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CHAPTER 8: LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (STUDY 2)

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Having explored the situation with regard to how receptive the teachers of English at secondary schools in Tbilisi are towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in this chapter the attitudes of other important agents of the study process – language learners' – are looked into.

8.1.1 The aim of the study

Generally speaking, the efficiency of a language methodology is largely determined by its intrinsic relevance and accuracy of the theories on which it is based, the context in which it is applied, and the correspondence it offers with the needs and requirements it is meant to meet. The most reliable resource for the measurement of the efficiency of a language teaching methodology is learners' attained proficiency level in the target foreign language (the situation in this regard will be explored in Chapter 10). However, it is also interesting to look into the sometimes not very obvious factors which might be at work in the process of methodology application, either hindering or contributing to arriving at successful or unsuccessful learning outcomes. Where learners as well as teachers stand in terms of their learning/teaching methodology orientation (See Table 7.11) is widely considered to be an important link in the chain connecting teaching methodology with its ultimate goal, which is the improvement of learners' communicative proficiency (Kern, 1995; Weinstein, 1994; Peacock, 2001). Thus, it was deemed important to look into how learners feel about the methodology to which they are exposed: do they accept or reject it? Do they feel positive or negative about the learning experiences that it offers? After all, it is the learners who are the major agents of the language instruction process at whom the methodology is aimed.

Chapter Overview

In Section 8.1.2 the general background to the chapter is presented; the importance of the attitude factor in language teaching is touched upon; and the connections and place of the present chapter among other studies in this dissertation are given. Section 8.1.2 also presents the four research questions that will be dealt with in Chapter 8, the answers to which are provided in the subsequent sections of the chapter. Section 8.3 discusses the research methodology applied in this part of the study: the research variables (8.2.1), the research medium (8.2.2), participant characteristics (8.2.3), data collection tools, procedure, and the material obtained (8.2.4). The statistical analysis approaches

adopted in this study are discussed in detail in Section 8.2.5. Section 8.3 reports the results of the analysis and Section 8.4 provides a summary, concluding comments and implications of the study.

8.1.2 The Theoretical background and the research questions

Before discussing the importance of learners' attitudes towards teaching methodology to which they are exposed in more detail, and before exploring Georgian learners' attitudes towards CLT, it is important to discuss the notion of "attitude" in general and its role in the language learning process. To start with, what is attitude? According to the *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009), attitude is "a way of feeling or thinking about someone or something, especially, as this influences one's behaviour". Gardner (1985: 91) claims that attitude is "an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object" (cited in Smadi & Al- Ghazo, 2013:63). According to Brown (2001:61), "attitude refers to our feelings and shapes our behaviours towards learning". According to Victori and Lockheart (1995:225), "[g]eneral assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing learning and about the nature of learning and teaching". According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), there exist two types of attitudes towards language learning: "integrative" and "instrumental". An integrative attitude is when the motive for learning is communication with people belonging to the culture of the target language, while an instrumental motive is to learn a language to fulfill more pragmatic goals, such as getting a job or passing an examination. Lambert further elaborates: "an integrative attitude is more likely to lead to success than an instrumental one" (cited in Macnamara, 1973:37). Communicative Language Teaching, in principle, is supportive of what Lambert calls "the integrative" attitude; however, if properly applied, it can also cater to the "instrumental" needs of the learner, leading to the optimal result. Within this study, it is attempted to find out whether learners in Georgia are more inclined to have more of an "integrative" or "instrumental" attitude towards language learning; information which, in its turn, could to some extent explain learners' positive or less positive disposition towards CLT.

Why is it important that learners have a positive attitude towards a teaching method? Generally speaking, students' attitude is one of the main factors that determine learners' success in language learning (Sarnoff, 1970:279). Research abounds that claims that learner beliefs have a pervasive influence on their academic learning (Horwits, 1988; Gardner, 1985); Brown (1994: 168) gives an example of a Canadian student whose positive attitude towards French, whose desire to understand its speakers and empathy towards the French led to a heightened motivation to learn the French language. Classroom realities that contradict learners' expectations about learning may lead to disappointment and will ultimately interfere with learning

(Horwits, 1988), whereas positive attitude brings out greater overall effort on the language learners' part, and typically results in greater success in terms of progress in language proficiency (Gardner, 1985). According to Stern (1983) "the attitude component contributes at least as much, and often more, to language learning than the cognitive skills", a point also supported by a number of other scholars (cited in Saracaloğlu, 2012:39); Savignon goes as far as claiming that "attitude is without a doubt the single most important factor in a learner's success" (2002:12).

There has also been some discussion regarding what influence learners' attitude towards new teaching approaches can have on teachers. When teachers feel that their status and/or good image might be negatively affected in their learners' eyes by the teaching methodology they use, they might have some reservations about using that mode of instruction (Janssen et al., 2013:14). The opposite reaction is anticipated when teachers feel that new methods are appreciated by their learners and that the practice of these methods makes a positive impact on their image and professionalism. Thus, the role and importance of learners' perceptions of the teaching methodology they are exposed to is significant in this sense as well.

Interdisciplinary research also suggests that various types of individual differences, such as sex, age, nationality, learning style and personality type, might largely affect learners' attitudes; so, these factors have to be explored in order to detect how they influence learner attitudes towards language learning (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Wenden, 1999; Horwitz, 1999; Rifkin, 2000). One such study by Saracaloğlu (2000) indicates that students' attitudes towards language learning differ according to the type of school they attend (2000:40); Baranov (1986) in his study with secondary school students (6th, 8th and 10th graders) in the former Soviet Union, attributes minimal effect to the factor sex; whereas Csepo and Nikolovy (2002) find parents' educational background to be an affective factor on learners' evaluations of foreign language learning (as cited in Saracaloğlu, 2000:41). The present study the following independent variables were included: 'school type' and 'learner sex' (see further discussion in Section 8.2.1).

To sum up, the importance of how learners evaluate language teaching methodology cannot be underestimated. If a positive basis on the learners' part towards the methodology is lacking, this has to be one of the hindering factors worth considering in the case of learners' unexpectedly low language proficiency outcomes. Acknowledging the importance of learners' attitudes in the study process, the present study was undertaken – aimed at investigating Georgian language learners' feelings towards CLT. The research questions formulated in order to obtain the data needed for the present study are presented below:

1. What are the attitudes of the secondary school language learners towards Communicative Language Teaching in Tbilisi?
2. What are the evaluations of the secondary school language learners of CLT-related challenges in Georgia?
3. Do learners' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching differ across a range of school types as well as according to sex?
4. How similar or different are language learners' and teachers' attitudes towards CLT in Georgia?

8.2 METHODOLOGY

8.2.1 Research design

As mentioned above (8.1.2), 'school type' and 'learner sex' have been identified as key independent variables which are expected to have an effect and yield certain variations with respect to learners' attitudes towards CLT in Tbilisi, Georgia.

As for 'sex', despite a scarcity of literature dealing with sex as an effect on learner beliefs towards language learning, there still are some findings which indicate that sex difference might influence significantly learners' attitudes towards learning (Siebert, 2003; Bernat & Lloyd, 2007); however, there are also findings which suggest the opposite (Tercanlioglu, 2005). Taking into account the paucity and the contradictory character of the research available on sex differences on students' beliefs about foreign language learning, it was deemed interesting to conduct further analysis and contribute to filling the gap existing in current research in this area, which has, to date, remained largely unexplored in Georgia.

'School type', whether the school has a central or a peripheral location and whether it is private or public, is believed to be an important factor which might have an effect on learners' learning preferences, as well as on their motivation. The nature of study-related difficulties and the learning opportunities offered to learners is also expected to vary across different school types (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005:49); Thus, as a result of the predetermined school selection criteria, as in Chapter 7, twelve secondary schools in total, representing various school types in Tbilisi, Georgia, were approached: four Public Central, four Public Peripheral, two Private Central, and two Private Peripheral schools. The names of the schools participating in the study are not revealed for confidentiality reasons.

The majority of the study participants represent public schools; the number of learners at private schools belonging to the age group under research (mainly twelve-/thirteen-year old pupils; see also Table 8.2), in some cases, was as low as fourteen per school, whereas at public schools the number could be as high as 126. The uneven balance of learner distribution across the

private and public sectors can be explained by the fact that, overall, at private schools, the classes, as well as the number of students in them, tend to be fewer compared with the public schools, where there were more classes, which were also much more heavily attended than at the private schools.¹

Access to public schools was also more easily obtained than to private ones, where, in some cases, the administration was reluctant to cooperate, saying the study was felt to interfere with the academic process at school. These facts explain the higher number of participating public schools and learners in the study. Table 8.1 summarizes the school and learner distribution information.

Table 8.1: Participating school and learner distribution

School type		Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Public Central	School A	87	44.7%
	School B	73	
	School C	42	
	School D	108	
Public Peripheral	School E	43	40.1%
	School F	77	
	School G	126	
	School H	32	
Private Central	School I	22	5.8%
	School J	18	
Private Peripheral	School K	51	9.4%
	School L	14	

Total number: 693

8.2.2 Study participants

The main criteria applied for the participant selection in this study was their age: learners had to have suitable cognitive development necessary for being able to analyze and adequately respond to the statements presented in the questionnaires. As a result of piloting the questionnaires, the optimal age group was estimated at twelve/thirteen years of age – seventh/eighth graders. More details of the participant age-related characteristics are provided in Table 8.2 below.

¹ For details, see Chapter 7, footnote 3.

Table 8.2: Participating learner age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
11	2	.3
12	116	16.7
13	475	68.5
14	78	11.3
15	22	3.2
Total	693	100

As it can be seen from the table, by far the most learners (68%) were thirteen years old, followed by the second biggest number of twelve-year-olds (16.7%), followed by learners of fourteen (14%), only a few being fifteen (3.2%); and just two of the learners were eleven years old. The choice regarding the participants' age turned out to be appropriate for the study: the learners were perfectly capable of completing the tasks provided and seemed both cooperative and enthusiastic in the process of the research. The mean score for the participants' age was: $M=13$; $SD=.647$.

As for the learners' sex, both male and female learners participated in the study, the female participants (53.1%) slightly outnumbering the male ones (46.9%).

Incentives to participate

Permission was first obtained from both the Ministry of Education and the individual school administrations before approaching the secondary school learners in Tbilisi. The learners were asked to participate so as to contribute to making foreign language instruction in Georgia more modern and compatible with the communicative needs of the present day. All the learners approached agreed to participate and did so voluntarily. The questionnaire collection was completed without any reported complaints. A confidentiality guarantee was provided to the school administrations, as well as the head teachers of the classes approached.

8.2.3 Data collection tools

Learner questionnaire

The data about learners' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching were collected through 30-item, mixed-model design questionnaires. The items in the questionnaire were grouped into eight CLT-related thematic groups, presented in three separate sections of the questionnaire: *Section 1* (items 1-17): (1) Language and Learning Theory; (2) Error Correction; (3) Teachers' and Learners' roles; (4) Classroom Interaction; (5) Course and Syllabus design; (6)

Teaching Material; *Section 2* (items 18-25): (7) CLT versus non-CLT activities; *Section 3* (items 26-30): (8) CLT-related Difficulties (see Appendix 8.1).

To avoid complication or confusion on the students' part, the questionnaires were in Georgian and devised in the simplest possible way for the young learners to complete (see Appendix 8.1A). Items 1-17 consist of pairs of statements, presented in *a.* and *b.* answer format: "a" options present a view in line with the tenets of CLT, whereas "b" options are in line with a more form-focused style of teaching. Students could circle "a", "b" or both variants. Statements 18-25, on the other hand, deal with language activities: learners were invited to respond to them by indicating on a 5-point scale their preference ranging from (5) – 'I like it very much' to (1) – 'I do not like it at all'. Items 26-30 (Section 8) of the questionnaire deal with CLT-related challenges; in this part, the learners were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how problematic they considered the CLT-related issues presented were in their own context; the ratings ranged from (5) – 'a very big challenge' to (1) 'no challenge at all'. For more convenient and comparable data presentation purposes, all the obtained scores were eventually changed into a similar 1–5 rating scale; an initial evaluation scale format emerged as a result of a pilot study conducted with a number of learners belonging to approximately the same age group as the actual study participants, as the most appropriate and relevant data collection form.

Questionnaire coding and processing

The completed learners' questionnaires, the questionnaire items as well as all the independent variables ('school type' and 'sex'), were coded and entered into SPSS (version 20.0) for statistical analysis. Different categorizations were made, starting with individual schools, and then grouping them into broader categories. This was done to check at what level and with which component of the study the significant effect of the 'school type' variable lay. All the response options were also coded numerically to allow for more statistical analysis options in SPSS.

8.2.4 Data collection procedure

A total of 693 learners from the participating secondary schools in Tbilisi completed and returned the questionnaires. An average of two classes of sixth or seventh-graders were also observed at each school, which provided an opportunity to see learners during the actual learning process (for more information about lesson observations, see 9.2.), and about half of the total of 693 learners who completed the questionnaires were also audio-recorded (350 learners), so that their speech could be evaluated linguistically and analyzed (for more information see 10.2).

To guarantee an easy questionnaire distribution and data collection procedure, the questionnaires were distributed and collected during lessons in progress, which guaranteed a 100% return rate. Also I was present while the learners were completing the questionnaires, as this provided an opportunity for the participants to ask questions and to receive explanations in the case of any misunderstanding. As the learner questionnaire was not very extensive and could be completed in about 10-15 minutes, the procedure did not disrupt the lessons too much.

8.2.5 Data analysis²

Reliability test

Before running any other tests to explore the data obtained through the questionnaires, the internal reliability of the questionnaire items was tested using the reliability analysis test in SPSS. As a result, which reached an acceptable level of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was detected ($\alpha = .60$). Not very high level of internal reliability of the questionnaire items might be explained by the fact that consistency coefficients are normally suppressed when the rating scale is short, e.g. only three points (Harris & Brown, 2010), which was the case with the present questionnaire.

Even though it is agreed that the alpha level should be at 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), in case of exploratory studies like my own Cronbach's Alpha values ≥ 0.60 is acceptable (Hair et al., 2005). Thus, for the present study, the existing inter-rater reliability level can be considered satisfactory.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for data analysis purposes. The data were explored in as detailed a way as possible, starting with analyzing them in terms of frequency counts, means and standard deviations for each item of the questionnaire (see Appendix 8.2), and only later calculating the composite mean scores of the broader thematic groups presented in the questionnaire. These composite variables were then subjected to further inferential statistical testing.

All the background independent variables included in the study were also explored with the help of descriptive and frequency analyses, the descriptions of which have already been provided in 8.2.3). The effects of the independent variables of the study were checked by adopting inferential statistics. As already mentioned (Section 8.2.1), only the effects of the variable

² For the definitions of the statistical terms used in this as well as other chapters of this dissertation, see Statistics Reference Page above.

'school type' and 'sex' on the research outcomes were explored here. To check the difference between the various group means and the effect size of these variables on the research outcomes an ANOVA³ was conducted; 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.

The effects of the 'sex' variable on the research outcomes were checked with an Independent Samples T-test in SPSS. A Paired Samples T-test was employed to compare the participating learners' attitudes towards CLT versus non-CLT activities, as well as for conducting a comparative analysis of the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards CLT.

To analyze the relationship between the variables and to determine the correlation between the different aspects of CLT and learners' attitudes towards each of them (whether learners who scored highly on certain CLT-related questionnaire thematic groups also scored highly in some other areas), a default type of Correlation Test in SPSS – Pearson's r – was performed on the data. For more information regarding the data analysis approach adopted in this study, see Section 7. 2.5.

8.3 STUDY RESULTS

The results reported in this study are of a quantitative nature and help provide the answers to the research questions formulated at the beginning of this chapter. To answer the first research question, frequency analyses, descriptive statistics tests, as well as inferential statistics tests were run.⁴

Research Question 1: *What are the attitudes of the secondary school language learners towards Communicative Language Teaching?*

Learners' attitudes towards CLT have been explored by letting the participants rate the CLT principles, presented in six thematic groups in the Learner Questionnaires (see 8.2.4 and Appendix 8.1). The groups have been presented

³ For more information about this as well as about all the subsequent statistical terms used in this Chapter, see Statistics Reference Page above.

⁴ For the details of the frequency and descriptive statistics of each item of the questionnaire, see Appendices 8.2 and 8.3.

in a similar way and order as in the case of the Teacher Questionnaires (for more discussion about the structure and rationale behind the questionnaires, see Section 7.2.4). The results obtained through the descriptive statistics tests run on the composite scores of the CLT-related thematic groups are provided in Table 8.3:

Table 8.3: Learners' attitudes towards CLT principles presented in six thematic groups

Questionnaire thematic groups	Mean	SD
1. Language and learning theory	3.60	.696
2. Error correction	3.64	1.205
3. Classroom interaction	2.82	1.127
4. Teacher's and learner's roles	3.89	1.037
5. Syllabus and course design	2.96	1.039
6. Teaching materials and activities	3.98	1.300
Mean score: 3.48		

Note: The mean scores are presented on a 1-5 scale (5=highly positive attitude – 1=negative attitude)

As the overall results show, even though the learners' attitudes seem to be more CLT-oriented than not, there were some aspects towards which they revealed a somewhat less CLT inclination than to the others, such as classroom interaction and syllabus and course design, for instance.

To provide a somewhat more concrete description of the learners' attitudes towards CLT principles, a discussion of the frequency counts and descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items, grouped within the above mentioned thematic groups (see Table 8.3), is provided below; more details of the analyses outcomes can be found in Appendix 8.2).

Within thematic group 1 of the questionnaire, Language and Learning Theory, which groups together issues related to language and learning theories, the learners expressed their positive attitude towards 'foreign language use in class' instead of Georgian ($M=4.70$), as well as towards having a more 'analytical approach to language learning' versus 'rote memorization' ($M=4.69$). The attitudes towards 'form focus' versus 'meaning focus' in language learning leaned towards acknowledging the importance of form and accuracy focus in the process of learning, rather than meaning and fluency ($M=2.62$); the same kind of not very CLT-compatible attitude was expressed with regard to the 'inductive' versus 'deductive' teaching approach, a preference being given to explicit explanations of the grammar rules rather than exposure to the discovery approach to teaching the language forms ($M=2.40$).

As for thematic group 2 of the questionnaire, which deals with Error Correction techniques, a rather neutral position was revealed on the matter of when mistakes should be corrected: as soon as errors are made, interrupting learners in the process of free speaking (an anti-CLT approach), or rather

afterwards, in the form of a delayed feedback (pro-CLT approach). On this issue, about an equal number of anti-CLT and pro-CLT positions were reported ($M=2.94$). However, the vast majority of the learners (80%) expressed a favorable attitude towards the CLT-supported self-correction techniques ($M=4.34$).

As far as the learners' attitudes towards Classroom Interaction patterns are concerned (thematic group 3), here a preference was shown for a more teacher-driven form of teaching. This reveals a somewhat conservative way of thinking on the students' part, who attribute the greater importance to 'teacher-student' rather than 'student-student' interaction ($M=2.11$), while they also approved of having 'increased teacher talking time' in the lesson ($M=2.70$). Within this section, a distinctly pro-CLT attitude was expressed towards 'pair and group work activities' only ($M=3.56$).

Learners' attitudes towards Teacher and Learner Roles in the language learning process (thematic group 4) revealed a highly pro-CLT orientation by pupils, one acknowledging the importance of learners' independence and initiative in the learning process ($M=4.17$), as well as the importance of teachers' empathy and attention towards individual learners ($M=4.06$), their learning needs and interests ($M=3.45$; for more details of how the outcomes were calculated, see Section 8.2.5).

The findings with respect to Language Syllabus and Course Design (thematic group 5) revealed a somewhat reticent attitude on the learners' part. Whilst a preference towards 'skills-oriented teaching' ($M=3.35$) as well as testing ($M=3.30$) was reported by the Georgian learners, when asked whether it was more important that the language program prepared them for real-life communication or for upcoming tests or exams, a bare majority of learners (52%) supported a teaching style that would prepare and help them pass the exams successfully rather than help with the development of real-life communication skills and competence ($M=2.22$).

As for preferences with regard to teaching materials and the nature of language activities (Group 6), authenticity ($M=4.06$) and a genuinely communicative nature of teaching materials ($M=3.91$) was reported to be important for the majority of learners (72% and 67%, respectively).

A separate contrastive analysis was conducted on the items belonging to thematic group 7 of the questionnaire: attitudes towards CLT versus non-CLT language teaching activities. The analysis outcomes are presented in Table 8.4:

Table 8.4: Comparison of learners' attitudes towards CLT and non-CLT activities

7. CLT and non-CLT language activities	Mean	SD
CLT activities		
18. Debates and discussions	4.06	1.043
19. Presentations	4.37	.958
20. Language games	4.19	1.011
21. Dialogues and role plays	3.89	1.165
Non-CLT activities		
22. Fill-in-the-gaps exercises	3.65	1.043
23. Reciting a memorized text	2.61	1.327
24. Grammar/vocabulary exercises	3.82	1.070
25. Dictations	2.80	1.361

Note: The mean scores are presented on a scale of 1-5 (5=like very much; 4=like; 3 =have a neutral attitude; 2=do not like; 1=do not like at all)

The results reveal that even though CLT activities are largely welcome by learners in Georgia, some of the non-CLT activities are appreciated almost as much: grammar and vocabulary and the fill-in-the-gaps exercises written exercises, for instance. At the same time, the non-CLT activities such as rote memorization and recitation as well as dictations were found to be quite unpopular among the language learners in Georgia (more detailed results of the frequency counts can be found in Appendix 8.2).

To compare learners' overall attitude towards CLT and non-CLT activities, and to detect whether the difference was significant, a descriptive statistics analysis, as well as a Paired Samples T-test was conducted on the composite scores of the items dealing with CLT (18-21) and non-CLT activities (22-25). The results are reported in Table 8.5.

Table 8.5: Mean composite scores of learners' preferences towards CLT and non-CLT activities

Activity type	Mean	SD
CLT activities	4.1270	.68249
Non-CLT activities	3.2197	.74261

Note: The mean scores are presented on a scale of 1–5 (5=like very much, 4=like, 3 =have a neutral attitude; 2=do not like, 1=do not like at all).

The outcomes of the analyses reveal that, overall, learners' attitudes towards CLT activities are significantly more positive than towards non-CLT activities — $t(692) = 25.58, p = .000$.

To check whether learners' attitudes towards various CLT thematic groups correlated with one another or not, a Pearson's Correlation test was run on the learner data. What was detected from this were low or insignificant inter-item correlations, which were not deemed worthwhile of further analysis.

Research Question 2: *What are the evaluations of the secondary school language learners of CLT-related challenges in Georgia?*

The data obtained through questionnaire items 26-30 (Section 3, thematic group 8) helped find out how problematic language learners thought application of CLT was at secondary schools in Georgia. Only the statements with regard to CLT-related challenges which are associated with learners have been included in the Learner Questionnaire, ending up with five items only altogether (see Appendix 8.1). Table 8.6 below lists the items and learners' evaluations of the degree of challenge they attach to each of them – the lower the score, the less problematic the learners find the issues.

Table 8.6: Learner evaluations of the CLT-related challenges

CLT-related challenges	Mean	SD
26. It is difficult for me to study in a foreign language	2.34	1.650
27. I feel uncomfortable when I have to speak in a foreign language with a Georgian classmate	1.94	1.548
28. Having many students in the group makes it difficult to learn a foreign language	3.11	1.851
29. It is difficult for me to get interested in the material which is not related to my context (culture, everyday life)	2.57	1.766
30. Speaking activities and pair/group work result in much noise, which makes it difficult for me to learn a language	2.23	1.684

Note: The items are evaluated on a scale of 1–5 (1=this is not a challenge; 5=this is a major challenge)

While teaching a foreign language, as is often claimed in the English Language Teaching (ELT) literature, especially when describing non-western cultures, the endeavour of persuading students to use the target foreign language in the learning process either makes them shy or anxious (Schmidt et al., 1996:56. This did not prove to be the case in Tbilisi: expressing oneself in a non-native tongue in the language class was not considered problematic by the majority of the participants (item 26), nor did learners rate having a foreign language as a

teaching/learning instrument as very problematic (item 27); heavily populated language classes (item 28) proved to be the biggest challenge for Georgian learners; imported language teaching materials and coursebooks (item 29), which in some cases are not relevant for the Georgian context, were not assessed as a big issue by most of the respondents, nor did the noise and chaotic situation that communicative activities might entail (item 30) cause much inconvenience or disapproval among the majority of learners.

To conclude, as the outcomes presented in Table 8.6 reveal, even though the learners admit some challenges related to CLT application in their own context, the issues are not rated as very problematic by the Georgian learners at secondary schools in Tbilisi.

Research Question 3: *Do learners' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching differ across the range of school types as well as sex groups?*

A one-way ANOVA and an Independent Samples T-test were conducted to check the effect of the background variables 'school type' as well as 'sex' on the learners' attitude analysis outcomes. As before, three sections of the questionnaire were analyzed and are reported separately. To make extensive data presentation feasible, the calculations were again performed on the composite scores of the three sections of the questionnaire first to reveal general tendencies; then, further, an item-based analysis was performed to find out whether the differences could be observed at a deeper level.

General attitudes towards CLT

The information about the effect size of the 'school type' variable on learners' attitudes towards CLT is presented in Figure 8.1 below.

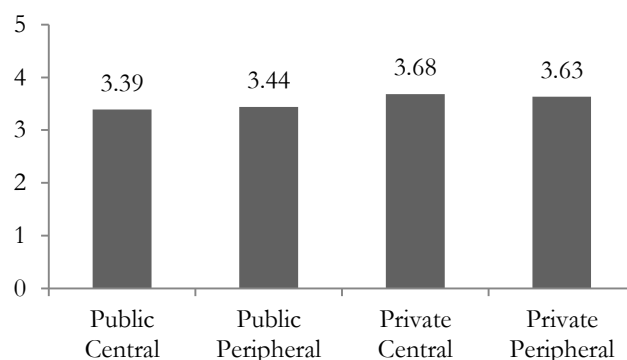


Figure 8.1: A comparison of learners' attitudes towards CLT across various school types

The results of the ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference between learners' attitudes towards CLT concepts and practices between private and public school pupils, the former revealing a significantly more favorable CLT attitude than the latter, the effect of the 'school type' factor being estimated at $F(2, 694)=1.44, p=.000$. To provide more detailed analysis, ANOVA was run separately on six thematic group scores, as a result of which it was revealed that a statistically significant difference was detected only in the case of Language and Learning Theory (group 1), public school learners scoring lower than private school ones [$F(3, 693)=12.5, p=.000$]. To sum up, the analysis of learners' general attitudes towards CLT revealed that the type of school which learners attend might have an effect on their attitudes but only towards the principles belonging to one specific aspect of CLT theory. For more details of ANOVA and post-hoc analyses, see Appendix 8.3.

As for the 'sex' effect on the learners' attitudes, the results of a T-test run on the composite scores of the questionnaire's thematic groups 1-6 showed no statistical differences between male and female groups. A further, more detailed item-based analysis, however, revealed some statistically significant differences in regard to the three CLT principles (items 8, 16 and 17), with girls in each case demonstrating a stronger CLT orientation than boys. More details of each item are provided below:

Item 8: *There should be more student talking time than teacher talking time:* Males: $M=2.44$ /Females: $M=3.13$; $t(693)=-5.13, p=.000$;

Item 16: *I like it better when the material comes from outside the classroom – the Internet, magazines, newspapers – than from the coursebook –* Males: $M=3.85$ /Females: $M=4.24$; $t(693)=-3.23, p=.001$.

Item 17: *I would prefer to be taught the language and skills that I will need in real life than the language and skills that will be tested in final exams –* Males: $M=3.68$ /Females: $M=4.11$; $t(693)=-3.36, p=.001$.⁵

Attitudes towards CLT versus non-CLT activities

An ANOVA test conducted on the learners' attitudes towards CLT versus Non-CLT activities, having 'school type' as an independent variable, yielded the following results:

⁵ The mean scores are presented on a five-point scale.

Table 8.7: Learners' attitudes towards CLT and non-CLT activities across various school types

Language activities	School type	Mean	SD
CLT activities	Public Central	4.09	.622
	Public Peripheral	4.27	.567
	Private Central	4.32	.625
	Private Peripheral	3.60	1.07
Non-CLT activities	Public Central	3.30	.715
	Public Peripheral	3.34	.659
	Private Central	2.84	.676
	Private Peripheral	2.55	.839

Note: SD=Standard Deviation.

Note: The mean scores are presented on a scale of 1–5

The evaluations of CLT activities were quite high across all school types; however, the analysis revealed that Private Peripheral school learners gave CLT activities a significantly lower level of approval than their peers from all other school types ($F(3, 693)=19.4, p=.000$), a finding, which requires further exploration. As for the attitudes towards non-CLT activities, it was detected that the learners at private schools appreciated such activities significantly less than those at public schools ($p=.000$).

As for the comparison between the learners' general attitudes towards CLT and non-CLT language activities across the sex groups, an Independent Samples T-test run on the composite scores revealed the results which are provided in Figure 8.2:

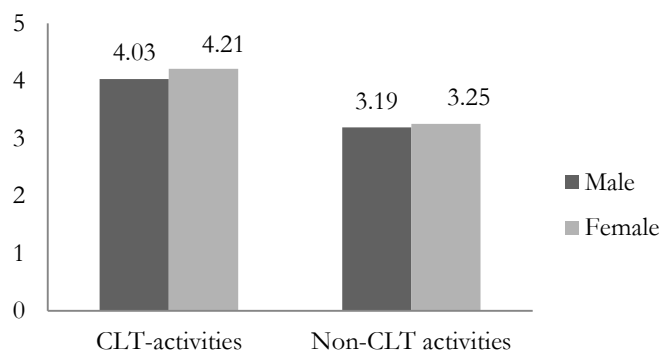


Figure 8.2: Comparison of male and female learners' attitudes towards CLT and non-CLT activities

A statistically significant difference was detected in regard to CLT activities only, with girls demonstrating more preference than males did. Deeper, item-based analysis in this area provided further details: namely, the activities which females favor significantly more than males are Presentations (Males: $M=4.23$ /Females: $M=4.49$; $t(693)=-3.49$, $p=.001$.) as well as Discussions and Debates (Males: $M=3.95$ /Females: $M=4.16$; $t(692)=-2.64$, $p=.008$).

CLT-related difficulties

As for the differentiating effect of the variable 'school type' on learners' evaluation of the CLT-related difficulties, an ANOVA test revealed the following results presented in the Figure 8.3 below:

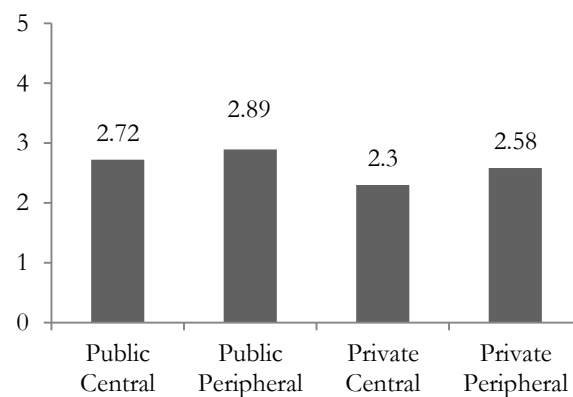


Figure 8.3: Learners' assessment of CLT-related challenges across different school types

To sum up the analysis outcomes, at Private Central schools learners attribute significantly less challenge to CLT implementation in the Georgian context than learners at public schools do, $F(3, 989)=5.19$, Public Central: $p=.023$; Public Peripheral: $p=.001$). For more detailed statistics of each item separately, see Appendix 8.3, Section 3.

The present investigation into female and male learners' evaluation differences regarding CLT-related difficulties yielded nothing of statistical significance.

Research Question 4: *How similar or different are the language learners' and teachers' attitudes towards CLT in Georgia?*

To find out how closely teachers' and learners' attitudes towards CLT matched, a cross reference to the data presented in Chapter 7 was made. Since the data in

the present and previous study (Chapter 7: Study 1) were generated in the non-comparable ways, and are derived from the different populations, no statistical analysis was possible here; however, for general comparison purposes, they were juxtaposed and are presented in Figure 8.4 below.

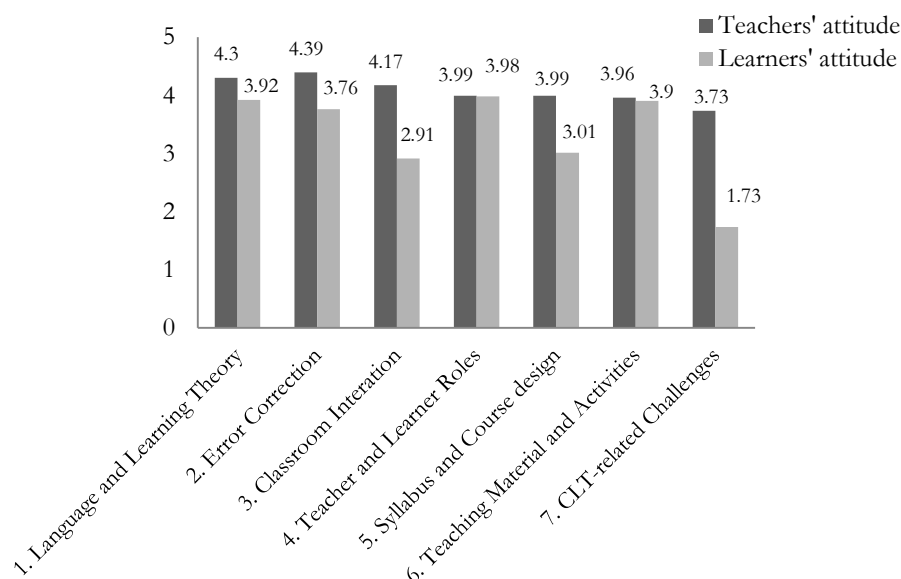


Figure 8.4: Comparison of the teachers' and learners' attitudes Towards various aspects of CLT and CLT-related challenges

The comparison reveals that the notably more CLT-oriented attitude is shown on the teachers' part towards (1) Language and Learning Theory, (2) Classroom Interaction, and (3) Syllabus and Course Design. This means that, theoretically, teachers tend to be more supportive of some aspects of CLT than learners.

As for the CLT-related challenges, learners seem to attribute a visibly lower level of difficulty to the implementation of this method in the Georgian context than the teachers do.

8.4 CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of the study presented in this chapter was to gain an insight into learners' attitudes towards CLT and to find out whether they favored the general principles underlying this language teaching methodology, since a favorable attitude on the learners' part is believed to be one of the most important contributing factors to a successful implementation of a teaching method. It was also deemed important to look into how problematic Georgian learners considered the challenges associated with CLT application in Georgia

to be, and how the situation varied in this respect across the different study contexts and between the sexes.

The information obtained through the questionnaires helped provide answers to the four research questions formulated at the beginning of the chapter. The large size of the empirical base of this study (693 learners) allows for generalizable conclusions and statements about the Georgian language learners' attitudes towards CLT at secondary schools in the capital of Georgia.

1. Secondary school language learners' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching in

With regard to the first research question, the results show that even though learners' overall attitudes towards CLT are quite welcoming and positive (see Table 8.3), more detailed analysis reveals that there still are some aspects towards which learners reveal a somewhat conservative way of thinking, which is more in line with the Grammar Translation Method, the language teaching methodology which enjoyed popularity for a long time before Communicative Language Teaching was introduced in Georgia (see Table 8.3). This is evident from the fact that a majority of learners reported that they considered the knowledge of language forms and accuracy more important than the practical skills and fluency in the target language (Appendix 8.2, items 3 and 4); they also showed a preference towards a more deductive rather than inductive approach to teaching; non-CLT inclinations were also detected towards the error correction techniques, with half the learners contending that mistakes should be corrected immediately, as soon as they are made rather than at a later stage in the form of a delayed feedback (Appendix 8.2, item 5). Learners' attitudes towards teachers' roles in the study process also proved to be of a somewhat non-CLT character: learners showed their appreciation of having teachers as the main agents of the study process, being the center of attention and monopolizing the talking time in the lesson (items 7 and 8); this type of attitude attests to learners' perceptions of the language teacher as a main source of knowledge and a dominant figure whom they prefer to look up to and rely on rather than having to construct their language competence on their own in the process of interacting with their peers.

Controversial attitudes were reported towards Course Design and Language Syllabus: learners admitted the importance of having more language skills work included in their language syllabus (see Appendix 8.2, item 13), but at the same time reported preparation for the examinations and tests as being a more important aspect of their language study in school than focusing on development of their real-life communication skills (item 15). This finding gives grounds for characterizing Georgian learners' attitudes towards language learning as "instrumental" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), the concept and phenomenon discussed in the introductory part of this chapter (Section 8.1).

In terms of the language activities, as already discussed in the analysis part of this chapter (Table 8.5), it must be remarked that even though, overall, CLT activities were more appreciated than non-CLT alternatives, there were some old-fashioned types of activities which were almost as much welcomed by the learners as CLT ones – Grammar and Vocabulary and Fill-in-the-gaps Exercises, for example (for more details, see Appendix 8.2, Section 2)

2. Georgian learners' evaluation of CLT-related challenges in Georgia

Overall, the issues related to CLT implementation in Georgia were rated by learners as moderately challenging; compared with their teachers (Section 7.3.2), the learners rated the issues as less problematic. The biggest challenge reported by the learners, as was the case with the teachers as well (Table 7.10), turned out to be that of language classes consisting of too many students, which learners considered to be an obstacle to successful CLT application and efficient language learning (see Table 8.6). According to the observation provided by Tkemaladze in 2001 regarding the situation at that time; according to Tkemaladze (2001), “the teacher-student ratio [in Georgia] is much lower than those of European countries, such as France, The UK and Holland (20 secondary school students per 1 teacher) and might seem ideal at first sight”. However, she also remarks that, this positive fact is in no way an indicator of the language teaching quality in Georgia (2001: 17).

3. Learners' attitude differences towards CLT across various school types and the sexes

Investigation into the differences between the representatives of the four different school types revealed that learners at private schools have considerably more CLT-oriented attitudes than learners at public schools (see Figure 8.1); however not in all aspects of CLT theory (see Appendix 8.3, Section 1). The factor of location (central versus peripheral schools) did not prove to have any significant bearing on the research outcomes.

Even though similar patterns of learners' attitudes had been expected in regard to language activities, here a different situation was revealed: the Private Peripheral schools analysed showed a significantly less favorable attitude towards CLT activities, such as presentations, debates or discussions, language games, dialogues and role plays, than did learners from other school types overall, with Private Central school pupils demonstrating the highest level of support, and Private Peripheral school pupils the lowest, the location factor in this case having an important effect on the research outcomes. As far as non-CLT activities are concerned, the situation was different here: Private Central, as well as private peripheral school learners showed a lesser appreciation of such activities as memorization, recitation and dictation than did the public school informants; however, some non-CLT activities like grammar and

vocabulary teaching, as well as fill-in-the-gaps exercises, proved still to be popular among the learners, albeit more among public school pupils than among private school ones (See Table 8.7; for more details see Appendix 8.3).

As for CLT-related difficulties and learners' perceptions of them at different types of school, insignificant differences were detected between private and Public Peripheral schools, with private sector learners viewing most of the issues as somewhat less problematic than their public school counterparts did. A significant difference was revealed only in regard to foreign language use in the lesson, and to pair- and group-work-related difficulties, and only between Private Central and Public Peripheral school members at that (see Figure 8.3; for more details see Appendix 8.3).

Exploration of the differences between the sexes revealed that, in Georgia, as in many other contexts, the difference between male and female learners' perceptions with regard to many language teaching methodology aspects is minimal (see Section 8.3; also Figure 8.2): only in a few cases was there a stronger CLT orientation detected on the girls' part: these cases comprise items such as 'increased student talking time', 'the use of authentic material' and 'the use of communicative activities' in the study process.

4. Discrepancy between the language learners' and teachers' attitudes towards CLT in Georgia

To summarize and compare the outcomes of Study 1 and Study 2 in terms of teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the language teaching method proposed in the language policy paper of Georgia, the following observation can be made: at secondary schools in Tbilisi language teachers, theoretically, seem to be more welcoming to Communicative Language Teaching than learners are (see Figure 8.4).

And in the end, to sum up the whole Chapter 8 discussion, it can be stated that, overall, Georgian learners' attitudes towards CLT are predominantly positive and favorable, with only a few aspects of it causing a measure of disagreement among the learners. It can also be stated that private school learners in Georgia tend to have a slightly stronger affiliation with Communicative Language Teaching than do public school learners; however, this difference is, in most, cases not significant.

The next study, presented in Chapter 9, looks into more practical aspects of CLT implementation in Georgia – it attempts to measure to what degree the policy and efforts made by the government of Georgia to make foreign language teaching/learning more communicative are actually reflected in English language classes.

