for teaching but an end in itself at the same time. Some argue that online communication opportunities, when learners find themselves in an environment where they have to use the foreign language for completing authentic tasks, have a similar effect as study abroad and language immersion programs do (Kabata, 2011:104). However, it should also be born in mind that such activities are most effective when they are well-integrated into the course goals and thoroughly organized to serve the language teaching rather than chatting or information exchange purposes (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000:310).

Current technology provides two distinct formats for online interaction: asynchronous and synchronous (Johnson, 2006:46). According to Romiszowski and Mason, “[s]ynchronous interaction occurs in real time and involves students’ and teachers’ simultaneous participation”, whereas asynchronous interaction occurs in delayed time and does not necessitate simultaneous participation (cited in Johnson, 2006:46). I will look at each of the groups in turn and analyze their advantages and disadvantages for foreign language learning/teaching.

One of the best-known online asynchronic communication tools is e-mail, which has been called “the mother of all Internet applications” (Warschauer et al., 2000:307). It is a “system for sending and receiving messages electronically over a computer network. E-mail is asynchronous and does not require the receiver of the message to be online at the time the message is sent or received”.²

While e-mail is now no “high tech” communication medium any more, it is still highly beneficial for foreign language learning in a communicative way. There are quite a few ways to incorporate e-mail in Communicative Language Teaching. One of them is group e-mail exchanges, where students discuss

² The definition of e-mail was retrieved from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/> (accessed September, 2012).

certain topics as a group, for pre- or post-lesson activity preparation or follow-up activities. E-mails can also be used for collaborative projects, to establish contacts with e-pals, to give feedback, and many other purposes (Kupelian, 2001:1). According to Jung (1999), e-mail may replace less communicative situations with more genuine and immediate interactions involving real people and real situations: “e-mail-based projects can be motivating and exciting to students because they (students) interact with real people about real things in a meaningful context” (Jung, 1999:221). Research has shown that e-mail use for development of writing skills in a foreign language considerably improves learners’ abilities as well as overall attitudes towards language learning and its practice (Perez, 2003:90).

A disadvantage of using e-mail in language teaching is that the language skills practice it offers is limited. E-mail is of little use for developing learners’ listening or speaking competence and focuses primarily on writing. As for the drawback that the writing practice involves, critics point out that through writing e-mails only the informal register is practised, and fewer possibilities are provided for more formal writing practice, the argument which seems to be debatable. On top of that, when writing e-mails, students tend to come up with shorter written output than when they have to produce a more traditional paper-based piece of writing (Gonzales-Bueno & Perez, cited in Perez, 2003:90).

Other examples of asynchronous online communication tools are webfora and blogs. A web forum,

or a message board, is an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. They differ from chat rooms in that messages are archived. Also, depending on the access level of a user or the forum set-up, a posted message might need to be approved by a moderator before it becomes visible.³

In language teaching, web forums can be used to put learners and the learning object on the same page and encourage users to get involved in natural communication, in the form of a discussion or a debate, for instance (Koochang 2009:91). Online forums provide a great way to improve the quality of students’ language learning skills. Learners independently get engaged in meaningful communication and identify their communicative strengths and weaknesses. They write freely, as the inhibitions of face-to-face contact are not present. However, as Kroonenberg (1995:24) remarks, together with the freedom learners have expressing themselves in writing, they are also aware of the fact that their text will be read by many, which keeps them focused on the message of the text as well as the accuracy of it.

³ The definition of *web forum* was taken from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inte_rnet_forum (accessed September, 2012).

However, certain pre-conditions have to be met in order to successfully integrate web forums in CLT. Teachers need to be skillful in using the medium, carefully select relevant forums for teaching purposes and be willing to dedicate some time to taking part in the discussions with students on a regular basis. Active involvement of a teacher is very important, which will make the whole process more motivating and exciting for the students (Anderson, 2004:48). Russo and Benson (2005:55) further argue that teacher involvement largely defines the degree of learners' satisfaction in the learning process.

As for weblogs, also known as blogs or online personal journals, these are examples of collaborative technology which provides individuals with an opportunity to express and share their ideas with the public (Bakar, 2009:594). Though most blogs are mainly "textual", there are other types of blogs as well, such as blogs focusing on art (artlog), photographs (photo blog), drawing (sketch blog), videos (vlog), music (MP3 blogs), or audio (podcasting) (Rozgiene et al., 2008:13). Blogs reach out to a wider network of social communities, which might be involved in discussions around a particular topic or issue. In CLT blogs can be exploited by learners to discuss the grammar issues they find difficult to understand, or to exchange/update information on the project they are involved in or the subject they are studying.

The use of blogs in language teaching is gaining popularity as it is perceived to be in line with the language teaching pedagogical models which stress the importance of constructive learning the way CLT does (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002:97-101) and which encourages learners' meaningful learning through active, manipulative, reflective ways (Barak, 2009:585). As argued by Blood, writing in blogs has a self-empowerment effect and develops writers' thoughtfulness and critical writing skills (2002:7). In addition, using blogs encourages English website explorations and communication with "cyber communities" (Bakar, 2009:596).

The possibility for readers to leave comments in an interactive format are an important part of many blogs. This feature may be utilized by both teachers and learners as an attractive and stimulating language learning opportunity. Most of the time, writers post about their thoughts, emotions, and reactions to various things, focusing primarily on the message and paying less attention to the form. This type of communication format is well-reflective of CLT principles of collaborative, meaning-focused teaching/learning (Oravec, 2002:616). Blogging also encourages a more student-centered atmosphere as well as students' autonomy in the process of language learning (Bakar, 2009:595). In the same way as web forums do (see above), blogs also help with developing learners' critical thinking and writing skills in a foreign language – as students know that their ideas will be displayed for public observation, they are more critical towards what and how they write (Brown, 2004:260), contributing

to the development of meaningful and at the same time accurate communication skills.

There are limitations to applying blogging in CLT, however, such as a difficulty in using this tool with students with lower language proficiency. Also, blogs by themselves cannot help learners learn a language unless it comes with a well-planned and organized language activity (Barak, 2009:603). Creative guidance, and proper feedback on the part of the instructor is also a must after a blogging session (Fageeh, 2011:42).

And in the end, there is some evidence that suggests that exploitation of asynchronous online communication tools in language teaching can be enjoyable as well as beneficial for language learners. There is some evidence that students involved in asynchronous online communication experience a higher level of course satisfaction and score higher (Koory, 2003:1; Johnson, 2006:69-70). Below follows a summary of some of the main strengths and weaknesses of asynchronous online tools for CLT classroom use.

Advantages:

- Use of these tools reduces anxiety, and relieves the stress associated with face-to-face communication (Hoffman, 1996:24).
- It allows archiving, which gives teachers, as well as students, a chance to more carefully review the written output and introduce corrections (Branon & Essex, 2001:36).
- It helps develop “higher order thinking skills” as it allows learners more time to organize thoughts and write them down before posting (Sharma & Barrett, 2007:105).

Disadvantages:

- Lack of immediate feedback.
- Students not checking the discussion often enough.
- The time it takes for discussions to mature.
- Less social interaction than in face-to-face or in synchronous chatting (Dede & Kramer, 1999:4).

As for synchronous online communication tools, Park and Bonk (2007) comment that “synchronous communication has a great potential to increase individual participation and performance”, and allows for instant feedback and authentic communication (Park & Bonk, 2007:245). Below, some tools of synchronous communication that can be used in CLT will be discussed. One of these is instant messaging, while others are the use of Skype and Facebook.

Instant messaging (IM) is a form of online communication that allows real-time (or close to real-time) interaction through personal computers or mobile computing devices. Users can exchange messages privately, similar to e-mail, or join group conversations (Skype messenger, Google messenger, msn messenger). Instant messaging allows to meet in a networked computer lab and

communicate via writing rather than talk face-to-face. The entire session can be saved and passed on to students for further observation and error correction. Even though this form of communication might seem a little artificial in the CLT language classroom, it has its advantages. First, it offers less outspoken pupils a better chance to be an equal part of the discussion; second, it enables students to better notice and understand the input of the classmates; third, it allows learners more time to reflect on the language used and come up with more complex and interesting language structures. A possibility to save the written record of the conversation provides learners with a chance to go back and see what they came up with while communicating spontaneously.

Skype is another efficient synchronous communication tool, which offers a free and easy way to access the world; it goes beyond learners' classrooms and provides opportunities of learning through communicating with other people. Skype also allows for audio and video calls, instant messaging, and chat file and screen sharing, which help language learners to develop their language skills in the most authentic and interactive way possible. Through Skype things such as arranging an interview with a native speaker from another country, organizing international collaborative projects with other classrooms worldwide, sharing presentations among peers from other parts of the world, making virtual world trips, having guest speakers in the lesson – is all free of charge and just “a mouse click away” (Eaton, 2010:1).

Using Skype in language teaching is not free from accompanying challenges: technical problems, which are quite common in the process of technology exploitation, might result in a waste of time and frustration. Teachers have to be extremely organized and well-prepared for setting up a Skype session. As Skype provides a real-time experience, fixing a mutually convenient time for all parties involved in the Skype communication might take some effort. And finally, the proper infrastructure, technical support at schools as well as special skills on the teachers' part are absolutely necessary to make the whole experience possible (Vila, 2010:1). Below follows a summary of some of the main strengths and weaknesses of synchronous online communication tools that can be used in CLT classrooms, as compared with face-to-face or asynchronous modes of online communication.

Advantages:

- Synchronous online communication helps learners develop fluency though unplanned, spontaneous communication.
- It bears more social characteristics than asynchronous online communication.
- It encourages more learner participation than asynchronous communication.
- It offers immediate response and feedback possibilities.

- It allows for the use of visual and audio aids in the process of communication (video/web conferencing) – body language, tone of voice (Hines & Pearl, 2004:34).

Disadvantages:

- Real-time online meetings are difficult to coordinate – to get all the participants online at the same time.
- It is difficult to moderate longer discussions.
- It requires special technical skills on the teachers' part.
- It is disadvantageous for poor typists.
- It lacks documentation, as the text is not archived (Branon & Essex, 2001:36).

The Internet provides many social networking websites, which function as an online community of the Internet users. Facebook (FB) is one, if not the most popular of them, these days. The popularity of Facebook as a language teaching/learning tool has been determined by the fact that it has become an omnipresent online medium, which millions of people all over the world use to communicate and keep in touch. It is also a source of much interesting and authentic information about different topics (Kabilan, et al., 2010:3). Although Facebook offers the functions that can be found in other programs as well, its comprehensive character, as well as the ease with which its users can employ all of its features, defines the distinctive nature and popularity of this social networking tool (Kabilan et al., 2010:2).

According to Godwin-Jones (2008) the tools and platforms such as FB, which “enhance communication and human interaction can potentially be harnessed for language learning” (2008:7). According to Kabilan et al., (2010) “learning of English in FB is feasible. This is because the technologies that support FB and features that characterize FB are able to engage students in meaningful language-based activities” (2010:7). Agreeing with the above views, and further emphasizing the benefit that FB can bring to the CLT classroom, below, some of the CLT language learning theories and principles that can be largely realized through and supported by FB are provided: “incidental learning”, “socially-situated learning”, “knowledge construction”, as well as “[language] observation” “repetition”, “problem-solving”, “learning from mistakes”, “learning by doing”, and “critical analysis” (Kabilan et al., 2010:2-3). Possibilities of sharing pictures, videos, web links, as well as chatting, creating groups, events, providing feedback, for instance, can all be efficiently exploited for language teaching purposes and make the learning process a part of a whole, natural communication process that most of us are involved in on a daily basis (Blattner, & Fiori, 2009:19–20; Mathews, 2010:1). Thus, Facebook can be described as a tool which helps with “developing language learners’ socio-pragmatic awareness and competence through meaningful intervention,

and for promoting their cross-cultural understanding” (Blattner, & Fiori, 2009:22).

Recent investigations have shown that Facebook can have a positive effect on the student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationship as well (Mazer et al., 2007:1). Mazer and his colleagues noted that by accessing a social networking website, students may see similarities with peers and instructors’ personal interests, which contributes to enhanced communication and better learning results. O’Sullivan and his colleagues (2004) discovered that students who have access to teacher websites containing self-disclosed information reported high levels of motivation and demonstrated a boost in learning. Moreover, students developed more positive feelings towards the teacher as well as the learning process itself (2004:464). Below follows a summary of some of the views regarding the main strengths and weaknesses of Facebook use in CLT classroom.

Advantages:

- It boosts learners’ motivation and engagement in the language learning (Kabilan et al., 2010:7).
- It enhances learners’ communication skills (Kabilan et al., 2010:7).
- It promotes collaborative work and learning from one another (Blattner & Fiori, 2009:19–20).
- It facilitates the development of socio-pragmatic and intercultural awareness in second language learners (Blattner & Fiori, 2009:22).
- It facilitates contact with native speakers (Blattner & Fiori, 2009:22).
- It contributes to “incidental” language learning, especially vocabulary acquisition, and the development of informal writing (Kabilan et al., 2010:7).

Disadvantages:

- Difficulty with the time management while working on FB (Fodeman & Monroe, 2009:36).
- Difficult for learners to stay focused on the learning goals only.
- Develops mainly non-academic language knowledge (Kabilan et al., 2010:7).
- Unless FB is integrated in classroom teaching in a skillful manner, and unless proper pedagogic value is attributed to its use, the learning process might become disorganized (Yunus et al., 2012:45).
- Thus, the potential of Facebook to be exploited for the purposes of learning and teaching English as well as other languages should not be underestimated these days. This is especially true for CLT classrooms, where authentic communication, synchronous or asynchronous, is the primary target of language teaching/learning. The challenges related to

its use, however, should also be duly acknowledged and dealt with (Kabilan, et al., 2010:2).

To conclude the discussion about the asynchronous and synchronous online communication tools and the opportunities that their use in CLT classrooms offers, it should be mentioned that this area is still under-investigated. Consequently, it is difficult to make strong claims about whether it is online or face-to-face communication opportunities that result in better outcomes in communicative language classes. It is also debatable whether these are synchronous or asynchro-nous online communication tools that are conducive to better communicative proficiency results on the language learners' part. According to Johnson, "[b]oth synchronous and asynchronous forms of online discussion have advantages and there is evidence that both contribute to students' cognitive and affective outcomes, albeit in distinct fashion" (2006:51). However, further research and reflection is still necessary in order to arrive at more decisions with regard to how to integrate technology in communicative language teaching in a consistent and efficient manner.

4.3.2 Other web-based resources and CLT

The Internet offers a number of very useful language learning websites which offer many multidimensional language practice opportunities, aimed at learners' language knowledge as well as at the improvement of language skills. Variety, its up-to-date nature, the possibility of offering immediate correction and feedback opportunities and learner independence are some of the highlights that characterize online language practice exercises and which make such tools more attractive to language learners than their traditional paper alternatives (Sharma & Barrett, 2007:42).

Another interesting web-based resource that can be exploited in CLT is what is called Virtual Worlds. Virtual World learning platforms are the latest technology that is gaining popularity in education and language training. Perhaps the best-known example of Virtual World is Second Life. In Virtual World, users can take on the form of imaginary characters, sometimes special virtual creatures, and live their lives in simulated environments (Berns et al., 2012:215). Virtual World is an efficient tool for flexible, collaborative and experiential learning. Learners are plunged into a virtual world, within a community of native speakers. The participants become cyber community members and feel physically present in a shared local space. Participants are also given a chance to practice completing real-life tasks – participate in meetings and hold brief talks in a foreign language (Palomaki & Nordback, 2012:1). Below follows a summary of some of the views regarding the main strengths and weaknesses associated with online practice programs and VW tools used for language teaching purposes.

Advantages:

- The use of Virtual World tools allows for a maximum engagement and immersion into authentic environments.
- The sense of a physical presence helps develop stronger conceptual understanding of the content.
- Virtual Worlds are interactive, motivating and activating.
- They develop students' independence.
- They help to lower learners' anxiety – learners are more open and free in communication.

Disadvantages:

- VWs are a comparatively new and underexplored technology tool in language teaching.
- Dealing with technical breakdowns is an issue.
- The use of Virtual Worlds requires extensive pedagogic support to enable teachers to employ this tool to its full potential.
- Using Virtual Worlds might be a daunting experience for some (Rozgiene et al., 2008:11).

Wikis, another internet-based resource, present interesting opportunities for use in CLT as well. They allow “visitors to add, remove, and edit content collaboratively” (Rozgiene et al., 2008:13). According to Wagner (2004), “Wikis (from wikiwiki, meaning ‘fast’ in Hawaiian) are a promising new technology that supports “conversational knowledge creation and sharing” (2004:265). A good example of a large wiki is Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia in many languages that anyone can edit. Wikis provide many opportunities for students to develop their language knowledge, skills and experiences in a very motivating and engaging way (Papadima-Sophocleous, 2012:179). While using Wikis, learners are actively involved in collaborative work, where they are engaged in reviewing and displaying information for real public observation in real time. This experience can have highly motivating effects on learners and form a valuable assessment basis for the teacher/tutor (Wagner, 2004:265). Wikis are largely socially oriented, are open source and can be exploited for a wide variety of purposes and they can be used for things like knowledge management and collaboration.

To sum up, the use of Wikis in language teaching supports collaborative learning, the students' active role in learning, learners' independence, group/pair work, authenticity of interaction and materials used; all of these language teaching aspects are strongly advocated by CLT and completely compatible with its main principles. Below follows a summary of some of the views (Wagner, 2004:265–289) regarding the main strengths and weaknesses associated with the use of Wikis for language teaching purposes.

Advantages:

- The use of Wikis is a quick and simple way for collaborative work and for promoting group unity.
- It offers opportunities for authentic language work.
- It promotes independence and content ownership.
- It encourages peer-correction.
- It increases motivation.

Disadvantages:

- It requires well-designed instruction and careful selection of the tasks on the part of the teacher.
- It requires careful distribution of roles and tasks by the teacher.
- Most Wikis focus on writing; consequently, students need to already have a minimum level in the L2 and be able to produce some words, phrases, or sentences (less suitable for lower levels) (Rozgiene, 2008:40).

A podcast is defined as “a digital media file, or a series of such files, that is distributed over the Internet for playback on portable media players and personal computers”.⁴ To put it differently, it is a group of files (in general, audio or video files, but also images, text, PDF, or any other file type) placed at a certain web address. People can subscribe to certain podcasts and when the new material about the subject becomes available, users are automatically updated about this and the material is downloaded to their computer.⁵ In Wikipedia, we read: “Podcasting is becoming increasingly popular in education. It can be a tool for teachers or administrators to communicate curriculum, assignments and other information with parents and the community. Podcasting can be a publishing tool for student oral presentations. Video podcasts can be used in all these ways as well”.⁶ Language learning has been identified as one of the disciplines likely to benefit from developments in podcasting (Kukulska-Hulme, 2006:119). It provides access to authentic materials and provides opportunities for learning much about the country where the target language is spoken (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007:476). Language teachers can direct their learners to podcasts available on the Internet for self-study purposes or make learners listen to them in class via a computer.

Podcasting can be used as a platform for sharing information with anyone at any time – between administrators, teachers, learners and their parents about various aspects of teaching and learning. An absent student can download a podcast of a missed lesson that was recorded; teachers can record students’ oral presentations, foreign language lessons, interviews and debates

⁴ For retrieved from <http://www.baysidejobs.com.au/480/-676536/user-community> (accessed September 2012).

⁵ Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting> (accessed September 2012).

⁶ Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting> (accessed September 2012).

(Rozgiene et al., 2008:13), as well as audio recordings of texts, pronunciation samples, oral feedback, audio exercises, songs, and “audio flashcards” where the key vocabulary items are read out loud (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007:480). Below follows a summary of the main strengths and weaknesses associated with use of Podcasting for language teaching purposes.

Advantages:

- Using podcasts is motivating and engaging.
- It promotes language use for authentic communication purposes.
- It supports developing the learning skills – “lifelong learning” (Naismith et al., 2005:4).
- It is a great source of authentic language learning materials (Wiley, 2000:7).
- It offers “mobile learning” (Kukulka-Hulme, 2005:2).

Disadvantages:

- Using podcasts increases teacher “workload” and preparation time.
- It entails depreciation of the value of classroom presence and interaction.
- Using podcasts can be “time-consuming”: “Podcasts cannot be skimmed” and the teacher/learner has to listen to the whole recording to check its suitability or appropriateness for the purpose, or when in need to listen to certain parts of it only (Sloan, 2005; Menzies, 2005; Blaisdell, 2005 cited in Rosell-Aguilar 2007:480).

Another online tool – YouTube –, which is defined in Wikipedia as: “a video-sharing website on which users can upload, view and share videos. A wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content, such as, video blogging and short original videos can be found on YouTube”.⁷

It is one of the most popular web-based tools among the students belonging to the generation of so-called “digital natives” – a person who has grown up with digital technology (Prensky, 2001:1). Thus, the use of YouTube, with all its functions – creating, watching, and sharing the videos – in foreign language teaching will most likely result in much enthusiasm and positive attitudes towards the language learning experience among learners (Terantino, 2011:10).

YouTube provides an opportunity to watch videos about virtually any topic. It offers great opportunity to teachers to choose the material as relevant to the course topic and students’ interests as possible. Watching videos on YouTube can provide learners not only with authentic language samples, but

⁷ Definition retrieved from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube> (accessed September 2012).

also with content on the culture of the target language, which is important for developing their understanding of the socio-cultural aspect of the foreign language. YouTube can also be a perfect tool for helping learners practice their listening skills by watching an interesting video, which might as well lead to an interesting follow-up discussions (Terantino, 2011:12).

Other possibilities that YouTube offers language learners include an opportunity for students to record and upload videos themselves, as the documentation of their project work, for example. YouTube videos also allow students to collaborate on language-based projects, which they can also share on the web, and get real feedback to their final product from a real public. The whole experience can serve as motivation for students in the process of language learning (Terantino, 2011:13).

There are also some deeper, more scientific advantages associated with the use of YouTube in language teaching. As cited in Terantino (2011):

Berk (2009) describes a review of theoretical and research-based studies related to the use of videos and the brain. He discusses how the use of videos has been found to benefit students by connecting to their multiple intelligences, both hemispheres of the brain, and to the emotional sense of the students.

Also, according to ‘picture superiority effect’ (Cattell, 1886), things are much more memorable when seen as an image rather than in a written form (cited in Terantino, 2011:11). Below follows a summary of some of the views regarding the main strengths and weaknesses associated with the use of YouTube for language learning/teaching purposes.

Advantages:

- YouTube helps with better remembering the presented material
- It provides both linguistic as well as cultural content for language learning, which can be used for a variety of purposes in the study process (presentation, illustration, stimulation, motivation).
- It is particularly useful for providing authentic materials for “less commonly taught languages”.
- It encourages student “participation”, “collaboration”, “creativity”, and “freedom of expression” (Terantino, 2011:10-14).
- YouTube can also be used as an offline tool – videos can be easily downloaded and used later even on a computer without the Internet connection.

Disadvantages:

- It is necessary that appropriateness of the videos created as well as watched by learners is carefully monitored.

- Preparing YouTube material for classroom teaching can be time-consuming – the teacher has to choose the right video relevant for classroom use from millions of available videos on YouTube, as well as make a plan for its proper integration into the study process.
- Accessing videos online might be related to some unexpected technical problems, and lack of reliability. Thus, the teacher needs to be prepared for dealing with the problem as needed.
- A good Internet connection is also necessary to provide easy access to the videos available online (Terantino, 2011:14).
- Advertisements can be time-consuming and annoying.

As with any other types of technology used in language teaching, in the case of YouTube as well, it is important that the teacher maintains the right balance and adopts ‘pedagogic’ approach while exploiting its potential for classroom teaching purposes (Terantino, 2011:15).

To conclude the discussion about the web-based resources used for communication (Section 4.3.1) as well as other purposes (Section 4.2.2), it should be reiterated that the myriad of opportunities that the World Wide Web offers for communicative language learning, is an invaluable asset in the communicative language classes: fluency oriented work, focus on meaningful communication, skills development, authentic material provided all in the target language; flexibility, independence and active involvement of language learners in the learning process and their own knowledge construction; student-focused, student-oriented mode of teaching – most of CLT principles can be easily realized through online tools. Rozgien et al. (2008) sum up the opportunities the World Wide Web offers in the following way: “the Web is both a source of authentic materials covering different topics, repository of specific Language Teaching sites, a tool for communication and a medium for collaboration” (2008:35). The World Wide Web brings students out of their classrooms into a cross-cultural environment and gives them an opportunity to be immersed in the authentic discourse of the world. This is especially essential for students who are learning the target foreign language in non-native environment with the help of non-native teachers (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000:9).

4.3.3 Other digital tools and CLT – interactive white board (IWB)

According to Gage (2005) “an IWB is essentially a large computer screen, which is sensitive to touch” (2005:1). A slightly more elaborate definition of the IWB is that of a combination of a computer, an electronic projector and a whiteboard, which allows a number of useful manipulations for the language classroom (Leithner, 2009:35; Gage, 2005:3). Gages (2005), when discussing the benefits of the use of this digital tool for teaching purposes, remarks that “an interactive whiteboard facilitates interactivity”. It is exactly the latter merit that is attached to the IWB that makes its exploitation different from simply using a

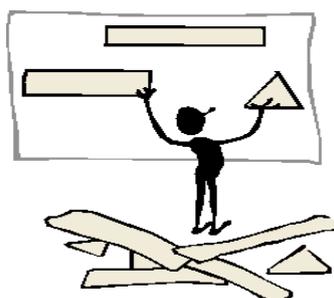
“large computer image” and turns this tool into an efficient means for supporting Communicative Language Teaching (2005:133).

There are two types of interactive whiteboards: the first is a ‘virtual’ electronic version of a regular board on a computer that enables learners in a virtual classroom to view what an instructor, presenter or fellow learner writes or draws. This type of IWB is also referred to as an electronic whiteboard

The second type is a more multifunctional one. As Williams and Easingwood (2004) put it:

Multifunctional Interactive White Board technology allows you to write or draw on the surface, print off the image, save it to the computer or distribute it over a network. You can also project a computer screen image onto the surface of the whiteboard and then either control the application by touching the board directly or by using a special pen. The computer image can be annotated or drawn over and the annotations saved to disc or sent by email to others (2004:46).

Figure 5.1 provides an image of the use of an IWB use in a language classroom.



4.1 Image of an interactive white board and its classroom use⁸

There is also some research evidence that the IWB can be used for stimulating discussion, problem-solving skills as well as whole class involvement in the study process (Gage, 2005:8). For creative teachers, there are some programs available for IWB that allow the creation of material, presentation as well as practice. These days more and more coursebooks are created which have an IWB version as well. Such programs allow adaptation and customization of the teaching material for individual classroom use. According to Sharma and Barrette (2011), “[s]tandard functions of IWB include possibilities to zoom in on certain parts of the page, to have audio files and transcripts readily available,

⁸ Image retrieved from <http://etec.ctlt.ubc.ca/510/wiki/images/5/58/StudentsUsingtheSMARTboard.jpg> (accessed September 2012).

to quickly check the answers of an exercise (Sharma & Barrette, 2011:2)⁹. Below follows a summary of some of the advantages and issues, based on Sharma and Barrette's (2011) arguments, related to the IWB use in a language classroom.

Advantages

- Offers possibilities of alternative modes of language presentation integrating a wide range of material into a lesson such as an image or a text from the Internet, or a graph from a spreadsheet, becomes feasible.
- Allows creation of customized learning material to meet the needs of the class.
- Frees learners from note-taking – the classroom becomes a “heads up” environment rather than having students stare into their text books.
- Facilitates resource sharing.
- Useful for providing feedback – when used for interactive testing of understanding for the entire class, the IWB can help provide a whole class feedback in a quick and efficient manner.
- Time-saving – the teacher who prepares and saves a lesson in an interactive whiteboard can reuse the lesson with the other group

Disadvantages:

- Interactive whiteboards are much more expensive to obtain and maintain than traditional whiteboards.
- Some technical skills are needed exploit and deal with certain technical problems which might arise while using IWB. (Sharma & Barrett, 2011:2-5)

In the end, it should be noted that the IWB will not have much value for classroom teaching unless efficiently exploited and integrated in the lesson by the teacher, and if she/he fails to do so, “a powerful piece of technology will be simply used as a large display screen” (Toyn, 2007:133). As Toyn (2007) further elaborates, “[it] is the teachers who creates the opportunities for learning and uses the IWB to maximize the potential of those opportunities: it is not the board which determines how much interaction occurs, but the teacher using it” (2007:133). Thus, it is still the teacher's right decisions and efficiency which, in this as well as in other case of technology use, remain the key factors in determining the ultimate success of technology-enhanced language learning.

In the previous two sections the main digital tools that can be exploited in CLT have been discussed, and the advantages and challenges related to the use of each of these tools have been looked at. In the following

⁹ For more information about the functions of the IWB, see [http:// onlinehelp.mindjet.com/Help/Mind Manager/8/ ENU /im_ whiteboard_ function.htm](http://onlinehelp.mindjet.com/Help/Mind Manager/8/ ENU /im_ whiteboard_ function.htm) (accessed 2012 October).

section, advantages and disadvantages of technology-enhanced communicative language teaching will be explored in a more general manner.

4.4 SUMMARY OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

As discussed in the preceding sections, the most common resources available today, offline and online, which might be used in a Communicative Language Teaching class are: language practice software, multimedia simulation software, language games, Word, PowerPoint, teaching/learning sites, virtual worlds, e-mail, Web fora, blogs, Instant Messaging, Skype, Facebook, Wikipedia, podcasts, YouTube, and Interactive White Boards. Despite all the obvious advantages and practical benefits that it offers, technology-enhanced communicative language teaching still encounters resistance and many challenges in many parts of the world. Whereas there are opportunities to modernize language education by employing up-to-date technology resources, there are also pros and cons related to the application of technology in language teaching, which need to be carefully considered in order to achieve optimal results.

4.4.1 Advantages of using technology in CLT

Below follows a summary, in the form of a list, of the benefits the technology tools can offer for communicative language teaching.

Advantage #1. Learners are more engaged in the study process.

Integration of technology in the process of language teaching helps to transform classrooms from teacher-centered into student-centered learning environments (Pitler, 2006:41). The teacher no longer assumes the role of the sole knowledge-provider. Knowledge is constructed through real task completion, which is very much in line with CLT principles.

One of the teachers involved in the technology-related study of Ertmer et al. (2012) summarized his attitude towards truly communicative language teaching in the following way: "If you walk into my room and you are not sure if I am even there, but the kids are engaged, then I feel like I am being successful because it really has to be student-centered" (2012:431). Technology is a useful tool that might help create such a learner-centered environment in the process of teaching.

Advantage #2. The teaching is more communicative and interactive

Rozgien (2008) says that the Internet has become a great tool for communication in teaching, and a medium for collaboration. The Internet is especially useful for language teaching, as communication takes place through a language, which, within a technology-enhanced language teaching format, is a means to achieve communicative tasks and, at the same time, a study object itself. Social networking, blogging and chatting are some of the Internet-based tools which greatly contribute to a highly communicative and interactive mode of language instruction (2008:35).

Advantage # 3. More learner autonomy

With the aid of technology, students can make more choices and take on a more active role in their own learning (Pilter, 2006:41). They can propose, create, and test independent learning experiences in a foreign language; for example, create their own blogs, post their comments, and make videos. In all these tasks, language use plays an instrumental role; learners are immersed in purposeful communication, which contributes greatly to the improvement of their overall language proficiency (Ertmer et al., 2012:430).

Advantage #4. An inexhaustible source of authentic materials

When a language is taught in a country where this language is a non-native tongue of the local population (e.g. when English is taught in a non-English-speaking country, such as Georgia), the availability of adequate and appropriate teaching materials is often a problem.

Even though some think that retrieving online teaching materials through the Internet and tailoring them to the existing needs of language learners can be a time-consuming experience (Hémard & Cushion, 2002), it is hard to find a coursebook which would cater to most of learners' individual needs and interests. Under these circumstances, exploiting web-based resources can be an invaluable solution to the problem. Also, the authenticity of the Internet-based resources makes them more attractive and motivating for learners and can better prepare them for real-life communication (Sharma & Barrette, 2007:42).

Advantage #5. Motivating and encouraging

Students are more interested in the type of learning which involves activities that reflect their daily life experiences. This way learners see the benefits of their

learning practices and the direct application of the knowledge they are trying to gain, which is motivating and encouraging. Motivation is paramount to student success and one of the contributing factors to a more efficient learning process (Granito & Chernobilsk, 2012:3). Krashen, in line with this, observed that learners with a high motivation do better in second language acquisition (1982:31). Thus, the motivational role of technology use in Communicative Language Teaching has to be duly recognized.

Advantage #6. Relaxing learning atmosphere

In learning/teaching process, it learning/teaching process is always important to create a low-anxiety environment in which a productive learning process can take place. In language education this may be especially important since, in order to take in and produce the language, learners the need to feel that they are allowed to make mistakes and take risks. This relates directly to Krashen's Active Filter Hypothesis (1982). According to Krashen, learners must be non-anxious in the process of learning so as to enable them to acquire the language (1982:30). Technology is non-judgmental and does not involve direct personal evaluation, and this contributes to lowering the affective filter factor, resulting in more productive language learning. Shy learners who might feel intimidated in face-to-face communication are offered a wider range of interactional modes, where they might feel less stressed and freer to interact (Pilter, 2006:41).

Advantage #7. Integrated-skills development

Such activities as online projects and research contribute greatly to natural language skills development, as in order to complete authentic tasks collaboratively students speak, listen, write and read at the same time. A process of multiple skills acquisition thus takes place, which is also accompanied by a recycling of vocabulary and grammar, which is equally significant (Dooly & Masats, 2011:49).

More importantly, while working on such authentic collaborative tasks, learners use their language skills for learning purposes, which prepare them for life-long learning. This outcome goes far beyond the classroom boundaries and becomes an important life experience for language learners (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000:309).

Technology-enhanced learning also provides a multisensory and multi-format environment (Pilter, 2006:41) which greatly supports learners with different learning styles, preferences and abilities. According to Gardner (1983), in order to achieve optimal teaching results, the learners' individual "intelligences" must never be overlooked. For instance, some learners

remember things better when these things are presented in graphic form, some prefer hearing things, while for others seeing things (e.g., words or pictures) move is more useful. The computer can satisfy the needs of many types of learners, making material available to the learner in the form of a text, a video clip or a movie format (Berk, 2009:11).

Advantage #8. Technical benefits

Alongside the online tools, there are online computer-based resources, such as language practice software, language games, Microsoft Office programs (text processors, slide presentation tools, for instance), which, compared with the traditional procedures, contribute to the efficiency of Communicative Language Teaching by providing learners and teachers with more easy-to-use writing, editing, information saving, and material recycling tools, as well as correction and feedback provision possibilities (Valentin et al., 2013:56). The opportunities that such online technology offers help boost learners' and teachers' motivation and efficiency, and save time in their learning/teaching process (AbuSeileek, 2006:12; Garris et al., 2002:441).

4.4.2 Challenges of using technology in CLT

Besides offering useful ways of improving the classes, the same tools can pose serious challenges to both teachers and the schools. The challenges most frequently discussed in the literature are listed below.

Challenge #1. Expense of implementation

There are many start-up expenses, such as buying hardware and software, hiring and training technical personnel. As financial investment is indispensable in making a technology-enhanced teaching environment possible, this means that schools need to consider the cost-effectiveness of the efforts (Ringst & Kelley, 2002:23).

Challenge #2. Finding an appropriate methodology

As the computer is only a tool and a resource, not a method that can be used in the process of teaching (Garret, 1991:74), it is difficult to define beforehand whether it can be exploited to its fullest advantage and thus lead to satisfying results. Elaboration of an appropriate pedagogical approach and method is essential for making technology work and turning it into a useful teaching tool. According to Pilter (2006), “[i]f schools add technology without providing adequate professional development the only thing that will increase is their

electric bill” (2006:39). This idea is shared by Salehi (2012), according to whom the effectiveness of technology use in teaching largely depends on “how and why it is applied” (2012:215). Bringing new machines into the classroom simply to seem innovative does not help teaching or learning; on the contrary, in case of misuse, the technology application in the teaching process might have a reverse effect, namely demotivating students, who might perceive their interpersonal connections and personal power reduced (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000:14).

Also, it has been proved that short-term, one-time superficial teacher training programmes aimed at helping teachers integrate technology in teaching often turn out to have equally short-term effects. More systematic supervision and support need to be provided to teachers in order to have a more profound and long-lasting impact on their methodological capacities (Ringstaff & Kelly, 2000:12).

Challenge #3. Keeping up with technology development

Looking at the history of language teaching, it may be seen that each method was accompanied by some form of technology or innovation. For example, the Grammar Translation method, which primarily focused on a one-way transmission of information, made great use of the blackboard (since the 1840s). The blackboard was partly replaced by the overhead projector (since the 1960s), another tool for teacher-dominated classroom instruction. Computer software programs and audio tapes were popular among the practitioners of the Audio Lingual Method, in the 1960s. These tools were mostly offline, and development in this area continued in the subsequent decades and then peaked in the 1990s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:63).

It is a challenge for teachers to keep up with fast technological developments. Being able use technological tools effectively entails a good understanding and knowledge of what is available for classroom use. Staying up-to-date with modern trends in technology and constantly trying to think of ways to make those parts of the language teaching can be a time-consuming process, which requires constant dedication and enthusiasm from teachers (Sharma & Barrett 2003:3;).

Challenge #4. Technophobia

For some teachers, dealing with technology and effectively integrating it into the teaching methodology and curriculum can be a challenging and daunting experience (Sharma & Barrett, 2003:2). Technophobia is still present among some teachers and learners (Leither, 2009:35). This is a big obstacle, usually more for teachers than learners, and unless this fear is overcome the goal of making technology-enhanced teaching a common practice will be hard to achieve (Rozgiene et al., 2008:32).

Challenge #5. A lack of computer skills

Integrating technology in language teaching demands specific skills from teachers. A lack of necessary technical skills and confidence can be a factor preventing teachers from using technology in their teaching (Salehi, 2012:215). Before teachers try to come up with the proper methodology to efficiently combine technology and face-to-face teaching, it is important that they as well as their learners have some basic skills to build their language learning/teaching experiences upon (Rozgien et al., 2008:32-33).

Challenge #6. Limited suitability of tools

Using technology not only as the content of language learning but also as learning material and as a tool is especially efficient for more advanced language learners. The Internet, for example, offers authentic materials which can be exploited in language teaching. Naturally, the whole process of working on original texts, with instant communications and digital correspondence, might become a barrier for beginner language learners, who need more explicit, slower, face-to-face contact to understand things better and to build up a linguistic basis.

Challenge #7. Psychological resistance

Learners' as well as teachers' conservative perceptions about efficient teaching methods and about how languages are learnt might lead to skepticism towards using technologies as an academic teaching tool (Warshauer, 2000:24). These concerns were confirmed by the teachers participating in a study conducted by Ertmer et al. (2012:423). Teachers noted that the strongest barriers preventing them from using technology were, amongst other things, their existing attitudes and beliefs towards technology. Such resistance comes especially from the students and teachers who belong to instructional cultures where more conservative, teacher-centered methods of language instruction are applied. According to Ertmer et al., to remedy the situation professional development efforts need to be redirected towards strategies for facilitating changes in teachers' attitudes and beliefs (2012:423).

Challenge #8. Administrative repercussions

E-mailing, online communication, and planning and tracking learners' progress can be very time-consuming (Salehi, 2012:215), and the fact that most administrators still count the actual time the teacher spends in the classroom

to determine the workload might be a discouraging factor for educators and make them avoid using technology-enhanced teaching tools (Rozgiene, et al., 2008:30).

In closing off the discussion about the advantages and challenges related to technology integration in language teaching, I will refer to Warschauer and Meskill (2000), who claim that despite the difficulties associated with the technology use in language education, technology-enhanced language teaching should still be the goal of all language educators all over the world (2000:305). To further elaborate, technology use in language teaching is especially useful for those language teachers who practice CLT, as the learning opportunities digital tools offer matches perfectly with the principles of almost all aspects of Communicative Language Teaching (Duffy & Jonassen, 1991:7). Technology use in language teaching helps to make the learning process meaningful and more fluency- and skills-oriented; helps with the target language use and inductive teaching approach (Kramsch & Andersen, 1999:31; Stepp-Greany, 2002:166); makes course structure more flexible, and encourages a skills-oriented assessment approach; encourages learner-centered interaction, with much pair/group work; helps transform the teachers' role of a knowledge provider into a facilitator and a guide (Prensky, 1998:3); contributes to learners' independence and involvement in the study process; makes available authentic, up-to-date teaching resources, which match students needs and interests (Cowan et al., 2003:459).

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the advantages and challenges described so far, the following recommendations can be deduced. They are useful in particular for countries like Georgia, which are facing a plethora of educational choices already besides having to prepare for challenges which arise from the digital revolution.

Recommendation #1: Avoid excessive enthusiasm

Generally, even though the importance of having more innovative, technology-based practices introduced into the language teaching system is widely recognized, the excessive enthusiasm for computers gives some people grounds to worry about making pupils over-dependent on technologies. As Chapman puts it, "The growing mania for getting a computer for every child in schools is dangerous and foolish" (Chapman, 1998:2). This situation, according to Warschauer and Meskil, is reminiscent of the times when some decades ago the promises of "magic through technology" did not quite materialise, bringing about much frustration and skepticism towards technology-based approaches, such as audio labs. Consequently, excessive enthusiasm should be restrained and overdependence on the computer should be avoided (Warschauer & Meskil, 2000:2).

Recommendation #2: Make technology targeted and meaningful

Using innovative, modern tools of technology in teaching seems appealing and attractive. However using, new technologies has to always be serving a concrete academic purpose and this use must never be merely for the sake of introducing something different and innovative in the teaching routine. Technology use should not become an end in itself (Chapman, 1998:2).

“We must ensure that the teaching is driven by the pedagogy and supported by the technology”, Laborda (2008:289) writes. What makes a difference is how you take advantage of the opportunities that new technologies offer for language teaching. A similar attitude is voiced by an American instructor, during the experiment that Warschauer and Meskill (2000) conducted. The instructor summarizes his careful attitude towards technology in language teaching: “It is not so much what I do with the technology, but what technology helps me get the students to do. That is what results in learning” (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000:26).

Technology must only be applied in teaching if its use contributes to the facilitation and efficiency of the learning process, as in case of its misuses the teacher might end up providing pupils with the skills of using a particular software or operating system rather than focusing on transmitting knowledge or developing a particular skill. In this case, it “would be a great disservice to young people”, Chapman concludes (1998:2).

Recommendation #3: Separate or combine the roles of the teacher and technology

Even though there are certain computer-based possibilities that are irreplaceable (tools for fast information retrieval, electronic dictionary possibilities, endless exposure to the target authentic language, unlimited opportunities of ‘guided practice’ and knowledge consolidation, for instance), the role of the teacher in the study process cannot be replaced (Barrett & Sharma, 2009:3).

As can be deduced from the widely used term “technology-enhanced teaching”, it is important to apply the benefits of technology to supplement and enhance the efficiency of a learning experience. The roles of a teacher and of technology need to be seen as complementary, and the best has to be taken from each and be efficiently combined for the best learning/teaching outcomes (Sharma & Barrett, 2009:3).

The teacher is there to do a number of things which require human intervention, such as performing a needs analysis and creating the learning syllabus. A computer may play a role in this, but decisions such as choosing a conversation topic, for example, need to be made by a professional like a teacher. Thus, it is important to separate the roles and differentiate between the contributions that teacher and technology might make in the process of

teaching – the teacher dealing with more analytical, or as Sharma and Barrett put it, “fuzzy”, areas, and technologies supplementing more straightforward extra learning opportunities (2009:3).

Similar views are expressed by the Georgian education expert Giunashvili (2009:10), who adds that technology use should supplement rather than replace the role of teachers and the face-to-face learning process altogether. The same opinion is also voiced by official policy makers in Georgia, who, while talking about the necessity of bringing technology into the study process in Georgia, emphasize the need to maintain the role of a teacher and offer a balanced methodology repertoire (Tabula, 2012:1).

Recommendation #4: Help teachers overcome resistance to new teaching paradigms

Changing the teaching paradigm that teachers are used to is never easy (Dooly & Masats, 2011:43). Research shows that it is difficult to change teachers' established practices and beliefs, as they are based on their own learning experiences (Pajares, 1992). Thus, personal experiences are important determinants of how teachers think and what they do. Dooley and Masats (2011) contend that it is extremely important that teacher training programs incorporate many awareness-raising components about the significance and benefits of integration in the language teaching process. Moreover, it is important to expose teacher trainees to technology-enhanced experiences by including technology-based approaches in their trainings. Teacher trainers need to practice what they preach and make the trainees observe directly the useful effects technology-enhanced teaching can have (Dooly & Masats, 2011:44). The point made here is further reinforced by Goldsby and Fazal (2000), who conclude that only those student-teachers who master technology use for teaching purposes at university will tend to integrate it in their teaching practice (2000:121).

Recommendation #5: Support computer skills development

A considerable amount of training and technical support must be provided by the school and by policy makers to help teachers acquire basic technical knowledge. This will help avoid the frustration and disruption technology use might cause (Rozgiene et al., 2008:29). Knowing which websites, interactive materials and useful computer programs to recommend to your learners, as well as knowing how to search the Web efficiently, the use of social networking and other information and communication tools is part of the basic technology literacy that the teacher must possess. When these core skills are acquired, there are many ways they can be extended. At an advanced level, teachers may wish to learn how to adopt these tools for creating online materials or podcasts, explore virtual learning environment, or video-conferencing facilities.

Recommendation #6: Provide methodology training

According to Dooly and Masats (2011), the use of technology is often met with reservation on the part of teachers as they do not know what the pedagogical application and implication of different forms of technology are (2011:44). According to Mashira and Koehler (2003), “a teacher who is able to negotiate the relationship between content, pedagogy and technology develops a form of expertise greater than the knowledge of a disciplinary expert, a technology expert and an educator” (2003:1017).

Recommendation #7: Plan and build school infrastructure

The availability of a technical infrastructure and of resources is a basis for technology-enhanced teaching. According to Rozgiene et al. (2008), in order to make technology-enhanced teaching possible minimal technical requirements should be met by a school – at least one computer with Internet access, a printer, basic computer software, a computer lab, some technical staff, and, preferably, language learning platforms and programs (2008:30).

In this respect, situations can differ dramatically in developed and developing countries. The availability of technology and its quality as well as quantity will determine the amount and intensity of technology-based language teaching at each particular educational institution, in each particular country (Rozgien et al., 2008:28).

4.6 CONCLUSION

To sum up, it is undeniable that the scope of the opportunities technology offers in the field of education, and especially in language teaching, is extensive and emerging. In this technology-dominated era, the concept of Communicative Competence (Hymes, 1982) itself has broadened to include online communications and online language use. Thus, the application of technology in communicative language teaching is, at the same time, an efficient tool that contributes to teaching/learning languages for communication, and the medium and communication context itself. Consequently, educators might be feeling pressure these days to be devoted to the task of making technology an integral part of teaching/learning process. According to Roth (2009):

Technology should be made a “significant component in the curriculum by drawing on Plato’s goals for education and adapting and realizing them” and “the teaching and learning should be interactive, personalized and holistic” that will aid students to “move away from the passive realm of reading and into the interactive world of digital pedagogy” (Roth, 2009:127).

As already discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 5.4), alongside the opportunities that technology-enhanced language teaching offers, there are quite a few challenges and circumstances that have to be overcome for teachers to be able to make TELL realistic and feasible. These include the readiness and willingness of both the teachers and learners to engage in computer-mediated learning/teaching, proper school infrastructure, supportive school policy towards TELL, availability of technical staff, relevant assessment methods, teacher guidance and training, considerable competence and dedication on the part of the teacher to keep up with the pace of the developments and come up with appropriate pedagogical approaches to integrate technology into the language teaching in the best way possible. These are some of the factors that determine the successful adoption and implementation of technology-enhanced Communicative Language Teaching.

Even though the situation in technology-enhanced teaching varies considerably from country to country, and although developing countries are far behind the developed ones, researchers admit that developed nations suffer from many of the same challenges and concerns as developing nations, and the developing nations, by sharing and looking up to the existing experience of more developed countries, will find progress easier (Jhuree, 2005:467).

Having discussed the possibilities that technology can offer today for communicative language teaching, in the next chapter I turn to describing the foreign, particularly English language, teaching situation in Georgia, from Soviet times up to today. Discussing this information is believed to be useful for gaining a historical perspective and to offer the reader useful information about developments in the language teaching field in Georgia. This will help shed better light on the current language teaching situation in Georgia as well as providing a more comprehensive understanding of the need for and significance of the research presented in this dissertation.

