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CHAPTER 10: LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH (STUDY 4)

"We thus make a fundamental distinction between the competence (the speaker-bearer's knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)"

Noam Chomsky (1965: 3)

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The study presented in this chapter concludes the description of the language policy transfer cycle outlined in the introduction of this dissertation (Figure 1.1) – it aims at exploring how the proposed language policy (as described in Chapter 6) in Georgia, influenced by the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards and understanding of it, as well as affected by the practicalities of classroom teaching, has an actual bearing upon the language learners' communicative proficiency in English.

Chapter overview

The remainder of this section (10.1.1) clarifies the terminology related to language knowledge and abilities in order to provide more clarity for the data analysis and discussion presented later in the chapter. The research questions of this study are also formulated in this section (10.1.2). Section 10.2 discusses the research methodology, whereas Section 10.3 reports the results of the learners' communicative proficiency analysis (10.3.1) as well as the comparison of the main results of all four studies (10.3.2). In Section 10.4 the summary of the present study outcomes and the concluding comments are provided.

10.1.1 Discussion of terminology relevant to the present study

When seeking to assess learners' success in acquiring a foreign language, it is important that the right decisions are made with regard to what should be measured and in what form, and that the decisions are based upon a clear understanding of the notions involved in this domain. There has been a long debate regarding the exact meaning of the linguistic terms related to learners' underlying and manifested forms of language knowledge (Llurda, 2000:85), namely, what exactly 'linguistic knowledge', 'language competence', 'language skills', 'language proficiency' and 'language performance' mean, and how these concepts differ from one another. Thus, to provide more clarity for the discussion later on in this chapter, it is important to determine the exact scope of the language knowledge-related linguistic terminology used in this study.

Linguistic knowledge and linguistic competence

Krashen (1982:10) spoke of linguistic knowledge as of the conscious knowledge of language rules and grammar ('knowledge *about* the language'). He attributed 'linguistic knowledge' to the field of linguistics, and referred to it as a component not necessary in the process of natural language acquisition, which he considered to be a much more efficient way of studying a second language than conscious learning of language rules, even in the post-puberty period. It was the growing realization that "having a perfect knowledge of linguistic forms and grammatical accuracy in the L2 does not necessarily constitute competence in oral verbal communication" that contributed to the elaboration of a more "integrated" form of language proficiency assessment (Pillar, 2011:1).

As for the term 'linguistic competence', this concept has caused much confusion and debate: for some, it means the mastery of the forms of the language (Chomsky 1965), its only difference from 'linguistic knowledge' being its intuitive character. According to Gregg (1989:20), "the term generally employed for one's linguistic knowledge (innate or acquired) is *competence*" (see also Saville-Troike, 2006:198); others argue that competence in a language equates with "the ability for use" (Llurda, 2000:86), taking account of the social contexts and norms of language as well (Hymes, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1982; Bachman, 1990). To highlight the communicative value of the term, Hymes (1972) used an adjective to modify it and created a new name for this concept – 'communicative competence', which expressed the social and communicative value of the notion in a better way (Llurda, 2000:86; see also Section 3.3.3). According to Saville-Troike (2006) 'communicative competence' means "everything that a speaker needs to know in order to communicate appropriately within a particular community" (2006:134).

Linguistic skill and language proficiency

In opposition to the Chomskian interpretation of 'linguistic competence', some researchers equate the concept with 'linguistic skill', claiming that 'linguistic competence' can be learnt or taught like any other skill, and that it is a competence in permanent progress and transformation (Corder, 1973:126; Bruner, 1973:111). Others perceive 'linguistic skill' as something that is required for the manifestation of 'communicative competence' (Saville-Troike, 2006:136; Wiemann & Backlund, 1980:190), the assumption that is adopted in the present study. 'Linguistic skill' as a term is also equated with 'proficiency' by Llurda; however, the differentiating character implicit in the term 'proficiency' is that of constant "variability" and its association with measurement and testing in second-language teaching and learning (Llurda, 2000:88-89). Thus, 'linguistic proficiency' can be considered to be a term finding itself in-between Chomskian 'competence' and 'performance' (see the following paragraph), and

as referring to “the ability to make use of competence” or an “ability to use a language” (Taylor, 1988:166). According to Stern (1983), the term ‘proficiency’ can be interpreted from two different perspectives: by looking at the “levels of proficiency”, from lower to higher, on the one hand, and that of the “components of proficiency”, on the other, the different language areas of which overall language proficiency is comprised (Stern, 1983:357; Llurda, 2000:89).

Linguistic performance

The actual process of application of the language knowledge and/or language competence through certain language skills is referred to as ‘linguistic performance’ (Chomsky, 1967; Widdowson, 2004; Richards, 2011). To Widdowson, ‘linguistic performance’ means “language knowledge put into effect as behaviour” (2004:3); as for Saville-Troike, he defines linguistic performance as “the use of language knowledge in actual production” (2006:191).

Despite the fact that there exist several alternatives for and controversy over the use of an accurate term, in the present study it was decided to adopt the term ‘communicative proficiency’ to denote language learners’ communicative abilities demonstrated through speaking.

10.1.2 Research questions

Based on the purpose and the problem focused upon in the present study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. How communicatively proficient are the learners of English at the secondary schools in Tbilisi?
2. To what extent is the learners’ communicative proficiency affected by ‘school type’ as well as certain learner-related factors?

10.2 METHODOLOGY¹

10.2.1 Research design

The present study has a between-groups design: the results of learners’ oral proficiency assessment are presented as dependent variables, whereas ‘school type’, ‘length of language teaching in school’, ‘exposure to extracurricular language learning’, and ‘sex’ are included as independent variables.

¹ For the definitions of the statistical terms used in this as well as other chapters of this study, see the Statistics Reference Page above.

School type

A detailed discussion on what effect ‘school type’ might have on the present study outcomes may be found in 7.2.1.

Length of English language teaching in school

Independent variables which are believed to affect the language proficiency level of learners were also included in this study. As the grade when language instruction starts at secondary schools in Georgia can vary from school to school as well as between the public and private sectors, it was thought useful to check whether the possible differences in the length of prior English language teaching enjoyed by pupils at a school had a significant effect on their language performance. Two groups were formed within this variable: learners with ‘under five years of language learning’ and learners with ‘five years or more language learning’.

Exposure to extracurricular language learning

Supplementing the education received in schools with extra language instruction through private language teachers as well as language centers has been common practice in Georgia. Recently, with much wider travel opportunities, greater information availability as well as communication possibilities, learners have gained access to valuable sources of extracurricular teaching, among them increased foreign language learning opportunities. Taking the above considerations into account, a need appears evident to explore whether learners’ existing level of language proficiency is a direct and simple function of the language instruction they get in school or is rather a combination of that with other learning opportunities outside school. Consequently, the factor ‘exposure to extracurricular language learning’ was included as an independent variable in the design of the present study, within which four further categories were considered: ‘no exposure’, ‘private teacher’, ‘private language school’, and ‘exposure to native environment/native-speaker teacher’.

Sex

As there is much discussion and controversy regarding whether the factor sex, in general, affects the research outcomes or not, it was believed to be interesting to look into sex-related differences with regard to learners’ communicative proficiency in a foreign language in the context of the present study as well.

10.2.2 Study participants

The participants approached in the present study constituted part of the same learner population as the one described for the study in Chapter 8 (see 8.2.3). Table 10.1 below summarizes the participants' background.

Table 10.1: Participants' distribution according to different school types and certain learner-related factors

Variables	Groups	Number of students (N=65)
School type	Public Central	23
	Public Peripheral	20
	Private Central	11
	Private Peripheral	11
Learner sex	Female	32
	Male	33
Learner age	12	27
	13	37
	14	1
Length of education (years)	2-3	5
	4-5	10
	6-8	50
English outside school	None	25
	private tutor	32
	private language center	6
	non-native speaking environment	2

An almost identical distribution was detected with regard to the randomly selected participant sex: 33 (50.8%) male and 32 (49.2%) female learners participated in the study. The participant age group was restricted to the 12–14-year-olds. As far as the length of exposure to language teaching in school is concerned, an average length of six years was detected. As for the learners' outside school language learning, more than half the number of participants (62%) had received some form of external language instruction, in the majority of the cases (49%) through a private tutor. A slightly smaller group had had no extra language instruction, and only a few participants had been exposed to language learning experiences through a private language center or in a native speaking environment.

Incentives to participate

Permission was obtained from the Ministry of Education of Georgia as well as from the individual school administrations before approaching the secondary school learners in Tbilisi. All the participants approached agreed to participate in the study. The speech recording procedure, which was conducted by myself and an assistant, was completed without any reported complaints. A confidentiality guarantee was provided to the school administrations that the recorded data would not be made public.

10.2.3 Data collection tools

Since the general framework of this study is Communicative Language Teaching, which is based upon the theory of Communicative Competence, an assessment approach had to be adopted for the present study be based on the principles of communicative competence as well.

There has been much discussion regarding the relevant form of assessment of learners' Communicative Competence. Communicative Competence, consisting of linguistic and discourse as well as strategic and socio-cultural (paralinguistic) components (see Section 3.3.3), is believed to be much more difficult to test than theoretical language knowledge as it measures linguistic as well as paralinguistic skills (Pillar, 2011: 4). According to Chambers and Richards (1992:8), "it is unlikely that all components [of communicative competence] can be assessed at once at any level by any task, or given equal importance" (for more information on communicative competence assessment-related challenges, see Section 3.10.4). According to Savignon (2002:4), learners' overall Communicative Competence, the development of which constitutes the goal of CLT, requires "global, qualitative assessment of learners' achievement as opposed to quantitative assessment of discrete linguistic features", which is a testing form commonly associated with form-focused approaches to foreign language teaching.

Thus, two types of testing are differentiated in the literature: "indirect, discrete-point testing" and "direct, integrated testing" (Di Nicuolo, 1991:143; Ingram, 1985:247). Whereas the former measures the learner's cognitive language proficiency with one component at a time, the latter is concerned with assessing learners' overall language proficiency in a more "holistic" manner (Savignon, 2002:4; Ingram, 1985:247). As the opponents of discrete testing argue, such tests measure only one component of language proficiency (knowledge or skills), in which case making a generalized assumption about the overall language knowledge is not possible. As for the integrated approach to language proficiency testing, Ingram describes such tests as follows:

Direct tests focus directly on the learners' proficiency as demonstrated in the way he carries out actual communication tasks and proficiency statements are

made in terms of the learner's actual language behaviour. Learners are rated by being matched against the level on a scale consisting of a series of proficiency descriptors that best describe their language behaviour. In other words, direct tests are criterion-referenced or edumetric tests (Ingram, 1985:247).

It has also been argued that the best possible way to access learners' overall language proficiency is through productive rather than receptive skills; to be more precise, integrated language testing is mainly associated with oral proficiency or conversational ability checking (Saville-Troike, 2006:147). It is oral communication through which both linguistic as well as paralinguistic communication abilities can be assessed (Pillar, 2011:3) and it is speaking which is primarily associated with authentic, spontaneous communication. Moreover, it is oral communication with which the Georgian learners, exposed to grammar-driven teaching methods, have been having most difficulties; thus, the final choice was made to test learners' communicative proficiency through speaking, adopting an integrative rather than discrete-point testing approach in the present study.

To sum up the discussion regarding language skills, their categories as well as the proficiency levels as defined in CERF, Table 10.1 is provided below. It gives a description and a visual representation of existing language skills, their division into receptive and productive categories, and the six potential proficiency levels attainable. What is not represented in this table is underlying language knowledge/ competence, which belongs to the more static and discrete domain of the language faculty. In the present study, learners' theoretical knowledge and/or their linguistic competence is taken as having been manifested through language skills and the proficiency levels are assigned according to the language competence demonstrated through actual speaking production, referred to in this study as communicative proficiency (for more discussion on the linguistic terminology used, see Section 10.2.1).

Table 10.2: Language skills, their categories and proficiency levels (CEFR)

Language skills	Categories of language skills		Proficiency Levels					
			Basic		Independent		Proficient	
			A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
	Receptive	Listening						
		Reading						
	Productive	Speaking	Spoken production					
			Spoken interaction					
		Writing						

As already mentioned above (Section 10.2.3), for the present study, the assessment scheme proposed in CEFR for qualitative aspects of spoken language use has been adopted for the assessment of Georgian learners' communicative proficiency in English (see Appendix 10.1). This assessment scheme is aimed at checking all the components of Communicative Competence – discourse competence is looked at through coherence/cohesion; strategic competence through fluency; socio-cultural competence through interaction; and linguistic competence will be tested through accuracy and grammatical and lexical range components offered in the assessment scheme. The only change made to the original CEFR assessment tool was adding the pronunciation component, which is not among the original CEFR spoken language descriptors. The decision was motivated by the fact that, in some cases, especially with speakers whose language is phonologically completely different from the target foreign language they are learning, pronunciation might be a cause of communication breakdown. For this reason, assessing Georgian learners' pronunciation as part of their overall communicative proficiency in English was believed to be relevant.

It is also important to note that in CEFR, in the language skills assessment grid presented in Table 10.2 above, the speaking skill is further subdivided into spoken production and spoken interaction. To better capture both types of oral communication as proposed in CEFR and thus to make the assessment process more comprehensive, two forms of speech collection supplementing one another were administered during the data collection process in the present study: picture description and role play tasks. Whereas through the picture descriptions learners' narrative speech was generated, the role play task stimulated learner interaction, providing data about their sociolinguistic and strategic competences in the English language.

To generate free narrative speech, a picture was provided for description. Generally, the speech elicited through visual aids cannot be

considered to be totally “spontaneous”, since it is “induced by some “visual stimulus” (Trofimova, 2009:114); however, this type of semi-free generated speech is believed to be advantageous to the present analysis. Whereas in the speech produced as a result of open-ended questions respondents can avoid using constructions and language that are difficult and demanding, in the picture description task a certain framework is provided within which participants have to perform. According to Yorkston and Beukelman (1980), there is also more “predictability” in this model with regard to what language speakers are likely to produce (cited in Trofimova, 2009:114). For the present study, this method of data collection is useful as it makes data comparison easier across various speakers: a certain vocabulary as well as grammatical range is expected to be produced by the speakers during the task performed.

When I conducted the interviews for the task, I presented the learners with a randomly selected magazine picture; it was selected on the basis of the assumption that its topic would be interesting to the learners and that they would be comfortable when describing it – a family of four, consisting of parents and two young children, on the beach with an interesting scenery and summer activities visible in the background. As it was September and pupils had just arrived back from their holidays, the topic was relevant and learners were expected to have much to say. Figure 10.1 provides the picture that was used in the study.



Figure 10.1: The picture used for speech data collection

The second task was role play. My reasons for selecting this task were that as communicative competence in a language includes an ability of social interaction, it was considered necessary to check this aspect of language competence in the form of a role play (Tavakoli et al., 2011). Even though role play can be somewhat artificial in some cases (McBride & Schostak, 2004:2), it can nevertheless reveal the communicative skills on the speakers' part. In the present study, students were asked to act out a conversation between two strangers in a train compartment on their way home from the holidays. They were told that in about three or four minutes, the train would stop and they would have to take their leave by saying goodbye. Even though the students were free to choose the conversation subject, a certain framework was naturally generated by the cues that were included in the task requirements given to the learners. Figure 10.2 presents the role play task given to the study participants.

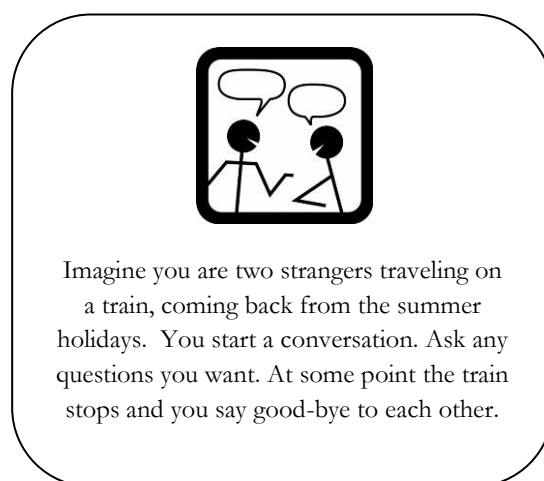


Figure 10.2: Role Play task assigned to the participants in the study²

Both picture description and role play tasks were suitable for learners whose level of language proficiency was expected to range from A1 to B1, as it allowed the production of both basic and more complex language (For a description of this range, see Table 10.5 below; for the speech samples for various proficiency levels, see Appendix 10.5).

² The task was created by myself; the image inserted was retrieved from the Internet: <http://www.clker.com/clipart-2312.html> (accessed August 2011).

10.2.4 Data collection procedure

Out of 693 learners who completed the questionnaires, the spoken performance of 321 participants were recorded; from these, 65 were selected for their communicative proficiency assessment purposes. The selection was made on the basis of and determined by, firstly, the representative nature of the speech samples – one group of learners from each school type was selected to assess learners' communicative proficiency. As a result, as different school types are not evenly populated in Georgia (see Chapter 7, footnote 3), the learner distribution according the various school types turned out to be somewhat unequal (see Table 10.1 below). Other

criteria for the selection of the data to be analysed included the quality of the recordings, as well as the amount of material feasible to be analysed withing this study.

For every speaker about six minutes of spoken performance was recorded: about three minutes of picture description (monologues, with minimal involvement of the interviewer), and about three minutes of role play, which took the form of pair work.

The speaking sessions were held during school hours: special arrangements were made with the school administrations and the teachers to allow pairs of pupils to leave the class for about ten minutes during the lessons. The participants were asked to speak continuously about the picture without interruptions; however, in cases when participants were unable to produce any speech, extra questions were asked to help them generate ideas.

Some speech samples illustrative of learners' oral proficiency are provided in Appendix 10.5. As for the audio recordings of the learners' speech, in order not to violate the confidentiality guarantee provided to the school administrations as well as to the head teachers of the classes approached (see Section 10.2.2), the recordings have not been published together with this dissertation; however, they are available from the researcher upon request.

10.2.5 Data analysis

Data processing and speech assessment procedure

The recorded speech data were eventually assessed by four raters: myself, two Georgian and one English native speaker, in the age range of 30-55, all with a foreign language teaching experience ranging between 10-14 years.

All four raters had experience with using CEFR assessment tools for oral proficiency assessment purposes; even so, a preparatory session with each of them was held where the assessment procedure and the CEFR descriptors were discussed and pre-designed evaluation forms were provided (see Appendix 10.2). Seven distinct aspects of learners' proficiency were assessed,

and on this basis, their overall communicative proficiency was also estimated:³ (1) Accuracy, (2) Grammatical Range, (3) Lexical Range, (4) Fluency, (5) Coherence/Cohesion, (6) Pronunciation, (7) Interaction, and (8) Overall communicative proficiency.

The assessments were made on a rating scale ranging from 0 to 6, corresponding to the CEFR spoken language proficiency global descriptors: 0=A0: Almost no competence; 1=A1: Limited competence; 2=A2: Basic competence; 3=B1: Sufficient competence; 4=B2: Good competence; 5=C1: Very good competence; 6=C2: Perfect competence. All the data obtained from the assessments were coded and entered into SPSS 20.0 for statistical analysis.

Inter-rater reliability

An inter-rater reliability was tested. A Cohen's Kappa coefficient is usually calculated for inter-rater reliability testing; however, according to Landis and Koch (1977:159), "*kappa* is mostly suggested in case the dependent variables are of a categorical nature"; if the data bears a continuous (interval or ratio) character, "the agreement and parallelism" can be determined through the use of an intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) with the help of an analysis-of-variance (Haley & Osberg, 1989:970). The ICC range is from 0.0 to 1.0. The ICC two-way mixed model analysis applied to the present evaluation data revealed a high reliability coefficient: $\alpha = .980$, which means that there was minimal inter-rater variability observed with regard to the assessment scores. Next, the averages of the assessment scores provided by the four raters were calculated and all the subsequent tests were applied to these dependent variables.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis

The next step that was taken to analyze the data was to carry out descriptive and inferential statistics tests: in order to describe the population participating in the study, frequency and percentage calculations were conducted on the independent variables (see Section 10.2.1); mean and standard deviation tests were applied to the dependent variables, i.e. learners' average proficiency scores (see Table 10.4). To check whether there was a correlation among learners' performance scores in various language aspects – that is, to find out whether learners who score highly in one spoken language aspect tend to score highly in the other aspects as well – a Pearson's Correlation test was applied (see Appendix 10.4).

³ In the original CEFR document, Grammatical and Lexical Range is combined under the same the Range category; however, in accordance with the purpose of the present study, further refinement of the category was believed to be useful.

To check the analysis outcomes across two independent variables (e.g. 'school type', 'exposure to extracurricular language learning') several statistical tests were applied: a Cross-Tabulation analysis was undertaken to check learners' overall language proficiency level distribution across various school types (see Table 10.6) as well as the relationship between the 'school type' and 'exposure to extracurricular language learning' (see Table 10. 7). The effects of the independent variables were checked through ANOVA (see Appendix 10.3). Post-hoc analysis tests, with the Bonferonni normalization option, were applied in SPSS to detect where exactly the between-group differences lay. A significance level of .05 was set for all inferential statistics tests.

When comparing and cross-referencing the results of the four studies presented in this dissertation across different school types (see Figure 10.6), no statistical analysis was applied since these dependent variables were generated in non-comparable ways and derived from different study populations; the data were only juxtaposed to reveal the general tendencies. For more information regarding the data analysis approach adopted in this study, see Section 7. 2.5.

10.3 STUDY RESULTS

In this section, the results of the analysis conducted with regard to learners' communicative proficiency will be presented and the research questions 1 and 2 will be answered (Section 10.3.1). As a way of drawing together the main findings of all four studies presented in this dissertation and analysing the effect of the main independent factor – 'school type' – on the overall analysis results, the cross study comparison was conducted (see Section 10.3.2)

10.3.1 The results of learners' communicative proficiency analysis

Research question 1: *How communicatively proficient are the learners of English at secondary schools in Tbilisi?*

Before analyzing learners' communicative proficiency levels, I attempted to find out what the set end-of-year language proficiency levels were for various schools approached for the present study.

Language policy in Georgia provides only a recommendation with regard to what the language proficiency level at the end of each school grade should be; teachers do not have to follow the government-proposed school grade– proficiency level correspondence scheme (see Figure 6.2), but are free to select their own language teaching material from among the government-approved coursebooks (for more information about government approved books, see Section 5.4.2), determining the existing foreign language proficiency level of a group of learners they are teaching at their own discretion. Table 10.3 provides the information regarding which coursebooks were used as teaching material in each class observed and what the coursebook's complexity level was (see Table 9.5).

Table 10.3: Coursebooks used in the lessons observed, at private as well as public schools, in Tbilisi

School type	School name	Coursebook Name	Level ⁴
Public Central	School 51	<i>Success A1+</i>	A2
	School 53	<i>Success A1+</i>	A2
	Experimental School 1	<i>English World 5</i>	B1
	Gymnasium 1	<i>Friends 3</i>	A2
Public Peripheral	School 147	<i>Bukia 2000 Plus</i>	B1
	School 122	<i>Lazer</i>	B1
	School 102	<i>Top Score 4</i>	B1
	School 133	<i>English World 5</i>	B1
Private Central	British-Georgian Academy	<i>Total English</i>	B2
	European School	<i>Gateway</i>	B2
Private Peripheral	XXI Century	<i>Lazer</i>	B1
	Albioni	<i>Challenges</i>	B1

The information presented above provides an insight into what the expected proficiency levels were for the groups observed at twelve schools in Tbilisi, which will be a useful reference point with which the obtained communicative performance outcomes can be compared.

Learners' overall communicative proficiency was assessed according to the CEFR descriptors of the seven aspects of spoken language use (for more details, see Appendix 10.1 and Section 10.2.3 above). More detailed illustration of how the learners' overall spoken performance was evaluated is presented in this section below, as well as in Appendix 10.5. Descriptive statistics tests were applied to the dependent variables, i.e. the average proficiency scores of all learners from all school types, the outcomes of which are reported in Table 10.4.

⁴ The levels are estimated according to CEFR criteria.

Table 10.4: Learners' communicative proficiency assessment scores across various spoken language aspects⁵

Qualitative aspects of spoken Language	Min.	Max.	Mean ⁶	SD
Fluency	.25	3.25	1.54	.771
Coherence and Cohesion	.25	3.00	1.46	.744
Interaction	.25	3.00	1.63	.723
Pronunciation	.25	4.0	1.75	.766
Accuracy	.50	3.25	1.47	.720
Grammatical range	.25	3.50	1.47	.765
Lexical range	.25	3.75	1.70	.796
Overall	.25	3.25	1.63	.807

Whereas no significant mean score variability is observed across the language aspects, with a spread of 1.46–1.75, and an overall score of 1.63 (CEFR level A1), there is a large intra-group variability revealed across the learners' language proficiency scores, the minimum being .25 (CEFR level A0) and the maximum 3.75 (CEFR level B2). This means that there were cases of dramatically different levels of communicative proficiency among the seventh-/eighth-grade language learners studied. To check whether these differences were defined by the different types of language instruction to which learners were exposed in school (as a result of classroom observations, described in Chapter 9, it was detected that at private schools language teaching bore a significantly more communicative character than at public schools; see Table 9.1), further exploration was undertaken, which is described below in this section under Research Question 2.

To explore whether there were certain aspects of communicative proficiency that some learners were consistently better at than others and whether they could be categorized as belonging to either more linguistic-competence-oriented (e.g. lexis, grammar, accuracy) or more communicative-competence-oriented (e.g. interaction, fluency, coherence/cohesion) groups, an inter-item correlation analysis was conducted. Learners' performance scores in various language aspects were checked through a Pearson's Correlation test, the results of which showed a strong relationship coefficient: r ranging from .897 to .953, $p=.000$

⁵ Fluency, Coherence and Cohesion, and Interaction are the three language-related aspects closely related to the communicative value of a language, whereas Pronunciation, Accuracy, and Grammatical and Lexical Range represent more linguistic knowledge-related language areas.

⁶ Mean scores are presented on an assessment scale of 0 – 6, with the numbers corresponding to CERF Proficiency levels (see Section 10.2.5).

across all components of the assessment scheme (for more details of the correlation analysis, see Appendix 10.4). This result is consistent with the assumption made above in this section regarding the homogeneity of language learners' performance outcomes across various language aspects presented in Table 10.4 and confirms that the constituent components of learners' oral proficiency are indeed interrelated: the higher a learner scores in one aspect of language competence, the greater the chances that his/her competence in other language aspects will also be higher. In line with the above finding, Savignon argues that "all the components [of Communicative Competence] are related, and they cannot be developed, or be measured, in isolation" (Savignon, 2002:8). This assumption also speaks in favor of the assessment scheme adopted in this study – all its constituent aspects represent one whole construct which comprehensively measures learners' overall communicative proficiency.

To further look at the learners' overall communicative proficiency scores and to determine how many instances of each language proficiency level were detected among the participants, the number of students with each proficiency level was counted. The results are presented in Table 10.5.

Table 10.5: Descriptive statistics of the learners' overall communicative proficiency

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage
A0	4	6.0
A1	26	41.0
A2	22	33.0
B1	12	18.5
B2	1	1.5
Total	65	100

The results reported above again show that the highest number of seventh/eighth-grade learners of English at the participating secondary schools in Tbilisi are at language proficiency level A1, the second largest group of learners at A2, while the B1 level is observed in only about half as many cases. A0 and B2 can be seen as marginal cases of language proficiency in this set.

As the findings presented in Tables 10.4 and 10.5 reveal, the overall level of language proficiency (1.63/A1) proves to be at least one step behind the level recommended in the national language policy document, which is set at A2/B1 for these grades (see Table 6.1). Comparison of the data presented in Tables 10.3 (coursebooks and their proficiency levels employed in language classes in Georgia) and 10.4 (learners' actual proficiency levels) also reveals that the English language proficiency level of students at secondary schools was lower than what is assumed by the textbooks used as teaching material in the lessons (for language proficiency level distribution across the four school types, see Table 10.6 below).

To compare the present results with regard to learners' communicative proficiency level in Tbilisi with the results achieved by learners at the National Exams in foreign languages, English in this case, relevant data were obtained from the National Assessment and Exam Center of Georgia (NAEC), and these are presented in Figure 10.3 below:

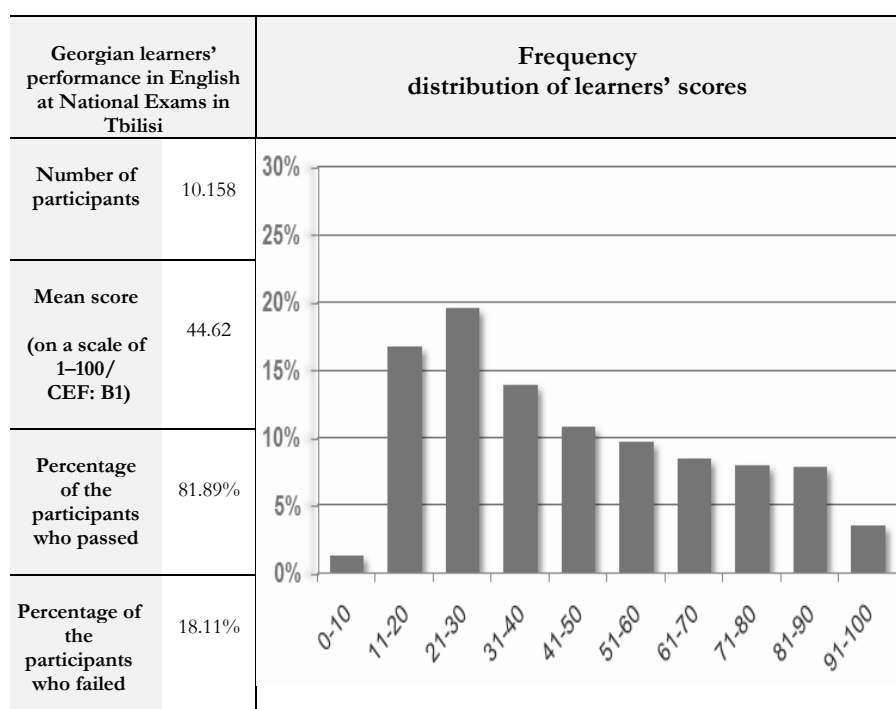


Figure 10.3: Learners' proficiency results in English at the National Exam in Georgia⁷

The scores in the figure are presented on a 0–100 point scale, and the complexity level of the test employed for the assessment purposes was B1. This means that the mean score of 44 points equals CEFR A1/A2 proficiency levels. It is also important to note that, as presented in the figure, the highest number of students scored between 11–20 and 21–30 points on their tests (A1). However, there were also instances of very high scores – 3% scored in the range of 91–100 (B1/B2 level). The variability observed is indicative of the fact that there are significant differences among learners' language abilities detected at the National Exams in languages in Georgia, which is in line with the results of the study presented in this chapter (see Table 10.5). Regrettably,

⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.naec.ge> (accessed December 2013).

no information was available at the NAEC regarding which schools the highest and lowest scoring learners belonged to. If we interpret the data presented in Figure 10.3 in the light of the findings obtained in the present study, it can be assumed that most of the highest scoring learners might be coming from private schools, whereas the lowest scoring pupils come from public ones. It is also noteworthy that at the National Exams, only reading and writing skills have been tested so far, and only recently was it announced that the listening skills component would also be incorporated in the testing system in the nearest future; as for speaking, it remains a component largely absent from the assessment format employed at school as well as University level in Georgia.⁸

It is also interesting to compare the language proficiency results obtained by the students at the National Entrance Exams in 2013 with those from the 1990s, which are reported in the study by Tkemaladze et al. (2001:138-139). It should be noted that the two tests are quite similar – they both test only reading and writing skills and both are of approximately B1 complexity level.⁹ The average score achieved by the students at the 1990 language exam in English is 33 points on a 50-point language test (above average), which is about the same achievement indicator than the one detected in the 2013 National Exam (compare with the data in Figure 10.3 above).

To provide more insight into the learners' speech assessed in the present study, the speech samples for each proficiency level were written out and illustrated in Appendix 10.5. The transcripts attached reveal considerable differences in the foreign-language communicative proficiency of students of approximately the same age: differences in speech styles, accents, speech rates, and range of grammar and vocabulary used to perform the task in question. Also, some of the learners managed to deploy communication strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution, whereas others demonstrated a total lack of such skills. The personal traits of the speaker also played a role: some were shier and more difficult to involve in speaking; others were more open and willing to speak out and demonstrate their language abilities. These discrete factors are also believed to have affected the participants' performance to a certain degree.

To better show how the learners' oral performance was rated, some illustrative examples of the criteria applied to each proficiency level will be discussed in this paragraph (further details regarding the assessment criteria employed in this study can be found in the CEFR document presented in Appendix 10.1; more extensive monologue as well as dialogue samples for

⁸ Retrieved from www.naec.ge/erovnuli-erovnuli-gamocdebi/ertiani-erovnuli-gamocde-bisiakhleebi/3196-informacia-uckhouri-enis-mosmenis-davalebis-shesakheb.html?lang=k a-GE (accessed October 2013).

⁹ The sample tests used in the 1990s at the National University Entrance Exams in English can be found in Tkemaladze et al. (2001:131-137).

each proficiency level, as well as the clarification of the symbols used in the transcripts, can be found in Appendix 10.5).

Level A0 was assigned to those speakers who were unable to comprehend any instructions addressed to them in English, and whose performance resulted in a communication breakdown at the very initial stage of communication. See a part of the speech sample below¹⁰:

Task 1: Picture description

Interviewer: What can you see in the picture?

Learner: Family...as...uh...dad...uh...as children..... mum is... "*shvilebi rogor aris inglisurad?*" – [how is 'children' in English?]" (prompt), yes, children... (communication breakdown).

Interviewer: What do you see in the background?

Learner: Mmm...(prompt) – mountain...beautiful...yes...(communication breakdown).

Learners grouped under the A1 language proficiency level were the ones whose communicative abilities were very limited. They demonstrated a very basic repertoire of grammatical as well as lexical range, much hesitation and incoherent speech, and poor pronunciation, which made the speech incomprehensible at times. There was much recourse to the Georgian language for the purpose of asking clarifications. See an extract from the speech sample below:

Learner: Uh, these people are...uh...uh...on holiday...they are on seaside...uh...uh.....weather is sunny.....uh.....(communication breakdown)

Interviewer: What can you say about the family?

Learner: Uh...This is father, mother, daughter and son... I think that this boy can't swim, so he has got this...uh..... (communication breakdown).

Interviewer: What about the nature?

Learner: Nature?...uh...uh.....uh.....here are some hotels, I think...uh... this is castle, maybe...uh.....some mountains there.....(communication breakdown).

The learners grouped under the A2 proficiency level were those who managed to demonstrate certain communicative abilities – to get the message across through simple, short, often inaccurate but, in most of the cases, comprehensible sentences; These learners were also able to reformulate some of their utterances to better convey the meaning, to ask for support and help while speaking, as well as self-correct in an attempt to fix certain inaccuracies. An extract from the speech sample is presented below.

¹⁰ For the clarification of the symbols used in the speech samples presented below, see footnotes 2, 3, 4 in Appendix 10.5.

Learner: Here is a little family: there are mother, father, sister and brother. They're in beach, they have fun day, I think. There are some guys in the...uh...I forgot it...in beautiful *boat*/bouθ/. Here are some beautiful houses, and here are *some – many* people, I can say; and they are swimming in water, playing in water, it's...and... uh...then...uh...they...are doing....doing some things...uh...we do this...uh... with the ground of beach; and they have fun here, I can say...

Learners assigned proficiency level B1 demonstrated an ability to use a reasonable range of lexical as well as grammatical units, making their speech noticeably richer and coherent. There were certain hesitations, circumlocutions as well as inaccuracies present in their spoken performance; however, this, in a majority of cases, did not result in communication breakdown or incomprehensible speech. They demonstrated the ability to maintain the communication and to keep the conversation going by asking questions as well as initiating new topics for discussion. There was no need for the interviewer to prompt or stimulate the speech. An extract from the speech sample follows below.

Learner: This family went to Greece....in...island. It's summer, it's already August, and they're having fun, and there's the whole family: mother, father and children; *their- they're* uh...they are having much fun, they are on a beach and one hour ago they came here. There is also pool and they will like it, but their mother and father told them that sea is better for them, like for everyone, but it's not available to swim too far, because there are sharks...

Only one learner from the entire population studied demonstrated B2 level language proficiency. This learner demonstrated a good level of fluency as well as quite a wide range of language structure knowledge, making their speaking more fluent and varied. Certain inaccuracies observed in the speech were, in most cases, self-corrected and did not cause any comprehension difficulties. The learner also demonstrated a good level of strategic competence in communication and the ability to initiate the discourse as well as take turns during communication. An illustrative sample is presented below.

Learner: So, I can see a happy family in this picture. There are two children, *a man and a...a husband and a* wife; their marriage is very happy, the children are very happy too. The boy is wearing green sunglasses, and *there is – and around* the boy there is something like the sun, *which helps him not to – which helps him to* swim in the sea. In the background, I can definitely say that there is a mountain...*there is not much...the sky is not really* cloudy and I can see people playing volleyball and...and they are trying to ride the boat in the sea, I think...

The learners' speech analyzed in this study is also illustrative of the typical language mistakes that Georgian speakers make as a result of first-language (L1) interference while speaking English, such as the omission and misuse of articles (e.g. 'they are on sea side'/'I visit a parks, museums'), the avoidance of inversion in questions (e.g. 'what you see?'), direct transfer of Georgian grammatical structures and lexical units into English ('Italia'/'Romi'), and mispronouncing English sounds non-existent in Georgian, and which tend to be problematic for Georgian speakers while speaking in English – /ð/, /θ/, /v/, /w/, /æ/ (e.g., 'I think'–/ai sink/; 'This is...'–/zis iz/; 'Where do you live'–/yer du yu: liv/; 'I was..'–/ai yoz/; 'dad'–/ded/. Deeper linguistic analysis, which would involve further exploration of this type of material, goes beyond the limits of the present study, however, and should be the subject of further investigation.

To provide more insight into the learners' speech assessed in the present study, the speech samples for each proficiency level were written out and illustrated in Appendix 10.5. The transcripts attached reveal considerable differences in the foreign-language communicative proficiency of students of approximately the same age.

Research question 2: *To what extent is learners' communicative proficiency in English affected by factors such as 'school type', 'length of language teaching in school', and 'exposure to language teaching outside school'?*

There are many external factors that might affect the language proficiency level of learners of English – and of foreign languages in general – at secondary schools in Tbilisi. In order to determine what factors, other than the teaching methodology and actual teaching practice the learners are exposed to in school might influence their achievement or failure in foreign language learning, all important independent factors were thoroughly explored. The investigation started by ascertaining how the situation with regard to learners' communicative proficiency varied across different school types. As a result of ANOVA, it was revealed that the effect size of 'school type' was significant [$F(3, 61)=24.8$, $p=.000$] further post-hoc analysis showed that learners at Private Central schools consistently scored significantly higher than their public school counterparts in all seven aspects of Communicative proficiency ($p=.000$). As for the assessment outcomes of learners from Private Peripheral schools, their achievement level was significantly higher ($p=.000$) than that of learners' from Public schools in all but three aspects: Grammatical Range, Pronunciation and Interaction, and significantly lower ($p=.015$; $p=.024$; $p=.028$ respectively) than the performance results of their Private Central school peers. For more details of the analysis, see Appendix 10.3. The results of the analysis run on the composite scores of learners' communicative proficiency testing across four school types are reported in Figure 10.4.

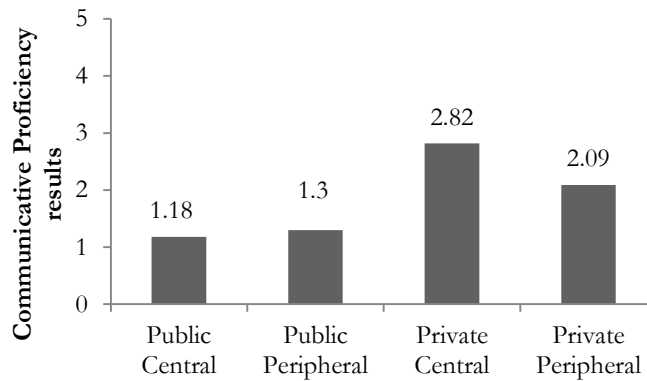


Figure 10.4: Learners' communicative proficiency distribution across four school types

The effect of the 'school type' turned out to be significant [$F(3, 61)=24.8$, $p=.000$] – as an ANOVA and post-hoc analysis revealed the communicative proficiency levels at Private Central schools are significantly higher than those at all other school types (Public Central – $p=.000$; Public Peripheral – $p=.000$; Private Peripheral – $p=.26$). The difference was also significant between Private Peripheral, on the one hand, and both types of public schools, on the other (Public Central – $p=.000$; Public Peripheral – $p=.003$). No difference was detected in terms of learners' communicative proficiency levels between the two public school types.

To detect the overall language proficiency level distribution across various school types a cross tabulation was conducted. The results are presented in Table 10.6.

Table 10.6: Overall language proficiency levels across four school types

		Four school types				Total
		Public	Public	Private	Private	
		Central	Peripheral	Central	Peripheral	
Overall language proficiency	A0	3	1	0	0	4
		13.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.2%
	A1	13	9	0	0	22
		56.6%	45.0%	0.0%	0.0%	39.0 %
	A2	5	9	3	9	26
		21.7%	45.0%	27.3%	81.8%	40.15%
	B1	2	1	7	2	12
		8.7%	5.0%	63.7%	18.2%	18.5%
	B2	0	0	1	0	1
		0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	0.0%	1.5%
Total		23	20	11	11	65
		100.0%	100%	100%	100%	100%

To sum up the results of the analysis of the language proficiency level distribution presented in Table 10.6, the general tendency observed is that the lowest levels belong to Public and the highest to Private school types: instances of A0 level were

detected only at public schools, while the vast majority of the highest scores, B1 and B2, were found at Private schools.

Length of English language teaching at school

To look into the question of whether length of English language teaching at school had a significant effect on learners' communicative proficiency level in English, an Independent Samples T-test was run. The results confirmed the expectation that the length of language teaching in a foreign language does have a significant effect on learners' performance in English: the group of learners who had undergone more than five years of instruction in English significantly outperformed those who had been exposed to less than five years of language teaching $-t(63)=3.79; p=.000$.

Exposure to extracurricular language teaching

The figure below presents the information regarding the learners' communicative proficiency distributed across the groups with different backgrounds of extra-curricular English learning.

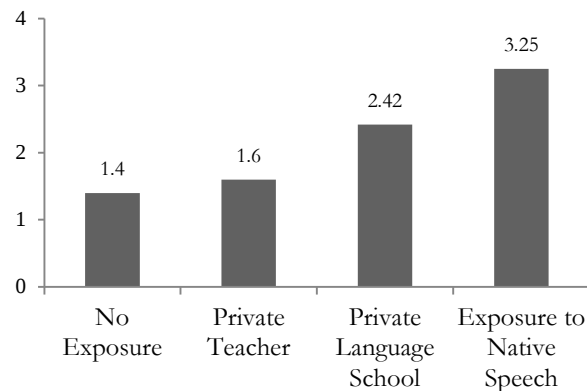


Figure 10.5: Learner communicative performance outcomes across groups with different extracurricular language learning backgrounds

According to the analysis results, more than half the participants in this study had received some form of external language instruction, private tutoring being by far the most popular form of extracurricular language instruction (see Table 10.1). In this instance, an ANOVA was applied to the data to find out how similar the performance of the groups with and without additional language instruction was. The type of extracurricular language instruction proved to have a significant effect [$F(3, 61)=8.66, p=.000$]; post-hoc analysis of the data yielded interesting results: no statistically significant difference was detected between the performance of the groups studying with a private teacher and those with no exposure to English language teaching outside school ($p=1.000$); however, the difference was statistically significant between the 'private language school' and 'no exposure' groups ($p=.013$) as well as between the variables 'exposure to native environment/native speaker teacher' and both the 'no exposure' ($p=.004$) and the 'private teacher' groups ($p=.018$). The difference was not statistically significant between 'exposure to native environment/native speaker teacher' and 'private language school' learner performance (see Figure 10.5). These findings imply that private tutoring does not actually contribute to the development of learners' communicative proficiency, whereas attending a private language school seems to be a better option for improving learners' communicative skills in English, and the

opportunities offered in the context of a native speaking environment prove to be the best way of making learners communicatively proficient.

I next decided to check whether there was a relationship between the variables 'school type' and the type of 'exposure to language teaching outside school', or to put it more specifically, whether the Private Central school pupils were the ones who had most exposure to a native speaking environment and/or to private language school instruction. These findings were expected to provide some perspective regarding whether the better communicative performance on the learners' part observed at private schools was due directly to the greater degree of communicative teaching observed at their schools (see Figure 9.1), or whether other external factors also played a role. A cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to find out what the learner exposure to outside school language teaching was at the various school types. The results are provided in the table below.

Table 10.7: Exposure to extracurricular language teaching at various school types

School Type	No Exposure	Private Teacher	Private Language School	Native Speaking Environment	Total
Public Central	7	15	1	0	23
Public Peripheral	10	10	0	0	20
Private Central	2	2	5	2	11
Private Peripheral	6	5	0	0	11
Total	25	32	6	2	65

The analysis revealed that the majority (seven out of eleven) of the Private Central school learners had studied at a private language school or had been exposed to a native speaking environment or been taught by a native-speaker teacher, whereas there was only one case of private language school instruction and no cases of exposure to native speech detected among students of other school types. Analysing the effect of sex of learners' on the study results yielded no significant differences and no further exploration was undertaken in this direction.

10.3.2 The comparison of the main results of the four studies across different school types

As the present study is the last of the studies presented in this dissertation, it was deemed useful to conclude this chapter by drawing together all the main results of the four studies. The findings are compared across the background of the main independent variable, 'school type', and the results are reported in Figure 10.6 below.

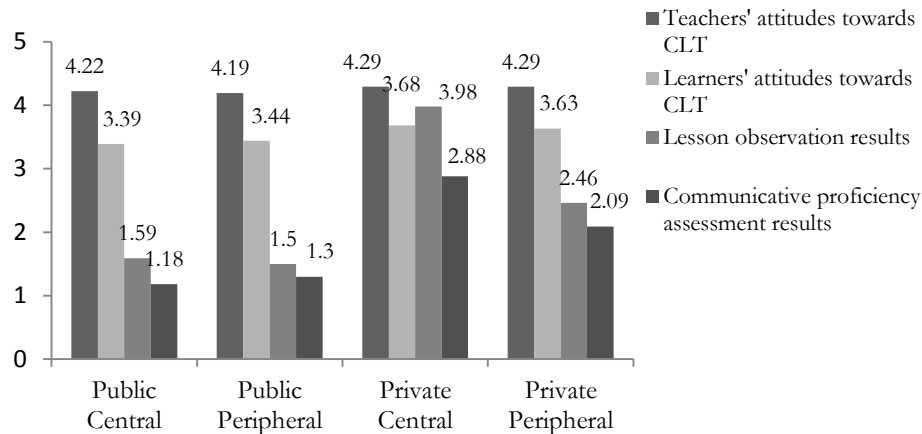


Figure 10.6: Comparison of teachers' and learners' attitudes towards CLT, observation and communicative proficiency assessment results

The results of the comparative analysis reveal that there is relatively little variation between teachers' and learners' attitudes, as well as between the lesson observation and communicative proficiency assessment outcomes across different school types. However, the difference between teachers' and learners' attitude results on the one hand and the observation as well as proficiency assessment results on the other are notable at all schools except for the Private Central ones (the situation at Private Central schools deviates from the pattern observed at all the other school types: the teachers' attitudes towards CLT are the highest, followed by the learners' positive attitudes and then by the visibly lower observation outcomes, which tend to be a bit higher than the communicative proficiency level of language learners revealed at secondary schools in Tbilisi. The tendencies identified for the four studies are almost identical for both types of public schools and similar to private peripheral school results. At Private Central schools, however, the variability among the results obtained for the four studies is less visible than at any other school types, the gap being somewhat considerable between teachers' attitudes and learners' final proficiency outcomes. Thus, as a result of the multiple comparisons, it can be concluded that it is at Private Central schools that whatever is theoretized (attitudes and conceptions) and practised (classroom teaching) is best reflected at the practical level (learners' communicative proficiency).

10.4 CONCLUSIONS

The present study has sought to explore the English language learners' communicative proficiency level at secondary schools in Tbilisi, as a way of measuring the success and practical impact of the language policy officially endorsed by the Ministry of Education of Georgia. The effects of certain independent factors on the level of the learners' communicative proficiency have also been explored. The answers to the research questions formulated at the beginning of the chapter will be addressed below.

1. The level of communicative proficiency of the learners of English

The assessment by four raters show that the average communicative proficiency of seventh- and eighth-grade learners of English at secondary schools in Tbilisi is much lower ($A1=1.63$) than the government-recommended language proficiency level, as well as the level assumed by the coursebooks ($A2/B1$ in the majority of cases) employed as teaching material by language teachers of these grades (see Tables 10.3 and 10.4). Such a mismatch is larger at public than at private schools.

However, it should also be borne in mind that in the present study the learners' communicative proficiency was tested through a productive skill, namely speaking, and as has already been mentioned above (see Section 10.2.3) generally, producing language, in written and especially in spoken form, tends to be more difficult to master than mere comprehension of the language, through reading or listening, is (Saville-Troike, 2006:137). Furthermore, scholars strictly distinguish between linguistic knowledge, on the one hand, and an actual ability to use that knowledge for communicative purposes, on the other (for more discussion, see Section 10.1). Thus, as a result of the present study, I cannot claim that the overall proficiency level of the learners would be the same as revealed in the present study if it was their linguistic knowledge that was checked, or if their competence was tested through another skill. Such multi-directional investigation would exceed the scope of the present exploration (for more discussion of the assessment choices made in the present study, see Section 10.2.3).

2. The effects of 'school type' and other learner-related characteristics on their communicative proficiency

Investigation into the effects of independent factors on learners' communicative proficiency revealed significant differences across different teaching/learning contexts, as well as between groups of learners of varying characteristics.

School type

The level of language learners' communicative proficiency proved to be significantly higher at private than at public schools (see Figure 10.4): Georgian language learners at private schools scored consistently higher across all communicative proficiency areas than their public school peers (see also Appendix 10.3).

The comparison of Study 1 to 4 showed that teachers' as well as learners' attitudes towards CLT are almost identical across all school types. However, the differences are considerable with regard to teachers' and learners' attitudes towards CLT on the one hand and the communicative character of the actual teaching practice as well as the learners' final language proficiency results on the other across the various schools. The comparison showed that at a practical level (the actual classroom practice and the learners' oral performance) the situation is much better at Private, in particular Private Central schools, than at both types of Public schools (see Figure 10.6).

To what extent learners' better performance can be attributed to the teaching methods employed at Private schools is something that still has to be considered. Hence, more learner-related factors were explored in this study, the results of which are summed up in the next section.

Length of language teaching

The length of language teaching received by an individual student proved to have a positive impact on learners' communicative proficiency – learners with over five or more years of language teaching performing significantly better than the group with under five years of language instruction. This finding might be informative for language policy makers in the debate around the optimum grade at which to commence foreign language teaching at secondary schools in Georgia, and which might prove to be supportive of the change recently introduced whereby foreign language instruction now starts from the first grade at Georgian schools (for more information about the language policy changes in Georgia, see Section 5.4). However, despite the positive effect of a greater length of language teaching, there are research findings available which indicate that the quality of teaching, the appropriateness of the methodology applied as well as the adaptation of teaching techniques to the age groups in question, proves to be equally if not more important than simply the length of language teaching (Turtel, 2005).

Exposure to extracurricular language teaching

Noteworthy results were obtained with regard to the effect of extracurricular language instruction on learners' communicative proficiency: only the exposure to a native speaking environment and language teaching at private language centers proved to have a significant effect on learners' improved

communicative proficiency in English, whereas language teaching received through a private teacher had no significant effect. These findings are indicative of the fact that, despite being the most widely-operated form of extracurricular supplementary language instruction (see Table 10.1) in Tbilisi, the language teaching offered by private tutors does not per se lead to improved communicative proficiency. Factors such as what kind of a private tutor a learner has – experienced/inexperienced; native/non-native, as well as the amount of teaching one gets – must be playing an important role in this regard (see Figure 10.5).

As for exposure to private language school instruction as well as to the language of native speakers, these factors proved to offer much better opportunities for communicative proficiency improvement to language learners. Unlike private tutors, private schools, in the context of increasing competition in the private sector for language teaching in Tbilisi, are seeking to brand themselves as institutions providing language learners with practical language skills and communication abilities through modern and innovative teaching methods, which, as the present study confirms, proves to have some validity. As to the effect of exposure to a native-speaking environment, it goes without saying that this is the best method for improving communication skills, a widely-acknowledged fact which has been reinforced once again in this study.

In the present study, it was also revealed that it is predominantly Private Central school pupils who tend to receive language teaching through a language center and/or from a native speaker, with the vast majority of public school pupils either receiving no extra instruction or attending lessons offered by a private tutor, which in Georgia might be a much more affordable and more available option than studying at a private language school or finding a way to have a systematic contact with a native speaker (see Section 10.3: *Exposure to extracurricular language teaching*). This observation, to some extent, serves to support the argument that the social background of learners attending private schools permits them to receive better-quality, more communication-oriented language instruction both at their schools (see Table 9.9) and beyond resulting in significantly higher communicative proficiency than their public school peers, who are largely deprived of such opportunities.

The discussion of the effects of the sociolinguistic factors can be further expanded by viewing the situation in the light of Bernstein's (1971) theory of language codes. According to Bernstein (1971), coming from a higher social class is already a factor which has a positive impact on learners' better communicative skills, overall. More specifically, according to Bernstein (1971:135-36), there is a strong correlation between social class and the use of either "restricted" or "elaborate code" of speech, the lower class representatives tending to be using more of a restricted speech patterns, whereas the middle and higher classes, being "geographically, socially and culturally [more] mobile", practised more elaborate speaking codes (cited in Spring, 2002:2). Bernstein's

theory might provide some explanation as to why the private school learners, who tend to represent the middle to high social class in Georgia, considerably out-perform public school learners, who are likely to have a socially less privileged background. Thus, the private school learners, expected to be using a more elaborate code of speech in their everyday lives, might be transferring the same code while speaking in a foreign language, whereas the public school pupils might be sticking to the restricted speech pattern typical of the native speech of many of them.

To conclude the present chapter, it can be said, that in Georgia, as in many other countries (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008:221), even after years of being exposed to foreign language instruction at school, students do not achieve an adequate level of proficiency, especially when it comes to the ability to practically apply what has been learned in theory. Comments such as “I know all the grammar rules, but I cannot speak” are commonplace, as is the phenomenon of seeing language learners who, while they manage to pass their written examinations at the high proficiency level with grade A, are not able to string a spoken sentence together. As already discussed in Section 5.3, the priority in Georgia today in the field of language teaching has shifted from providing theoretical knowledge of language rules towards developing more practical, communicative abilities in language learners. This is believed to be a precondition of success in providing Georgian citizens with better perspectives and wider possibilities for their future careers. Hence, it is important to consider what it takes to put language teaching at the service of achieving these global aims. Adopting a method which in theory is claimed to be targeting the right goals is not sufficient, such as the mere official adoption of CLT in the case of Georgia. Also, as the results of the present study illustrate (see Section 10.3, RQ2), when it comes to aiming at improving learners’ communicative competence, alongside the teaching quality, quite a few other factors have to be taken into account too. Like any other teaching method, CLT as well is likely to be more suitable to certain groups of learners than to others. Consequently, considering certain affective social factors and making context-specific adjustments are always highly desirable rather than opting for the wholesale, unquestioned adoption of a method created in a distinct cultural and social environment.