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Communicative language teaching in Georgia : from theory to practice

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CHAPTER 7: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CLT (STUDY 1)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

So far I have reviewed Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), its theoretical underpinnings, its role and place among other language teaching methods, as well as the possibilities of enhancing its efficiency by integrating technological resources in the process of teaching (Chapters 2, 3 and 4); I have also explored the efforts made in Georgia to transform language teaching into a more communicative practice (Chapters 5 and 6). In the following chapters (Chapters 7–10) I turn to analyzing the data obtained as a result of the research conducted at secondary schools in Georgia.

The analysis chapters of this dissertation can be subdivided into three parts: the first part looks at the teachers' and learners' conceptions of and attitudes towards CLT (Chapters 7 and 8); the second part investigates the classroom realities in Georgia (Chapter 9) and the third considers the language learners' actual foreign language proficiency level (Chapter 10).

The present chapter aims to document how much teachers at Georgian secondary schools know about the existing language policies, how well they understand and interpret them and what assumptions they hold about the main principles of CLT, how much in favor they are of this method, and what challenges they see along the way in applying CLT in their actual teaching. This exploration is hoped to help with gaining a proper understanding of how well prepared English language secondary school teachers are in the capital of Georgia, at a theoretical level, to become successful implementers of Communicative Language Teaching in the Georgian context.

Chapter Overview

In the remainder of this section, the general background to the present study (Section 7.1.1) as well as the research questions formulated (Section 7.1.2) are presented. Section 7.2 discusses the research methodology applied in this study: the research design (7.2.1), participant characteristics (7.2.2), the research tools adopted and the materials used (7.2.3). The data collection procedures and the amount of the collected data are described in detail in Section 7.2.4. The research data were analyzed in a qualitative as well as quantitative manner. The descriptions of the data analysis approaches and methods adopted are provided in Section 7.2.5. The results obtained are discussed in the final part of the present chapter: Section 7.4 provides a summary of and the concluding comments on the study results.

7.1.1 The theoretical background and the research questions

Nowadays, the communicative value of language teaching is recognized at most secondary schools around the world. It is the approach incorporated in many official language policy documents globally (Mangubhai, 2005:32), as well as in Georgia (for more details see Chapter 6, or refer to the policy document itself).

However, the mere fact of a change in the language policies and the endorsement of the use of CLT at all schools in Georgia does not necessarily mean that the aims outlined in the policy paper are successfully implemented in practice or that the declared goals are actually achieved. Successful introduction of the language teaching policy into the language classroom starts with the familiarization of teachers with this policy, the provision of a deep and accurate understanding of the method proposed and the generation of a positive attitude towards this method (Li, 1998:677). Unless these basic preconditions are met, we can conclude *a priori* that the policy will not penetrate the actual classroom. If teachers either do not know that the policy exists or do not correctly interpret the requirements the policy document puts forward, or if they lack knowledge of the recommended method, there is a very slim chance that the policy goal will be achieved. Neither can any positive outcomes be expected if the teachers do not favor and accept the principles and the learning and teaching theories that underlie the method. As Savignon (1991:273) puts it, “in order to understand the discrepancy between the theory and practice, teachers’ views should be investigated, and in case a negative attitude is observed, it should be changed into positive before any further efforts are made in this regard”. According to Woods (1996), teacher persuasions inform their classroom practice to a considerable degree (cited in Mangubhai, 2005:53). As is claimed by Karakhanian (2011), “teachers’ beliefs can be viewed as lenses through which they perceive innovations in teaching and have a great impact on their behavior” (2011:84). Karakhanian also cites a number of studies which document the fact that there is a strong relationship between teachers’ beliefs and conceptions about teaching and learning on the one hand, and their actual teaching practice on the other (Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Archer, 1999; Dart et al., 2000). Those teachers who have a positive perception of the ongoing changes in the teaching process, and acknowledge the necessity of being equipped with new approaches in their daily practice, are much more likely to perform according to the requirements put forward by the reform than are those teachers who feel skeptical about the changes and would rather stick to “the good old practices”. Thus, the teachers’ attitudes towards the change becomes very important. According to Li “[h]ow teachers as the end users of an innovation perceive its feasibility is also an essential factor in the ultimate success or failure of that innovation” (1998:698).

Besides the enthusiasm teachers might feel about the newly proposed methodologies, it is important to know how much “nostalgia” they feel towards the older, more traditional ways of teaching (Goodson et al., 2006). As

Hargreaves (1994) claims, understanding the extent of the teachers' determination to adopt a new style of teaching versus their desire to maintain the old ways also provides a valuable understanding of the teaching innovation process (as cited in Karakhanian, 2011:120). The above arguments explain the importance and necessity of exploring teachers' awareness of the existing language teaching recommendations, their understanding of the theory and principles of CLT, as well as their attitudes towards this method. The exploration of the existing challenges and certain factor effect on the overall situation was also deemed important in the present study.

7.1.2 Research Questions

The research questions that this chapter seeks to cover are the following:

1. Are English language teachers aware of the existence of the National Curriculum of Foreign Languages and its recommendations?
2. Do they comply with the existing official language teaching recommendations and standards in Georgia?
3. How well do the teachers understand the theoretical underpinnings of CLT?
4. What kind of attitudes do they hold towards CLT?
5. Are there any challenges that the teachers consider as obstacles to the successful application of CLT in Georgia?
6. Do school type and certain teacher characteristics affect the study results significantly?

7.2 METHODOLOGY¹

7.2.1 Study design

A mixed-method approach was adopted to collect the data in the present study. This approach allows researchers to take advantage of different types of data, and provides a broader perspective to the study as the qualitative data helps describe aspects that the quantitative data cannot address (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). All the teacher-related data analyzed in this chapter was obtained through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (see Appendix 7.1) and questionnaires (see Appendix 7.3). Each method of information collection had certain advantages over the other, and together formed a comprehensive data collection tool.

¹ For the definitions of the statistical terms used in this as well as in all the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, see the Statistics Reference Page above. The terms are arranged according to the alphabetical order.

Research variables

The study presented in this chapter takes account of such factors as school type (environment) to which teachers belong, as well as other teacher-related variables – their age, sex, profession, academic qualifications, teacher training and teaching experience – to see in what ways these factors might affect the study results. Each of these variables will be looked at in this study.

Research medium and selection criteria

In the Georgian context, considerable differences are expected to be found with regard to the teaching situation at secondary schools depending on whether the school is private or public (sector), and whether it is located in the central or peripheral part of the capital, or beyond the capital, in a province of the country (location). Thus, having ‘school type’ as a differentiating variable in the analysis was considered relevant.

As far as school sector is concerned, whether a particular school is a public or a private institution is believed to be affecting administration, their decisions and requirements, as well as teachers and learners in different ways (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005:49). Hence, it was believed that arranging the schools according to the sector category they represent – private or public – was a useful distinction to make. In Georgia, private schools are widely believed to offer a better quality education: they are expensive compared with public schools, which are free in Georgia and are they are affordable only by those with a high income.

As for the location, according to Siniscalco and Auriat (2005), “[t]he location of a school is often a key issue in data collection because physical location is often strongly related to the socio-cultural environment of the school”, and it thus might have some impact on the overall situation as well as teachers’ and learners’ attitudes. Two choices were made with regard to the variable ‘school location’ in the present study. First, it was decided that the focus of the study would not go beyond the limits of the capital, as the language education situation in other regions is dramatically different from that in Tbilisi and a separate study investigating peculiarities related specifically to the provinces would be needed. A further reason why the capital alone was opted for is that by far the largest share of the population lives in Tbilisi, and consequently, the nation’s highest number of schools (12.80%) is located there with the higher number of students (30%) than in any other Georgian city.²

² In all, there are 2,340 schools in Georgia, 2,085 of which are public and 255 private. In the capital, Tbilisi, there are 177 public and 124 private schools. The total number of pupils amounts to 570,372, of whom 518,467 are studying at public and 51,905 at private schools. There are 142,700 pupils at public schools and 28,183 at private schools in Tbilisi.

Retrieved from <http://catalog.edu.ge/index.php?module=statistics>. Also available at <http://www.emis.ge> (accessed January 2014).

Furthermore, the situation in each region of Georgia is rather different and cannot be considered to be representative of any other. Thus, it was believed that conducting research at one or two regions or cities and not in others would not yield accurate results from which general conclusions on a national level could be extrapolated in any meaningful way. Also, Tbilisi, being the capital of Georgia, is the place where any reform takes its origin and from where it starts its proliferation. Consequently, it is Tbilisi where the effect of reform would be felt most for the time being.

The second differentiation related to school 'location' that had to be made was classifying schools according to their central or peripheral location in Tbilisi. In Georgia, centrally-located schools (especially public schools) in each city are believed to be more prestigious, as the government tends to invest more financial resources and efforts in them as flagships of education policy and of society, and consequently, these schools have a better learning infrastructure and offer considerably enhanced social opportunities to their students, whereas schools in the periphery of the city are regarded as socially deprived and having poorer-quality equipment and even staff. There is less evidence that the same kind of difference can be found between centrally- and peripherally-located private schools.

Arising from these pre-determined school selection criteria, twelve secondary schools in total, representing a spread of school types in Tbilisi, were selected: four public and central (i.e., city-center); four public and peripheral (i.e., suburban); two private and central; and two private and peripheral (the map showing the school distribution according to their locations, can be found in Figure 1.4). The names of the schools participating in the study are not revealed for privacy reasons. The above information is summarized in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: The participating schools and the number of respondents per School: raw figures and percentage of the respondents per school type

School type	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Public Central	38	39.6%
Public Peripheral	24	25%
Private Central	17	17.7%
Private Peripheral	17	17.7%
Total	96	100%

The uneven balance of language teacher distribution across the private and public sectors can be explained by the fact that public schools in Georgia are normally far more numerous and have far more students enrolled than private schools, which are much fewer in number and smaller in scope. Consequently, the number of students at private secondary schools in Georgia is generally

speaking much smaller, and accordingly, the number of language teachers needed to represent that category sufficiently is likewise smaller. Also, the access to the public schools was more easily obtained than to the private schools, where, in some cases, the administration was reluctant to cooperate, claiming that the study would interfere with the school's academic activities.

7.2.2 Study participants

The 121 participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. Of those 96 who completed and returned the questionnaires, 26 were also observed in class, and out of these 26 teachers, 21 were also interviewed (see Section 7.2.3 – *The interviews*). This allowed a full picture to be drawn of some of the participating teachers' – their informedness about and understanding of the existing methodology requirements (through the interviews), their attitudes towards CLT (through questionnaires), and their actual teaching practice (through lesson observations, see Chapter 9).

Participant characteristics

The following teacher-related characteristics were explored in the present study: age, sex, teaching experience, specialization, academic background, teaching experience, teacher training. Some of them have been included in the study as a variable, some of them have been dropped for the reasons provided in the paragraph below.

As the frequency analysis of the participants' age revealed the majority of the respondents belonged to the 35–45 age group, followed by the second largest group of participant belonging to the 45–55 age group and the fewest number of respondents to 25–35 age category. A further ANOVA test showed, overall, private school representatives tend to be significantly younger ($M=39$) than their public school colleagues ($M=43$) – $F(3, 92) = 10.14, p=.027$.

As for sex, an interesting fact to be noted here is that for the entirety of the study, out of the 96 participants, fully 95 were female and only a single one was male, a fact which throws into stark relief how dominated the language teaching profession in Georgia is by female instructors. It should also be mentioned that all the participants were Georgians, except for one American teacher, a participant of the Teach & Learn with Georgia program (see Section 5.4.4) who was interviewed only to get his perspective on the English language teaching situation at the school where he acted as a teacher's assistant (see also Section 9.3). Thus, neither sex nor nationality was included as an independent variable in the study.

As for the participating teachers' teaching experience, it ranged from under 5 to over 20 years: the majority (38%), had over 10 years of experience, 33% over 5, 18% of teachers over 20 and 9% of participants had under 5 years

of language teaching experience. A statistically significant difference was detected between the length of the teaching experience of teachers at public ($M=3.06$)³ and private ($M=1.94$) schools [$t(95)=7.39, p=.000$], the public school teachers tending to have a significantly longer background in teaching than those from the private sector.

The participants had academic qualifications in pedagogy (52%) and in philology (48%), the majority of them (66%) holding the degrees equivalent to BA (four to five years of undergraduate studies) and the rest (33%) MA degrees (one to two years of graduate studies). The participants were also asked about their teacher training experience. Since all 96 participants turned out to have undergone some teacher training, this variable was also dismissed as having no effect on the research outcomes. More careful analysis of the quality and the origin of the training provider (local or international) may be a subject of further research and analysis. The participating teacher data discussed above is further summarized in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2 Participating teachers' background information

Grouping criteria	Groups	Number of cases (N=21)
Age group	25-35	4
	35-45	5
	45-55 (and above)	12
Sex	Female	20
	Male	1
Teaching experience	Under 5 years	2
	Over 5 years	10
	Over 10 years	2
	Over 20 years	7
Specialisation	Pedagogy	11
	Philology	10
Academic degree	BA	12
	MA	9
Teacher training	All the teachers	21

³ The mean scores for Teaching Experience have been given the following values: 1=under five years of experience; 2=over five; 3=over ten; and 4=over twenty.

Incentives to participate

Permission from both the Ministry of Education and the individual school administrations was first obtained before approaching the schoolteachers. Teachers were asked to participate on the basis that they would thereby be contributing to research related to the aim of making foreign language teaching in Georgia more modern and compatible with the communicative needs of the present day. All teachers who participated did so voluntarily, and the completion and return of the questionnaires constituted their consent to participate in the study. The questionnaire collection and the interviews were completed without any complaints being reported or adverse events having occurred. As reported above (see Section 7.2.1), public school administrations were more cooperative than those from private school. The guarantee that the information obtained would be treated confidentially was provided to the school administrations, as well as the participating teachers.

7.2.3 Data collection tools*The interviews*

The interviews were conducted in an attempt to gain more comprehensive insights into the participants' awareness of the official language teaching recommendations, teachers' understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of CLT, as well as their attitudes towards CLT and the assessment of the challenges related to the implementation of this method in Georgia.

There are a number of advantages to the interview format, which are discussed in the research methodology literature. According to Mangubhai, the use of a questionnaire inviting teachers to respond to a pre-designed, limited set of statements does not allow teachers to provide personal interpretations or to use their own language and constructs for communicating their understanding of the subject (2005:34). McBride and Schostak (2004) explain the usefulness of using interviews as a data collection tool, stating that interviews tend to provide more meaningful, qualitative data (2004:2), whereas questionnaires simply give respondents a chance to make a choice among the limited options provided. According to Patton (1990), interviews are suitable for "uncovering people's real perceptions, assumptions, pre-judgments, presuppositions" (1990:278). One more advantage of adopting the interview for qualitative data collection is that it offers the opportunity of having a more informal, dynamic conversation, which also gives an interviewer an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and obtain more "elaborate" explanations, whereas questionnaires and surveys are more static and might not provide that degree of flexibility and in-depth information (Van Meurs, 2010:132).

The interviews in this study took the form of 13 open-ended questions and lasted for about twenty-minutes each. 21 teachers were interviewed at

twelve secondary school in Tbilisi, Georgia (see the interview form in Appendix 7.1).

The Questionnaires

The questionnaires were aimed at finding out to what extent secondary school English language teachers in Tbilisi are in favor of and supportive of Communicative Language Teaching, as well as to supplement, cross-check and provide an additional perspective to the data obtained through the interviews about the teachers' understanding of the theoretical basis of CLT and their evaluation of the challenges associated with this teaching approach.

To make sure that a full list of attributes of CLT criteria and all of its principles were covered, the literature dealing with the theoretical underpinnings of this approach (was carefully examined (see Chapter 3). The most typical and most common features of CLT were identified from the works of various authors (Widdowson, 1978; Littlewood, 1981; Freeman-Larsen, 2000; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Widdowson, 2004; Richards, 2006; Brandl, 2007), and were included in the questionnaire. Besides pro-CLT statements, the respondents were also prompted to reveal their attitudes towards non-CLT items. The questionnaire items were classified into seven thematic groups, which was thought useful for facilitating its processing and analysis: (1) Language and Learning Theory, (2) Course and Syllabus Design, (3) Teachers' and Learners' Roles, (4) Classroom Interaction, (5) Error Correction, (6) Teaching Material and Activities, and (7) Challenges and Difficulties associated with CLT (see appendix 7.3).

Group 1, Language Learning Theory, looks at the learning and language theories underlying CLT, such as more importance of focusing on language meaning than its form, paying more attention to fluency than to accuracy, taking an inductive rather than a deductive approach of teaching, and the importance of the target language use in the lesson. Group 2, Course and Syllabus Design, is concerned with language skills and a function-oriented syllabus focusing on real life skills development in learners. Group 3, Teachers' and Learners' Roles, explores CLT-compatible teacher and learner roles. Group 4, Classroom Interaction, looks at the classroom interaction patterns, such as pair/group work activities, student-centeredness and increased student participation and talking time. Group 5, Error Correction, focuses on the application of CLT-compatible error correction techniques, such as self-correction, peer correction and a delayed feedback. Group 6, Teaching Material and Activities, explores the communicative nature of the teaching materials and activities applied, and Group 7, Challenges and Difficulties associated with CLT, outlines the challenges that can potentially be related to CLT implementation in the classroom. For a more refined analysis, Group 7 was further

subdivided into teacher-related challenges, learner-related challenges, and other challenges categories.

Design

Initially, the questionnaire comprised 85 items, which, after pilot testing, Factor Analysis and revision was reduced to 60 items. The largest part of the teacher questionnaire took the form of statements about CLT presented as 5-point Likert-format items. The teachers had to indicate, on a five-point scale, to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the given statements. The values of the rating scale numbers were defined as follows: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=have a neutral position, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree.

Opinions differ with regard to whether a neutral position, in this case option 3, should be included as a possible choice to respondents or not. According to Burns and Grove (1997), if this choice is made unavailable, respondents are forced to make a choice one way or the other on what their view is, “which may lead to irritation in respondents and may increase non-response bias” (cited in Rattray & Jones, 2007:236). In the present study, adopting a neutral position is an option which gives the teachers a chance to express that their attitude is genuinely undecided or uncertain, where that is applicable. Another pair of problems associated with surveys using a questionnaire with Likert items are the issues of what is known as a ‘central tendency bias’, which means that respondents may avoid using the extremes in response categories offered and a ‘social desirability bias’, by which respondents might try to portray themselves or their organization in a positive way. These are potential problems and need to be taken into consideration (Armstrong, 1987:359-362; Allen & Seaman, 2007: 65-64).

Even though most of the questionnaire statements were offered in a Likert format, there is one section in the questionnaire that takes a different form, the one comprising items 13–20. These items check teachers’ understanding of what constitutes real practice in language skills development. More specifically, items 13–20 verify if teachers understand correctly whether certain types of activities really develop a given language skill (reading, listening, speaking or writing) or not. Teachers were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale (4=helps greatly; 3=helps; 2=helps to some extent; 1=does not help much; 0=does not help at all) the extent to which they believe if the language activities described help learners develop the indicated language skill (for the full version of the questionnaire, see Appendix 7.3). This proved to be quite useful, as throughout the lesson observations and the interviews, it was noticed that quite often teachers, as well as learners, held misconceptions about what the aim of a certain language activity performed in the class was. For example, very often in a lesson, it was observed that learners were reading out grammar exercises, and later on, when asked in the interview whether they had

had any speaking practice in the lesson, some of the students and teachers answered that they had, mistaking the mechanical grammar exercise reading for a speaking activity.

To assure that all the teachers understood the statements as accurately as possible (as teachers' language proficiency problems were anticipated), and to avoid any misunderstandings, the questionnaires were presented to the participants in Georgian, and only later were they translated into English for the present dissertation (See Appendix 7.3b).

To enable a comparison of data derived from different sources (teachers, learners and observers), it was attempted to keep the structure and contents of all three data collection tools used in the present study, such as teacher and learner' questionnaires as well as observation forms used in the third study (Chapter 9; see Appendix 9.1), as consistent with one another as possible. Even though a high degree of uniformity was achieved, certain differences are still present in the forms, due to the different formats and circumstances of data collection in each case. For example, the statements included in the teacher questionnaire, such as "The examination system, which focuses of testing learners' knowledge of language forms, negatively affects teacher/learner motivation to use CLT", could not be included in the observation form, as the statement refers to the kind of practice that could not be evaluated during the observations. Similarly, in the learner questionnaires the statements were transformed from the teachers' into learners' perspective, and again, some of the statements that no longer pertained to this context had to be dropped.

7.2.4 The data collection procedure and obtained material

The whole study was conducted in September 2011, at the beginning of the academic year 2011–2012, within the space of a month. At all the participating schools administrators facilitated the process of setting up interviews and helped distribute and collect the questionnaires.

The interviews

In order to make the necessary amendments to the interview structure and questions, before the actual interviews took place, a pilot interview was conducted with a number of volunteer English language teachers to practice the procedure and to receive interviewee feedback. As a result, four interview questions were dropped, and some of the interview questions were reformulated to stimulate more focused answers. The fact that the interviews were conducted after the observations, this provided a good chance to compare what had actually been observed in the lesson with what teachers said about their teaching experiences and to check their awareness of the language

teaching recommendations and understanding of the theoretical basis of CLT. During the interviews follow-up, unplanned questions, which had arisen from the lesson observations, were also asked. All the interviews were audio-recorded and summarized for the qualitative analysis (see the Interview data analysis form in Appendix 7.2).

The questionnaires

The teacher questionnaires were quite extensive (60 items). The questionnaire was first piloted with four teachers of various ages and backgrounds (age range 32–60: a university professor, a private-school teacher of English, a public-school teacher of German, and a private language center teacher of English). After the teachers had completed the questionnaires, their comments and suggestions were discussed, and some refinements and alterations were introduced into the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed to all the available English language teachers at the schools visited. It took about 40 minutes to complete the questionnaire, so the teachers were asked to do the task at home. Most of the questionnaires distributed were returned completed (121 distributed, 96 collected) on another day.

7.2.5. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis: interview results

The method used in analyzing the interview data followed the analytical approach of the qualitative study. For the presentation of the results, the views expressed by the 21 English language teachers were summarized with the help of a specially-designed form (see Appendix 7.2). Patterns were identified in the retrieved data and all the recurring themes in the interviews were highlighted and categorized for analysis purposes. The interview analysis section deals with the first three research questions of this study.

As Patton (1990:169) suggests, qualitative research provides a more “in-depth” perspective and “illuminates” the questions studied in a more meaningful way. For this purpose, in the present study, some particularly noteworthy quotations from the individual interviews will be cited to support the points made by the teachers and provide an opportunity for the reader to be directly exposed to the thoughts and ideas expressed by the participants on this topic. To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, the sources of the quotations will be coded with a letter “T”, which stands for “teacher”, and a number unique to the respondent. Codes will be used to refer to the school type teachers represent – Pub. C. (Public Central); Pub. P. (Public Peripheral); Pri. P. (Private Peripheral); and Pri. C. (Private Central) – so, for example, the code T01: Pub. P. refers to a certain teacher representing a public school in the

periphery of Tbilisi. To better illustrate and corroborate the points made, some figures and statistics will be provided along with the qualitative data. For this purpose, descriptive statistics tests, as well as frequency counts and Chi-Square analysis, were performed on various sets of the qualitative data. The interviews were conducted in Georgian and were translated into English as closely to the original as possible by me.

As it can be observed from the description of the data analysis approach earlier in this section, the approach adopted in this and subsequent studies is univariate. This can be explained by the exploratory nature of the present investigation, which primarily aims at describing the situation in the field of English language teaching in Georgia in general terms. The descriptive statistics, together with the qualitative data obtained during the studies, provide all the information and allow the reader to form an accurate picture of the situation. However, through this approach inter-variable associations are not taken into account and may affect the interpretation of the data. To avoid inaccuracies of interpretation, it was further checked whether multivariate analyses, using linear regression models as well as a multivariate model of ANOVA, would have yielded different results from the ones currently obtained, which, in the vast majority of cases, did not prove to be the case. For example, in certain cases (with the 'teacher age' [Chapter 7] and 'extracurricular language learning' [Chapter 10] factors), where multiple groups were formed under the factors investigated, the population size ended up to be small in certain groups. This in the case of a multivariate analysis approach led to the results being less compatible with the raw data, as well as qualitative data results, than the adopted univariate analyses did.

Inter-rater reliability

To check the validity of the interview response summaries and the categorizations of the responses, as well as of the translations undertaken, peer debriefing techniques were applied (Morse et al., 2002). The outcomes of the categorization and the summaries were shared with two colleagues with equal knowledge of the field of language teaching. A large degree of agreement was achieved for most of the items. In some cases, where certain clarifications were needed for better understanding of the categorizations, explanations were provided, which were deemed satisfactory by the co-evaluators. Using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 (SPSS Inc., 2011), an inter-rater reliability of .89 (Cohen's Kappa) was calculated.

Quantitative data analysis: questionnaire processing and coding

All the data from the teacher's questionnaire was entered into SPSS. All the variables (school type, age, sex, teacher training, academic degree, teaching experience) were coded numerically in order to make more statistical calculation options possible in SPSS format. The participating schools were coded in four different ways: (a) individually (1- 12); (b) according to location as well as the sector (Public Central, Public Peripheral, Private Central, Private Peripheral); (c) according to location only (central versus peripheral); (d) according to sector only (private versus public). Different categorizations were made, starting with individual schools before grouping them into broader categories. This was done to check at which level and in which component of the study the statistically significant effect of 'school type' as a variable might lie.

The questionnaire was analyzed in three separate sections: items 13-20, which are meant to measure Georgian teachers' understanding and their ability to differentiate between skills-oriented and language form development-oriented activities; the 'Challenges' section (items 47-60), which lists typical CLT-related difficulties and invites the respondents to mark to what extent these difficulties might be specific to the Georgian context; and the rest of the items of the questionnaire, which investigate the teachers' general attitudes towards CLT.

Data reduction and calculating averages

Initially, to detect the underlying, unobserved commonalities among the multiple items on the questionnaire, as well as to reduce the number of variables, a Factor Analysis of principal components with Varimax rotation was performed on the teacher questionnaire items. The data were analyzed using SPSS. This step was considered necessary because it is often asserted that the structure of the construct being measured should first be understood before its meaning can properly be tested (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). However, as a result of the Factor Analysis, the factors yielded (12 new factors, dealing with both CLT and non-CLT concepts) were unnecessarily complicated and distorted the straightforward approach that was considered most appropriate for the present study. Consequently, for the data reduction, it was decided instead to calculate the averages for each questionnaire thematic group.

For all groups of the questionnaire (see Section 7.2.3: *Questionnaires*) – except for the 'Challenges' group, with regard of which it was considered worthwhile to look at each item dealing with a concrete CLT-related issue separately – the composite scores were calculated. This resulted in six dependent variables in total, dealing with CLT principles, plus the seventh

group of 16 items/dependent variables, dealing with the CLT-related challenges.

Before computing the composite scores for each group, it was checked that all the items had been measured in the same way and had the same directionality (the higher the score on a scale, the more CLT-oriented a teacher was). In some cases, when the items were asking about a non-CLT characteristic and thus had the opposite directionality (items 2, 5, 9, 12, 24, 26, 32, 34 and 38), they were reverse-coded in SPSS.

Validity and Reliability

Before running any other tests to further explore the data obtained through the questionnaires, the internal consistency analysis of the questionnaire items was conducted in SPSS. As a result, Cronbach's Alpha of .838 was estimated, which indicates a strong reliability coefficient for the items of the questionnaire used in the study.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis

The next step that was taken for my data analysis was carrying out descriptive statistics tests, calculating frequencies, means and standards deviations, to reveal the general tendencies in the data. The effects of the independent variables of the study on the analysis outcomes were checked by adopting inferential statistics. The effects of the independent factors were explored by using the inferential statistics tests – an Independent-Samples T-test and an ANOVA. As normality of data (checked with a Shapiro-Wilks test) underlying ANOVA were not quite met, an adjusted F test, namely, the Brown-Forsythe statistic, which is more robust to such violations, had to be used in SPSS. To detect where exactly the inter-group difference lay, follow-up post-hoc analysis tests were applied. Again, as the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not satisfied (Equal Variances Not Assumed), the more robust Tamhane's T2 test was used instead of the common alternatives of Bonferroni or Scheffe, which could have been applied if equal variances had been assumed.

To analyze the relationship between the variables and to determine the correlation between the various aspects of CLT and the teachers' attitudes towards each of them (do teachers who score highly on certain groups of the questionnaire, also score highly on certain other groups?), a correlation test was performed. A significance level of .05 was set for all statistical tests.

7.3 STUDY RESULTS

7.3.1 Interview results

The results reported in this section are mainly of a qualitative nature and are based on the information retrieved through the interviews conducted at 12 schools with 21 English language teachers. As mentioned above, some quantitative data will be presented as well for the more precision. I will discuss the results according to the different research questions studied.

Research Question 1: *Are English language teachers aware of the existence of the National Curriculum of Foreign Languages and its recommendations?*

To answer the first research question, open-ended interview question number 1 and 2 were asked to the participating teachers: “Is there any document provided by the Ministry of Education which defines the methodology and standards that need to be followed in the language classroom?(1)/Are you aware of the foreign language teaching methodology recommendations and the teaching/learning goals that the document provides? (2).

The interview questions were aimed at revealing the extent to which the teachers were informed about the language policy document in force in Georgia, namely, The National Curriculum for Foreign Languages (NCFL). Some samples of the teachers’ interviews are presented below to illustrate the categories formed in this regard.

Table 7.3: Teacher interviewees’ answers to the interview questions regarding their awareness of the official language teaching requirements in Georgia

Category	Examples
Well aware	<i>“Absolutely, at the beginning of the year, we sit down and discuss together how to stick to that, which course book to choose, so that we can follow the requirements and achieve the language goals by the end of the year” (T10: Pub. C.).</i>
Partly aware	<i>“Yes, I know something about that, but really very little; I do not know the details” (T04: Pub. P)</i>
Not aware	<i>“I have no idea what document you are referring to, we have not been informed about or provided with such a document by anybody” (T05: Pub. P)</i>

The statistics of the degree of informedness among the teachers of English of the language teaching requirements are presented in the table below:

Table 7.4: Frequencies and percentages of the English language teachers' awareness level of the official language curriculum in Georgia

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Not aware	4	19.0
Partly aware	15	71.4
Well aware	2	9.5
Total	21	100

To compare the mean scores for the teachers' awareness across the school types in order to find out whether the situation in this regard varied at different schools in Tbilisi, Georgia, an ANOVA was performed. The results are presented in the table below:

Table 7.5: English language teachers' awareness of the official language curriculum in Georgia across different school types

School Types	Mean	SD	N
Public Central	2.14	.378	7
Public Peripheral	1.33	.516	6
Private Central	2.25	.500	4
Private Peripheral	2.00	.000	4
Total	1.90	.539	21

Note: SD=Standard Deviation

As a result of a follow-up post-hoc analysis, a significant difference was found only with regard to the Public Peripheral school type, where the teachers' awareness level regarding the existing Language Standards in Georgia was lowest. The effect of this school type in this case was estimated at $F(3, 18)=7.467$, $p=.002$. Other school type representatives demonstrated the same level of awareness.

Research Question 2: *Do teachers comply with the existing official language teaching recommendations in Georgia?*

To obtain an answer to the second research question of the present study, the teachers' responses to the interview question number three were analyzed: "How closely do you follow the official recommendations provided in the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages? If not, what do you use as your methodology guideline instead?". Some samples of the teachers' interviews are presented below to illustrate the categories formed in this regard.

Table 7.6: Interviewees' answers illustrating the level of their compliance with the recommendations of the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages

Category	Examples
Full compliance	<i>"Yes, we take it seriously. We discuss ways to meet the Standards in a special meeting which we call at the beginning of the year" (T10: Pub. C.).</i>
Partial compliance	<i>"We try to take the National Curriculum requirements into account. In our final examinations we try to use the rubrics provided in the Language Standards published by the Ministry of Education and design our tests accordingly. However, during the year, we mostly focus on our course books and the method that they offer" (T02: Pri. C.).</i>
No compliance	<i>"I do not follow the Language Standard recommendations; that is a mere formality. I have my own method, which I developed using the experience I have in dealing with pupils and their language needs" (T05: Pub. P.).</i>

The statistics of the degree of compliance of the teachers of English with the language teaching requirements in Georgia are presented in the table below:

7.7: English language teachers' compliance level with the NCFL recommendation

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Do not comply	5	23.8
Partly comply	15	71.4
Fully comply	1	4.8
Total	21	100

The data revealed through this analysis is in line with the earlier research conducted in this area in Georgia by Tkemaladze et al. in 2001 (2001: 112), which shows low level of compliance with the existing official language teaching requirements. The quest into the effect of the independent variables on the teachers' language policy compliance results revealed no significant differences.

Research Question 3: *How well do the teachers understand the theoretical underpinnings of Communicative Language Teaching?*

Interview question number four – “How would you describe CLT, its main principles, goals and procedures?” – as well as number five – “How would you interpret the concept of Communicative Competence?”, together with the information obtained through other questions that followed, helped obtain the answer to the third research question relating to teachers’ understanding level of CLT’s underpinnings. Some illustrative samples of the teachers’ interview answers, illustrating how the categories were formed, are presented below.

Table 7.8: Teachers’ responses illustrating the level of their understanding of CLT underpinnings

Category	Examples
Has no understanding	<i>“I have no idea what you mean by ‘Communicative Language Teaching’. Maybe I know, but I cannot remember” (T07: Pub.P).</i>
Has partial understanding	<i>“I’ve heard of the method, but have little knowledge of what it is about. I think it aims to develop communication – to enable learners to speak (T05: Pub. P).</i>
Has full understanding	<i>“CLT aims at English use, as well as all four skills development. In CLT the grammar role is reduced and integrated with other skills and activities work. However, it is still important to teach grammar as well” (T02: Pri. C).</i>

The statistical information about the degree of understanding of CLT underpinnings on Georgian teachers’ part are presented in the table below:

Table 7.9: The 21 Georgian language teachers’ theoretical understanding of CLT (based on Karakhanian 2011)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Has no understanding	8	38.1
Has partial understanding	11	52.2
Has full understanding	2	9.5
Total	21	100

As it can be observed from the table above, the range from to absolutely no theoretical understanding to partial understanding of CLT was revealed among the teachers in the majority of cases. The interviews showed quite a few

teachers (8), mainly at Public Peripheral schools, who demonstrated very limited or no knowledge about CLT at all; it was also straightforwardly stated by the overwhelming majority of the respondents (19 out of 21) involved in the study that they had no or very little familiarity with the literature dealing with CLT. The cases of partial understanding or misunderstanding also abounded (11). There were only two cases when the teachers demonstrated close to accurate understanding of CLT: both belonged to the Private Central school type.

As the biggest group comprises teachers that were ignorant of CLT, it was deemed interesting and enlightening to discuss some of the cases of other types of language theory related instances. For example, there were cases of the teachers' evident confusion about what the language skills are: mistaking "grammar" for a skill, for example ("My main focus is covering all four language skills: *speaking, listening, reading and grammar*"), as well as mistaking a teaching method for a skill, or even for a stage of an activity ("I use all teaching methods – *listening method, reading method, post-reading, pre-reading*"). Also, misunderstanding was demonstrated not only at a theoretical, but also at a linguistic level: there was one case when a teacher, having described her teaching approach as "communicative" and while describing the typical activities that are conducted in her class, mentioned taking her learners on guided excursions, where learners can use their English for real communication, and added that these types of activities were suggested in the Teacher's Book (*English World 2*⁴) and referred to as "guided lessons". Obviously, there was a misunderstanding on her part regarding what exactly was meant by "guided lessons" in the book (a "guided lesson" refers to a type of lesson where a teacher guides and gives direction to the lesson/activity without much interference, rather than dominating the whole teaching process) and she interpreted the phrase according to its primary dictionary definition: *Guided* – adj. 1. Conducted by a guide: *A guided tour of the castle* (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2008). The reason for such misinterpretation must have been the teacher's inadequate English. This example also illustrates a lack of understanding on the teachers' part of the effects and outcomes certain teaching activities entail, since having guided tours within Georgia for foreign-language proficiency purposes seems not very effective.

It was considered interesting to investigate to what extent the teachers' knowledge and understanding of CLT underpinnings differed across the various school types. Accordingly, an ANOVA statistical test was performed to reveal the effect significance, which was estimated at $F(3, 18) = 5.52$; a statistically significant difference was detected between the Private Central school and the Public school types (Public Central and Public Peripheral

⁴ Macmillan Publishers: see at <http://www.macmillanenglish.com/younglearners/englishworld> (accessed November 2013).

school), the significance being estimated at $p=.025$ (Public Central) and $p=.006$ (Public Peripheral). No effect on the results of the other independent variables (see 7.2.1) was revealed as a result of a further ANOVA application.

It is interesting to note as well that when asked to talk about their own teaching practice (Interview questions 6-12) many of the teachers (12 out of 21), while evaluating the communicative character of their own teaching, reported using a “mixed approach” – communicative as well as grammar-oriented, or even admitted employing several methods at a time:

Well, the methodologies are mixed: we use communicative as well as grammar-focused methods – basically, we are trained to implement the methodologies presented in the course books, and the course books offer a variety of approaches (T11: Pri. P).

The above text also reveals another case of low awareness of what the teaching methodology implies: a course book cannot be based on several distinct teaching methodology premises simultaneously; however, course books do offer a wide range of teaching activities, covering language skills as well as grammar, vocabulary and phonology. It seems that the teachers' perceptions and understandings in most cases stop at the surface of the specific activities and exercises the course book offers, which are often erroneously referred to as “teaching methods” by the language instructors in Georgia.

Having explored the teachers' language policy awareness, the level of their declared compliance with the official teaching recommendations and their understanding of the theoretical base of CLT, now I will turn to discovering what factors and challenges might be preventing the teachers from applying CLT in their everyday teaching practice (research question 5, which will be dealt again below while discussing the questionnaire data obtained in this regard; research question 4 will be dealt with later, as it was through the questionnaire, not the interview data, that the answer to this question was attempted to be obtained).

Research Question 5: *Are there any challenges that the teachers consider as obstacles to the successful application of Communicative Language Teaching?*

The teacher responses to the interview question thirteen – “What difficulties do you encounter in the process of Communicative Language Teaching?” – yielded much data which helped answer the above research question about the difficulties related to CLT implementation in the lesson. Unlike in the case of the Challenges section of the questionnaire, where respondents were invited to indicate how much, on a scale of 1 to 5, they saw a certain CLT-related issue as a problem in their own teaching, during the interviews, the participants were not given a list of difficulties to choose from; rather, they were asked to come up with their own spontaneous answers.

A table with a pre-defined list of typical challenges was designed for the purpose of the analysis. As is often done in the literature dealing with CLT-related challenges (Li, 1998:685), the difficulties were further categorized into four groups: (a) teacher-related; (b) learner-related; (c) administration-related and (d) CLT-related. The number of times these difficulties were mentioned by the participating teachers in the interviews were counted and are reported in Table 7.10 below. Even though some other, general teaching challenges were also discussed in the interviews, only those difficulties that have to do with the application of CLT in the Georgian classroom are presented in the table below.

Table 7.10: Common CLT-related difficulties and the Georgian teachers' acknowledgement of these challenges related to their context

Source of difficulty	Number of times
A. Teacher-related	
1. Low language proficiency makes it difficult for teachers to practice CLT	4
2. The influence of older methods makes it difficult to practice CLT	2
3. Teachers need to have better theoretical understanding of CLT	4
4. The fear of using a novel method	10
Mean	5.0
B. Learner-related	
1. Learners are given too much independence in the learning process	0
2. It is difficult to involve all learners in the communicative learning process	11
3. It is difficult to make learners speak in the target foreign language	2
4. Mixed level learner groups are difficult to deal with in a CLT lesson	9
Mean	5.5
C. Administration-related	
1. There are not enough methodology training courses in CLT	10
2. There are not enough teaching resources and infrastructure for CLT application	17
3. Large classes make the application of CLT difficult	16
4. There is little time allocated for covering a CLT course	9
5. Grammar-driven examination system has a negative effect on CLT application	1
Mean	10.6
D. CLT-related	
1. CLT takes much preparation time	6
2. CLT is related with many classroom management problems	17
3. Assessment of learners' communicative competence is a challenge	0
Mean	7.6

As can be seen from the table, difficulties falling into the category related to the school administration or to the education system were mentioned most often, except for item C5, which was mentioned as an issue in the interviews only once. Teacher-related difficulties tend to be seen as the least problematic by English language teachers in Georgia. Below follows a more detailed analysis of the interview data relating to CLT-associated difficulties.

Teacher-related difficulties

As shown in Table 7.10 above, most of the participating teachers were not very willing to talk about the difficulties related to their own status which might be preventing them from efficient language teaching, thereby making them accountable for the failure. Only a few (four) teachers admitted any need for a higher level of language proficiency on their part, or were explicit about the lingering influence of traditional teaching methods on their current practices. Some examples of teachers' discussion about the challenges they encounter in the process of teaching follow below.

We need to be exposed to native speech more, to have a better pronunciation and use appropriate, natural English (T08: Pub. P).

We are used to the old methods, the activities that they offered. Now the course books have been changed. Everything is new — the approach is new, the materials are new — so we will have to learn much, and adapt ourselves (T06: Pub. C).

Overall, there was no nostalgia or urge reported by teachers to carry on with the grammar-driven ways of language teaching. There was even some discussion of how unpopular grammar-focused lessons are among learners and how the teachers, who think that grammar is one of the most important components of language teaching, have to find ways to deliver a grammar lesson in disguise, which is already going to extremes, as CLT does not exclude grammar instruction at all.

The learners do not want to learn grammar any more. They are demanding a “language without grammar” approach. So, when I have a grammar lesson, I do not even mention the grammatical topic we are going to cover in the lesson, rather I hide it under another name; for example, if I want to teach Present Perfect, I say, we are planning to discuss our life experiences (T02: Pri. C.).

This kind of attitude on the part of teachers, as well as learners, is not typical of every country (Li, 1998). Even in some of the neighboring countries, the situation varies dramatically — in Armenia, for example, nostalgia towards past teaching and learning experiences and educational traditions have a strong hold on the parties involved in the education process, who, in some cases, openly show their preference for more traditional, Soviet teaching practices (Karakhanyan, 2011: 65, 85).

Another teacher-related problem listed in the CLT literature is the teachers' fear of having to apply a novel methodology and having to experiment with it. Almost half (ten teachers) of the group interviewed

admitted facing this challenge. Some of the teachers also confessed a need for help in this respect. The above said is illustrated by the quote that follows:

It can be quite daunting to use novel approaches and methodologies in teaching. Application of technology tools, for example, in the language teaching, helps to make the teaching more communicative; however, it can be quite challenging for teachers to start integrating that into their everyday practice; learners are much better at it (T12: Pri. P.).

Learner-related difficulties

The analysis conducted in the present study revealed that the increased independence delegated to the learner when CLT is applied is not actually perceived as a problem among the Georgian teachers, as is the case in some other countries (see Section 3.9.5). Students' mixed language proficiency level was mentioned as problematic by half of the interviewees. Teachers reported a feeling of being left helplessly alone in facing this problem:

There are recommendations that teachers need to adapt materials according to each learner's needs and abilities, but this is easier said than done — in a classroom with 32 learners it is virtually impossible, I must admit (T08: Pub. P.).

In the CLT classroom, level differences were considered as giving rise to another problem – a difficulty in equally involving all learners in the communicative learning process:

Learners with higher levels of proficiency speak out more, and the ones who can't speak well sit silently; they do not want to look silly in front of their peers (T09: Pub. P.).

CLT was believed to be detrimental to more outgoing, more sociable personalities of the learner, as well as of supporting largely the needs of higher-level students. Making students speak in the target foreign language was not, however, reported as problematic by the teachers.

Administration-related difficulties

Even though almost all the respondents reported that they had participated in teacher training courses on new methods, some of them still mentioned a lack of teacher training and of professional support as something they are suffering from in this transitional period. Some of them expressed their dissatisfaction at the fact that courses typically provide only superficial and fragmented knowledge, whereas what they require is more theoretical background and a deeper understanding.

In our training courses, there is no theoretical background provided to things. We are shown how to conduct certain activities, and then we have to find our way in our classrooms on our own (T06: Pub.C).

Three of the teachers reported having attended training courses which were not useful at all, as the contents had offered nothing new to them:

We have training courses, all of us, we have to have training. The Ministry sets it as a requirement, and they organize them for us. The courses are interesting, but they are for new teachers mainly; we know most of the stuff they teach (T07: Pub. P).

The biggest challenges reported by the teachers were those of teaching resources and large class sizes. Almost all the respondents referred to large classes as one of the principal constraints on their attempts to use CLT. In Georgia, there are often about 30-35 students in a group at secondary public schools, whereas the numbers at private secondary schools may range between 15 and 20. Despite the difference in this respect between the public and private school system, these problems were mentioned by both public and private sector teachers. The teachers found it very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to use CLT with so many students in one class, as, according to many of them, CLT requires close monitoring and giving individual attention, while the speaking activities often require classroom rearrangement, which results in much noise:

I must admit, I sometimes skip pair and group work activities, as with so many students I can't set it up properly. I find it difficult to pay attention to each group/pair as well. Well, it can be noisy too (T11: Pri. P).

Seven teachers complained about not having the resources in place needed for the successful implementation of CLT:

Zero resources... one Teacher's Book to every three teachers; we find it very difficult to share. No CD players or anything (T09: Pub. P).

There is no technical equipment at all – no DVD players, whiteboards, or any other facilities – it is all left up to the teacher (T04: Pub. P).

The language lab, which is reminiscent of the Audio-Lingual teaching method popular in the 1970s in the former Soviet Union was mentioned by six teachers as a very useful resource for achieving communicative teaching goals, especially for listening skills and pronunciation improvement.

Little time being dedicated to covering the communicative syllabus, which entails much more time-consuming activities than the previous style of grammar-focused exercises did, also came up as an issue in quite a few cases (nine teachers). It is important to note that the grammar-driven examination

system was mentioned by only one teacher as a detrimental factor for CLT implementation.

CLT-related difficulties

Typical difficulties associated with CLT itself include the time-consuming character of CLT activities, classroom management issues, and CLT assessment-related difficulties. Only CLT-related classroom management challenges were referred to in the vast majority of cases (17 teachers); a lack of time for implementing CLT activities was not often mentioned as a problem (six teachers); whereas assessment-related difficulties, which are discussed in the CLT literature rather often, were not brought up in the interviews by any of the teachers.

A particularly positive attitude towards CLT, and an acknowledgement of there being very few challenges, was demonstrated by three of the interviewees. It is interesting to note that these were the heads of the language departments in their respective schools:

Overall, we have excellent results; there are some “weak students”, of course, but as a whole, we have good results. Well, difficulties... there are some, but nothing too serious (T06: Pub. C.).

A distancing of their own practical attitudes from those of the rest of the language teaching staff was also observed among these teachers:

Well, there is no problem of resources, I have my own CD player; whoever does not have one can go to the staff room and use the computer there to do the listening ... nothing is impossible or difficult if the teacher is hard-working and motivated (T04: Pub. P).

To check how the situation varies across the different school types, a cross-tabulation was performed. Chi-Square analysis was used to compare the frequencies of mentions of CLT-related challenges. The results indicate that there is no significantly different situation in this respect across the different school types (χ^2 (Df = 3, N = 21) = 2, 26 - 20.1, p value ranging from < .107 to .759).

7.3.2 Questionnaire results

The results reported in this section are of a quantitative nature and are based on the questionnaire data output, which are meant to provide answers to the research questions 4 and 5, and 6, as well as to supplement the research questions 2 and 4.

Research Question 4: *What kind of attitudes do teachers of English hold towards CLT?*

The data presented in Table 7.11 provides an overview of the teacher attitudes across the various CLT-related areas, and summarizes the detailed discussion that follows afterwards (for more information about the methodology and raw data processing procedure, see Setion 7.2.5).⁵

Table 7.11: Teachers' attitudes towards various aspects of CLT

	1. Language and learning theory	2. Course design and syllabus	3. Teacher's and learner's roles	4. Classroom interactions	5. Error correction	6. Materials and activities	7. CLT- related difficulties
Mean	4.31	4.39	4.17	3.99	4.00	3.96	3.73
SD	.337	.509	.324	.372	.532	.510	.462

Note: Groups are evaluated according to the rating scale which ranges from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

As the Table 7.11 illustrates, the higher composite mean score of the pro-CLT groups compared with the composite score of the CLT-related challenges reveals that even though the teachers see and recognize the problems along the way of implementation, they still hold highly positive attitudes towards and acceptance of CLT (composite mean score of the pro-CLT groups – M=4.20; composite score of the CLT-related Challenges group – M=3.73).

As was mentioned above (Section 7.2.5), questionnaire items 13-20 were analyzed separately. This part of the questionnaire helps indicate how accurate the teachers' understandings of the value and aims of the concrete teaching activities are and thus supplements the information obtained through the teacher interviews and helps provide a comprehensive answer to RQ3 (*How well do the teachers understand the theoretical underpinnings of Communicative Language Teaching?*).

Overall, it was revealed that teachers evaluated quasi-skills development activities as still useful to some extent (composite mean score M=2.18, SD=.815), whereas the usefulness of the real skills development activities was estimated at a much higher level, ranging from the evaluation ratings of "useful" to "highly useful" (composite mean score=3.67, SD=.470).

⁵ For more details and frequency analysis of each item of the group, see Appendix 7.5.

A Paired Samples T-test was applied to check the significance of these differences. The difference was proved to be statistically significant ($p=.000$). For more detailed analysis of how various language activities were evaluated by the teachers, see Appendix: 7.6).

Research question 5: *Are there any challenges that the teachers consider as obstacles to the successful application of CLT in Georgia?*

As mentioned above (Section 7.2.5), the data obtained through the questionnaire items 47-60 (see Appendix 7.3) supplemented the interview information regarding teachers' evaluations of the CLT-related challenges that exist in Georgia. Table 7.12 below lists the typical CLT-related challenges as found in the literature and the mean scores of the teacher ratings with regard to the difficulties outlined: the higher the score, the more problematic the teachers think the challenge in question is in the Georgian context:

Table 7.12: The mean scores of the CLT-related challenges reported by the teachers in Georgia, subdivided into four thematic groups

Source of difficulty	Mean
A. Teacher-related	
1. Low language proficiency makes it difficult for teachers to practice CLT	4.77
2. The influence of older methods makes it difficult to practice CLT	3.34
3. Teachers need to have a better theoretical understanding of CLT	4.50
4. The fear of using a novel method	3.06
Mean	3.92
B. Learner-related	
1. Learners are given too much independence in the learning process	3.00
2. It is difficult to involve all learners in the communicative learning process	3.52
3. It is difficult to make learners speak in the target foreign language	3.48
4. Mixed-level learner groups are difficult to deal with in the CLT lesson	4.35
Mean	3.58
C. Administration-related	
1. There are not enough methodology trainings in CLT	4.09
2. There are not enough teaching resources for CLT application	4.30
3. Large classes make CLT application difficult	4.11
4. There is little time allocated for covering a CLT course	3.29
5. Grammar-driven examination system has a negative effect on CLT	2.52
Mean	3.66
D. CLT-related	
1. CLT takes much preparation time	3.90
2. CLT is related with many classroom management problems	4.11
3. Assessment of learners' communicative competence is a challenge	4.15
Mean	4.05

Note: The mean scores are presented on a scale 1-5 (1=this is not a challenge; 5=this is a major challenge).

Questionnaire data analysis revealed somewhat similar results to the interview questions regarding the CLT-related challenges; The challenges that were mentioned most frequently in the interviews – lack of professional training, insufficient resources and large classes, as well as classroom management difficulties also had the highest mean scores in the questionnaires; the examination system had low scores both in the interviews and in the questionnaires, which shows that the teachers do not see this as a major problem in Georgia. However, some discrepancy was observed with regard to the language assessment issue: whereas assessment of learners' communicative competence was never mentioned as a problem in the interviews, in the questionnaires the same item received a high score of 4.15. Also, teacher-related difficulties (*low language proficiency; the influence of the older methods*) did not come up in the interviews much (it was mentioned only four times), whereas in the questionnaires, they were rated as very challenging (M=4.77; M=4.50). Other

items in the *Challenges* sections of the interviews and questionnaires revealed only moderate variability (for more detailed statistics, see Appendix 7.7).

Research question 6: *Do school type and certain teacher characteristics affect the study results significantly?*

In order to find out whether certain social factors had an effect on the research outcomes, such independent variables as the ‘school type’, teacher ‘age’, ‘sex’, ‘experience’, ‘specialization’, ‘academic degree’, ‘teacher training’ were looked at for each group of the questionnaire separately (see also Section 7.2.1). Out of these variables, ‘teacher training’, ‘specialization’, and ‘sex’ were a priori excluded from the analysis, since all the participants claimed they had undergone many teacher training courses; the vast majority of the respondents had either a pedagogical or a philological academic background; and all but one of the teachers were female, so that these variables would have no differentiating effect. Consequently, only the factors ‘school type’, ‘teacher age’, ‘teaching experience’ and ‘academic degree’ were preserved as variables possessing potentially significant effects. These independent variables each had two or more levels; consequently, both an Independent Samples T-test and ANOVA were applied for the data analysis purposes.

As a result of the analysis, it was revealed that only the ‘school type’ had a statistically significant effect on the study results: private and public school results in teachers’ attitudes towards error correction methods (Thematic group 5) were detected to be significantly different, with the private school teachers tending to be more in favor of CLT-type error correction techniques than the public school teachers, the effect size estimated at $F(3, 92) = 4.26, p = .008$.

7.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has sought to explore English language teachers’ awareness of and compliance with the official language teaching recommendations, their understanding of the CLT theoretical underpinnings as well as their attitudes towards CLT. The chapter has also discussed the challenges that teachers acknowledge as obstacles to the successful implementation of the communicative method they try to apply in their everyday teaching practice. The results of the interviews and questionnaires provide information to answer the six research questions formulated at the beginning of the chapter. Based on the data obtained, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. English language teachers’ awareness of the official language policies and language standards in Georgia

As was revealed from the interviews (see Section 7.3.1), most of the respondents (70%) had some awareness of the language policy documents,

quite a few of them (20%) had no awareness at all, and only 10% of the interviewees demonstrated a full knowledge of the details the document offers regarding the foreign-language teaching recommendations and goals set by the Ministry of Education of Georgia. This finding shows certain improvement of the overall situation with regard to policy awareness revealed on the teachers' part explored in 2001, where 63.7% of the teachers interviewed reported no awareness of the policy paper. The author of the study, Tevzadze, expresses her views about the situation stating that "it is depressing that a professional group has such a low awareness of documents which form the policy they should be implementing" (Tevzadze, 2001:38). The present study also showed that the Public Peripheral school teachers tended to be significantly less informed of the language policy and methodology reforms than the teachers from all other school types investigated (see Table 7.4).

2. Compliance with the official language policies and language standards in Georgia

As for how closely the teachers claim to follow the language teaching recommendations, approximately the same distribution is witnessed with regard to compliance as it was in the case of the teachers' awareness of the officially proposed language teaching method and its underpinnings: almost no cases of full compliance were detected (see Table 7.7). Many of the teachers turned out to have the course books as their main source for teaching guidelines, lesson plans and teaching materials. Many of the participants (12 teachers) confessed practicing a teaching method that they had developed "on their own", and what is more, all the interviewees admitted being fully in charge by themselves of developing and choosing the tests for their own students' mid-term and end-of-year assessment purposes, without external evaluation being involved in any way. No significantly different situation was detected among the groups of teachers with different characteristics nor across the different school types.

3. Teachers' understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of Communicative Language Teaching

The quest into the level of the English language teachers' understanding of the theories behind Communicative Language Teaching, explored through interviews with 21 secondary school English language teachers in Georgia, revealed that little methodological conceptualization has been construed by teachers on the basis of academic or professional studies, as is evidenced by there being very few cases of a full and accurate understanding of CLT detected in the interviews (see Table 7.9 and 7.8). The results instead ranged from no understanding at all, or an inaccurate understanding, to a fragmented or partial understanding. The largest number of teachers interviewed (52%) belonged to

the category of those with a partial or inaccurate understanding. Many of them held beliefs about CLT that were not consistent with the actual underpinnings of this approach. Some viewed CLT as being aimed at developing conversational skills only; some saw it as involving only speaking and listening skills development, and as including very little or no grammar instruction. Quite a large number (12 out of 21) of the teachers interviewed demonstrated misunderstandings regarding such basic language concepts as language skills and language activities (see Section 7.3.1). Their interpretations of what exactly Communicative Competence meant included such interpretation as teaching learners basic conversational skills, or teaching survival language with very little grammar involved.

Two of the teachers in the Private Central schools, however, did hold good understanding of CLT. They demonstrated an acknowledgement of the importance of focusing on such CLT-supported language teaching aspects as functional language use, skills development; the significance of employing communicative interaction patterns in the process of teaching, such as pair/group work, rather than having an exclusively teacher-centered environment; and the necessity of employing communicative activities, such as debates, discussions and project work, was also mentioned by them.

According to Maclellan and Soden (2003:119), as long as the teachers hold wrong, vague or superficial understandings of the teaching methodology they are recommended to employ, there will be little chance to actually change much in this respect. Day (1999) further elaborates that “change which is not internalized is likely to be cosmetic and temporary” (as cited in Karakhanyan, 2011:70). A low level of integration of the principles and of understandings might allow the suspicion that teachers’ classroom practice, in most cases, are not likely to be driven by CLT-compatible experiences. For this reason, classroom observations were also undertaken in the study, as described in Chapter 9.

4. Teachers’ attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching

Overall, there was a very highly positive attitude reported by the teachers towards all aspects of pro-CLT theories and classroom practices (see Table 7.11), which means that, in theory at least, teachers are supportive of CLT and ready to switch from solely grammar-driven teaching to more communicative, skills-oriented language instruction.

5. The challenges that the teachers consider as obstacles to the successful application of Communicative Language Teaching in the Georgian context

The data obtained through the interviews and the questionnaires reveal that even though secondary school English language teachers in Georgia favor CLT, they see practical problems associated with its implementation as well.

There were a number of issues that were reported by the English teachers as posing barriers to the successful application of Communicative Language Teaching in Georgia (see Tables 7.9 and 7.11). It is important to note that the teachers talked less about problems related to factors involving their own standing, mainly instead emphasizing administration and learner-related difficulties, demonstrating a lack of readiness for self-evaluation and a tendency to shift accountability onto third parties. In the interviews, the teachers were not as open about discussing teacher-related problems as they were in the questionnaires, where they admitted to most of the problems of this category. For example, teachers' admitted the need for a further language training, the finding which is in line with the previous study results conducted in Georgia in 2001 (Tkemaladze et al., 2001:112). Unlike the informants of Tkemaladze et al. (2001:112), however, the teachers involved in my study acknowledged the need for methodology training in CLT as well (see Table 7.12). The interviewees who held the position of Head of Language Departments at their schools seemed the least critical about the challenges there were, revealing a higher sense of accountability towards the learning/teaching process, and thus seeking to present the situation in a better light.

The difference between the difficulties reported in the interviews and those indicated in the questionnaires was revealed in connection with a rather important area of CLT – assessment of the learners' communicative competence. It is interesting to note that the rather problematic communicative language assessment issue did not surface in any of the teachers' interviews; however, when asked about it in the questionnaire, teachers rated them as rather problematic. This can be explained by the deduction that even though in theory they see CLT-compatible assessment as a challenge, in practice it is not causing them difficulties, as most of the teachers reported that they design the tests themselves or lift their mid-term assessment materials directly from the course books, with clear indications that no standardized assessment system is used by English language teachers at secondary schools during or at the end of the academic year. This finding is also similar to the results of an earlier study conducted in Georgia by Tkemaladze et al. (2001) who also report largely non-standardized form of applied assessment techniques and tools at secondary schools in Georgia (2001:20, 113). Today, teachers are still given freedom to choose which form and material to use for testing purposes: the use of non-communicative forms of assessment of learners' language proficiency was

reported by all the teachers interviewed. The majority of the teachers test the language forms and lexical units they covered during the year, paying less attention to testing learners' Communicative Competence through the language skills.

6. The effect of the 'school type' as well as certain teacher-related characteristics on the study results

Investigation of differences between age and sex groups, or between teachers of differing academic qualifications and levels of teacher training, revealed no statistical significance. Only 'school type' proved to have significant effects on some of the research outcomes. Exploration of the effect of the variable 'school type' on the research outcomes revealed that the level of teachers' awareness of the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages and its recommendations and goals as well as their understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of CLT vary across different school types: teachers at Public Peripheral schools tend to have significantly lower awareness than teachers at other school types; as for the understanding level, a difference was detected between Public Peripheral and Private Central school teachers. No other variables had a significant impact on the study results (see Section 7.3.2, RQ 6).

In terms of teachers' attitudes towards CLT, here as well, the situation varied slightly only across the school types, and with regard to only two thematic groups presented in the questionnaire: representatives of the Public Peripheral schools demonstrating significantly less pronounced preferences for pro-CLT language teaching activities and error correction techniques. Teachers' perceptions of the challenges that there were did not vary much across the different school types, nor did any other teacher-related independent variables have any effect in this regard either.

The present chapter has sought to explore the state of affairs of English language teaching situation in Georgia in theory. The next chapter carries on with a similar investigation relating to the attitudes of Georgian learners of English towards Communicative Language Teaching.