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Author: Edisherashvili, Natalia

Title: Communicative language teaching in Georgia : from theory to practice

Issue Date: 2014-06-03

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Four years after the introduction of the first communicative curriculum for foreign languages, in 2001, a Georgian research team (Tkemaladze et al., 2001), supported by the British Council in Georgia and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, conducted an investigation of the English language teaching and learning situation in Georgia. Recommendations were provided with regard to what needed to be changed or what innovations should be introduced in the ELT field in Georgia. This group of researchers advised making English the first foreign language at schools, taught to every school child from as early an age as possible (Tkemaladze et al., 2001:114). They also suggested introducing better-quality coursebooks (which were all British-published at the schools approached in this study), conducting much-needed language teacher training and compiling teacher training standards (Tkemaladze et al., 2001:113-114). Most of these recommendations have, since 2001, been followed at the governmental level in Georgia (see Section 4.4), particularly since the second wave of more ambitious reforms started in the field of foreign language teaching in 2009.

In this light, it was interesting to analyze what effects have the changes made since 1997 in foreign language teaching field, and more specifically in English Language Teaching, had on the situation at secondary schools in Georgia. It was particularly interesting to investigate whether a visible change at the language policy level in favor of the communicative teaching/learning of foreign languages, first introduced in Georgia in 1997 and later revised in 2009, is duly reflected in teachers' classroom practice as well as learners' communicative proficiency in English at secondary schools in Tbilisi. So, the most important components involved in the successful implementation of a teaching method have been dealt with (see Figure 1.1). I first looked at teachers' awareness of the curriculum for foreign languages in place in Georgia¹, as well as their understanding of the language teaching methodology presented in the policy document. Teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the officially endorsed methodology were as well and classroom observations were also undertaken in order to see how the official methodology recommendations, together with English language teachers' and learners' theoretical perceptions, are reflected in actual English language lessons. Finally, the communicative proficiency of Georgian learners in English was

¹ The National Curriculum for Foreign Languages (for more information see Chapter 6).

assessed, which provided information regarding the extent to which efforts of the Government undertaken thus far and the current situation in the ELT field in Georgia are reflected in learners' communicative abilities in English.

Chapter overview

Section 11.2 of this chapter provides an executive summary, conclusions and discussion of the outcomes across all four studies undertaken as part of the present research. Section 11.3 looks into the challenges highlighted by the teachers themselves, as well as those observed in the lessons, and provides recommendations with regard to how to overcome these so that the current language policy and language teaching practice in Georgia is more conducive to higher communicative proficiency outcomes on the learners' part than was observed in the present study. In Section 11.4, the major strengths and limitations of the conducted research are discussed, while Section 11.5 provides suggestions for further research. The final section, 11.6, presents concluding remarks.

11.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this section, I will deal with the issues that emerged from the different studies I conducted and that were the focus of Chapters 7 to 10. I will summarize these studies by describing their main findings.

STUDY 1: Teachers' perceptions and acceptance of Communicative Language Teaching in Tbilisi.

Teachers' awareness of (RQ1) and compliance with (RQ2) the existing language curriculum:

The interviews, which I conducted in the framework of my study with teachers at secondary schools in Tbilisi, revealed that the vast majority of language teachers in Georgia have a very vague awareness of the details of the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages (see Table 7.4). A similar low extent of compliance with the language curriculum recommendations was detected on the part of the participating teachers (see Table 7.7), which, to some extent, explains why the overwhelming majority of them regard their coursebooks as the main guideline that they follow in their teaching.

The lack of external evaluations (from governmental or non-governmental bodies) associated with the process of language teaching/learning at secondary schools in Tbilisi might be one of the explanations why teachers do not feel accountable for or experience any need to follow the official language teaching recommendations. All mid-term and end-of-year language testing is compiled and/or selected by the teachers themselves, and they take the decisions on the whats and hows of testing on their own. Consequently,

language tests tend to be adapted to the material covered and the type of activities conducted by the teacher during the course. The above reasons, combined with the scant effort observed on the part of policy makers and school administrations in Georgia to raise language teachers' awareness of and compliance with the official foreign language teaching requirements might explain why Georgian secondary-school language teachers tend to have little knowledge of, and in the vast majority of cases do not follow the official language teaching recommendations.

The above findings are also indicative of the fact that no unified and consolidated approach to language teaching and testing is to be expected across different secondary schools in Georgia, the situations and the academic choices tending to be determined according to the judgment and decisions of local school administrators and individual teachers.

The level of language teachers' understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of Communicative Language Teaching (RQ3)

In order to answer the third research question of Study 1 (Chapter 7), first a literature review was conducted on Communicative Language Teaching in general (see Chapter 3). The core underlying principles and concepts of the method were identified, which served as a point of reference in the process of establishing Georgian language teachers' knowledge of CLT theory.

The interviews conducted with language teachers in Tbilisi illustrate that there seems to be an overall lack of proper understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of CLT. This type of problem is typically present in cases where there is a lack of "academic formation" in the area of language teaching methodology (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004:252-253) and is explained by the incidental, inconsistent character of teacher education and training offered to secondary school teachers both at pre-service and in-service levels (Henard, 2010:43). It is essential that ordinary practitioners of language teaching possess a clear understanding of the central ideas of the methodology they are using in order to achieve their teaching goals (Swarbrick, 1994:1), the lack of such awareness is likely – as is also proved in practice at secondary schools in Tbilisi (see Table 9.6) – to lead to teaching practice and results lacking in coherence, consistency and communicative nature (see Study 3 below).

It is generally true that ambiguity about an innovation to be implemented creates higher risks of failure (Janssen et al., 2013:19). CLT is considered by many as an approach replete with ambiguity, giving more space for interpretation and flexibility than any other language teaching methods formerly favored in Georgia (and elsewhere), such as the Grammar-Translation or the Audio-Lingual Method did. Pointing out the eclectic nature of Communicative Language Teaching, Swarbrick (1994:10) also admits the challenge of providing practicing teachers with the clear understanding of what

CLT really implies/entails. Hiep (2000) reinforces Swarbrick's conclusions by stating that CLT does indeed allow for many different understandings, descriptions and uses of itself (2000:193). However, despite the generalistic guidelines that CLT offers, there still are certain clear features and aims that characterize this method, which allows teachers to act freely yet rationally within a clear methodological framework. Thus, it is important that the teachers understand the main underpinnings of CLT, so that they are able to base their teaching on the main principles of this method and at the same time feel free and capable of adapting their practices according to the practicalities of classroom instruction.

Language teachers' acceptance of Communicative Language Teaching (RQ4)

As argued by Webster et al. (2012), "for successful implementation of language innovation, the users (teachers and learners) must view the proposed change favorably. Unless and until attitudes change favorably towards the proposed language, users will continue to reject the intended language innovation" (2012:37). It was for this reason that the exploration of teachers', as well as learners', attitudes towards CLT was undertaken, in the Study 2 (see below).

The investigation into Georgian language teachers' attitudes towards and acceptance of CLT was conducted by interviewing teachers as well as having them complete opinion and attitude survey questionnaires. As a result, it was revealed that, in theory, the teachers strongly approve of Communicative Language Teaching, seeing it as an efficient tool of language instruction (see Table 7.11). In actual practice, however, as will be shown below, in most of the cases, their teaching does not bear the same kind of communicative character as their theoretical perceptions do.

Teachers' evaluation of CLT-related challenges (RQ5)

Despite the positive attitude towards and support of the adoption of CLT observed on the part of language teachers, most of the issues associated with CLT implementation in non-English contexts discussed in the literature (see Section 3.10) were also broadly acknowledged as problematic by the Georgian teachers (Table 7.10). In the interviews, teachers seemed more reserved about admitting those challenges that involved issues of their own standing, and instead mainly brought up more learner-related and administration-related issues, such as the difficulty of involving all learners in communicative activities, a lack of infrastructure and teaching/learning resources, large class sizes and CLT implementation-related classroom management problems (see Table 7.10). However, in the questionnaires, when teachers were asked about the same challenges in more general terms (see Appendix 7.3b, items 47- 61), they were more critical in evaluating the degree of challenge the lack of certain

teacher-related competencies might be conducive to: a lack of communicative proficiency in English, a need for a more profound theoretical knowledge and understanding on teachers' part, as well as the necessity of more professional development training for the teachers (see Table 7.12).

It is interesting to note that the country's language testing and assessment system, which seems to have remained largely language-form-oriented, focusing on writing and reading skills only (for comparison, see the English language test of the 1990s [Tkemaladze et al., 2001:131-137] and the test administered in 2013 at the National University Entrance Exams in English in Georgia²), was rated as the least problematic aspect both in interviews and in questionnaires by the language teachers. However, it is obvious that such a form of language assessment is incompatible with the principles of CLT, and consequently does not help contribute to the transformation of form-focused language teaching into a more communicative mode of language instruction (for more discussion on the observed challenges and language assessment-related issues in language classes in Tbilisi, see Section 11.3 below).

Effects of 'school type', 'teacher age' and 'teaching experience' on teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards CLT (RQ6)

No significant overall differences were found between the groups of teachers from the various school types with respect to policy document awareness and compliance with its recommendations (see Tables 7.4 and 7.7). As for their understanding of CLT theory, I found that the teachers at private, centrally-located schools were significantly more aware of the theory underlying CLT than the ones representing other school types (see Section 7.3.1).

Here, it is interesting to note, that even though it was revealed that teachers at public schools in Georgia have a longer average length of language teaching experience and tend to be older than private school teachers (see Section 7.2.2), neither of these factors has an effect upon their level of awareness of and compliance with the current language policy or of knowledge/understanding of the theory of CLT. Being older and having more experience does not make teachers either more appreciative of more communicative way of teaching or less daunted when confronted with CLT-associated challenges in their classroom practice.

To sum up, teachers at secondary schools in Georgia, both public and private ones, demonstrate a favorable attitude towards and an acceptance of Communicative Language Teaching in theory. However, the findings of Study 1 indicate the urgency of raising awareness both of the officially recommended language teaching methodology and of the language standards, as well as the

² Information retrieved from http://www.naec.ge/images/doc/EXAMS/english_v3_2013.pdf (accessed October 2013).

need to provide language teachers with a solid understanding of the theories underlying Communicative Language Teaching. Only when the theoretical basis of novel teaching modes and the patterns that the language instructors are encouraged to adopt are well internalized and understood will official policy recommendations lead to more profound changes in the field concerned. By this means alone can the transformation be achieved of turning today's teachers into more communicative language practitioners whose efforts are more conducive to improving language learners' communicative competence at secondary schools in Georgia.

STUDY 2: Learners' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching in Tbilisi

Secondary school language learners' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching (RQ1)

The study of learners' attitudes towards CLT revealed that, overall, Georgian learners demonstrate acceptance of Communicative Language Teaching, of most of its principles as well as practices (Table 8.3). However, there were certain non-CLT learning experiences towards which learners showed their preference over more CLT-compatible practices (see Appendix 8.2). For instance, the majority of learners expressed a preference for focusing on language accuracy rather than fluency, as well as preferring exam preparation in lessons rather than real-life communication. For most students who are concerned with passing their final exams and obtaining good grades, it is vital that they feel a sense of security during the study process, to know that whatever they do in the lesson will help them perform better during the final examinations. This might be expected to be a more immediate and relevant study goal for a thirteen- or fourteen-year old learner than thinking in a longer-term perspective about their lifelong objectives or aiming at acquiring the skills that will equip them with the competence to function efficiently in some as-yet abstract situations in the future. This gives grounds for characterizing Georgian learners' attitudes towards language learning as 'instrumental' (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), namely, aimed at fulfilling the immediate goals of their language learning (more discussion on 'integrative' versus 'instrumental' attitudes is offered in Section 8.1).

Here, again, the vital importance of bringing the advocated teaching method in line with an assessment system is revealed: unless the forms of assessment applied in Georgia bear a more communicative skills orientation, and for as long as they continue to maintain their largely form-focused, non-communicative character, it will be very hard to ensure that the teaching methodology applied in the study process in Georgia bears truly communicative character.

Secondary school learners' evaluations of CLT-related challenges (RQ2)

Learners evaluated the application of CLT in language classes in Georgia as bearing a moderate challenge, the biggest issue reported on their part being the large group sizes at public schools in Tbilisi (see Table 8.6). The learners' evaluation of the degree of CLT-related challenges is lower than that attached to the process by the teachers (for more discussion on similarities and differences between Georgian teachers' and learners' perceptions of CLT, see RQ4 below).

The effect of 'school type' and 'sex' on learners' attitudes towards CLT (RQ3)

The study revealed that, overall, private school learners tend to be significantly more appreciative of CLT than their public school peers (see Figure 8.1). Private school pupils also tend to attribute significantly less challenge to the implementation of CLT than do their public school counterparts; to be more specific, school learners at Private Central schools were found to be the most welcoming of CLT of any school type participating in the present study, significantly outranking public school pupils as well as private peripherally-located school pupils on this measure (see Figure 8.3).

As for the effect of sex on the results, it was detected that there are certain aspects of CLT towards which female learners are significantly more positively disposed than male learners are. Above all, it was the communicative activities that appealed to the girls more than to the boys: activities such as presentations, discussions and debates were significantly more appreciated by female than male participants in the study (see Figure 8.2). This finding indicated that certain CLT activities might be catering to girls' preferences more than to boys. No other major differences were observed between the sexes in other respects.

Similarities and differences between language learners' and teachers' attitudes towards CLT (RQ4)

Analysing the differences between teachers' and learners' attitudes towards CLT showed that teachers hold significantly more positive attitudes towards CLT in certain teaching areas (see Figure 8.4). In an attempt to explain this, it can be argued that with regard to teachers, being as they are adult informants of the study process, the phenomenon known as the 'social desirability bias' (see also Section 7.2.3) might be playing a role; there are some researchers who argue that participants might be expected to act in a way that they consciously know will portray them in a more positive light (Kaminska & Foulsham, 2013:3). This scenario is more likely to take place in the case of teachers than

learners, who are more likely to respond to the statements of the questionnaire presented more frankly and intuitively.

To conclude, in response to Kavanagh (2012), who claims that “no teaching approach will be valid unless the teachers who use it and the students who are receptors of it accept it” (2012:736), we can say that, in this regard, no significant constraints that would impede the officially recommended teaching method been detected – positive attitudes were identified towards CLT on the teachers’ as well as the learners’ part in Tbilisi.

STUDY 3: English language lesson observations at secondary schools in Tbilisi

The communicative character of the classroom setting (RQ1)

Class observations revealed that English teaching at secondary schools in Tbilisi is characterized by a low degree of communicative character (see Tables 9.6 and 9.9). However, the results of the present study, conducted in 2011, are somewhat better than those reported by Tkemaladze et al. in 2001, when out of 148 classes observed, not a single communicative activity was observed to be practised in language lessons in Georgia (Tkemaladze et al, 2001:112).

CLT implementation-related challenges observed in language classrooms (RQ2)

Through actual lesson observations, the overall level of challenge associated with the implementation of CLT at secondary schools in Tbilisi was found to be of an above average degree of difficulty (see Table 9.8). That estimate is in-between the level of CLT-related difficulty revealed on the teachers’ (Table 7.12) and learners’ part (Table 8.6) in Study 1 and Study 2 respectively.

The observations also revealed that language learners tend to be the least problematic agents in the study process. No particular problems regarding their involvement in the lessons, speaking in English or reacting to English speech were detected. The biggest issue related to their cause is the widely varying levels of language proficiency in a class. Teachers, on the other hand, were identified as the biggest source of challenge in the study process: their lack of proficiency in English, insufficient awareness of and understanding of the CLT principles, practical language teaching skills, as well as the observed influence of previously used form-focused language teaching methods, have been found to be quite pronounced. Other CLT-related challenges – large group size, CLT-related classroom management problems, classroom layouts that are impracticable for CLT implementation, a lack of teaching resources and technical facilities, an assessment system incompatible with CLT – were found in degree of severity to lie in between the learner-related and teacher-related difficulties. This pattern of distribution of the

sources of challenge is in line with how teachers evaluated CLT-related challenges in the questionnaires (see Table 7.12), but differs from teachers' evaluations reported in this regard in their interviews (see Table 7.10). In the latter case, it was problems associated with school administration and a non-CLT-compatible environment that were mentioned most frequently.

The effect of 'school type' and certain teacher characteristics on the communicative character of language teaching (RQ3)

Whereas the situation in terms of the communicative nature of language teaching can be characterized as rather poor at both types of public schools investigated, language practice at private schools can be described as significantly more communicative in nature. A further significant difference was observed between the communicative quality of language teaching at Private Central and Private Peripheral schools, the former bearing significantly more communicative characteristics than the latter (see Table 9.9).

As far as the impact of age is concerned, it was revealed that younger teachers tend to employ more communicative types of teaching and experience significantly fewer challenges in the process of instruction than their older colleagues (see Table 9.9). As for the teaching experience effect, it was detected that teachers having less experience demonstrate a more communicative type of instruction than their more experienced counterparts (see Table 9.9). Explanations for this finding can be identified in the literature dealing with the issue of teacher age and adoption of innovations. Generally, the young are more willing to take risks and to experiment than older people are (Hasluck, 2011:1-2). Also, it might be that, as Bradley and Devadason (2010:119) claim, young teachers are more optimistic and more capable of and adaptive to change. In an attempt to explain the teaching experience-related finding, it can also be speculated that teachers less burdened by an extensive previous teaching background are less under the influence of form-focused, 'fixed' ways of teaching, thus finding it easier to readapt to new modes of instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:252). This assumption is further reinforced by the claims made by Richards and Rodgers:

Greater experience does not lead to greater adaptability in our beliefs, and thereby, the abandonment of strongly held pedagogic principles. Quite the contrary, in fact, the more experience we have, the more reliant on our "core" principles we have become and the less conscious we are of doing so (2001:252).

Tevzadze (2001:36) refers to the long experience of Georgian teachers of English participating in her study conducted in Georgia as being a negative factor. According to Tevzadze, generally, "this [long teaching experience] could be considered to be a positive feature, but it is, in fact, worrying in Georgia's

case”. The reason for their pessimism is that these language teachers belong to the generation of teachers with a Soviet language education background, which was permeated with pedagogic principles and aims incompatible with Communicative Language Teaching standards and with present-day students’ communicative needs (Tevzadze, 2001:36).

Discrepancies between teachers’ attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching and their actual teaching practice (RQ4)

The gap between how teachers feel about CLT in theory and what they actually manage to implement in practice proved to be significant at public, but not at private schools. Public school teachers stated that they were supportive and receptive of CLT; however, in actual classroom settings, their teaching reflects very few signs of CLT. In contrast, at private schools, teachers’ attitudes towards CLT and what they actually are able to implement in their language classes are not notably different (see Figure 9.2). These results indicate that the strong acceptance and approval of a suggested teaching method is not always in and of itself a sufficient precondition for its successful application in the classroom. Other teacher-related as well as practical factors also play a significant role in this respect.

Some academics blame the situation on the failure on the teachers’ part to properly interpret the proposed recommendations and to grasp their practical implications (Ansarey, 2012:64), which was the case detected with respect to Georgian teachers of English at most of the secondary schools explored in this study.

Furthermore, the influence of traditional ways of teaching might be at work. In the present study, the majority of teachers were in the age range of 35-65. This means that all of them will have received their language education, and pre-service training, if any, on the basis of the Grammar-translation tradition, which dominated Soviet language education at that time. Some argue that the cause is simply human nature, which is prone to stick to tried and trusted practices; these seem to exert “a magical hold on us” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001:557).

Fear of losing face might be another factor that puts older established teachers off teaching a language communicatively, being an approach that they feel less capable in, compared with teaching grammar and language form. Teachers – even those with years of experience – when in new roles often perceive themselves as novices in the context of innovation, which considerably affects their self-esteem and may lead to resistance and non-compliance on their part towards the new paradigms of instruction (Janssen et al., 2013:14). Possible evidence that this factor is also at work with respect to the Georgian teachers is the observation made in this study regarding some of the participating teachers’ comments uttered before the observations started, particularly by teachers whose lessons suffered the most from the non-CLT

approach to teaching. This category of teachers was prone to warn me and the other observer that the lesson that was about to start was not a typical one, and that it was only a revision lesson (even though the school year had just started). Some of them also complained about not being able to conduct ‘proper’ lessons with that particular group claiming that the learners were extremely ‘weak’ and had been taught by another teacher the previous year. These comments, to some extent, reveal ‘face-saving’ elements on some of the Georgian teachers’ part at public schools in Tbilisi, namely in the case of (some of) those who were inefficient in their teaching and who seemed to be subconsciously aware of the fact.

There is also an argument that starting the introduction of educational reforms from above is not always the best thing to do, and that in most cases, “a bottom-up approach” seems to be more effective (Kavanagh, 2012:736; Kara-khanyan, 2011:21). In Georgia’s case, the innovation was introduced at the policy level and only later was it attempted to somehow contribute to the whole process of transforming language teaching into a communicative framework (see Section 5.4).

The English lesson observations in Tbilisi have also reinforced the prior assumption that what is theorized at the policy as well as at language teachers’ conceptual level is not always widely substantiated in practice. Although the language curriculum in Georgia is now based on the premises of CLT, and even though the attitudes and conceptions of those responsible for delivering this new style of teaching are positive, the majority of teachers at public schools in Georgia are unable to take up CLT and instead carry on with traditional language form-oriented instruction. Fortunately, the situation in the private sector, especially at Private Central schools, is considerably better and can be evaluated as satisfactory (see Figure 9.2). This means that as long as certain components necessary for the efficient implementation of CLT are in place, this method can be successful in Georgia, leading to the increased communicative proficiency of the language learners.

STUDY 4: Learners’ communicative proficiency in English at secondary schools in Tbilisi

Communicative proficiency level of learners of English (RQ1)

Theoretically speaking, there is nothing wrong with being at any proficiency level in a foreign language at any age; what matters is how large the gap between teaching/learning goals and outcomes is, and whether the length of language instruction received is adequate to learners’ current language abilities.

Study 4, reported on in Chapter 10, estimated seventh-/eighth-grade Georgian language learners’ overall level proficiency in English at approximately A1 to A2 CERF level (see Tables 10.4 and 10.5). This attested proficiency is one to two levels lower than what has been promulgated as the

appropriate target proficiency level in foreign languages for this age group in the National Curriculum, as well as by the coursebooks which were employed as teaching material in the classrooms observed in the study (see Table 10.3).

The same average proficiency level (A1/A2) was detected on the part of the sixteen/seventeen-year-old learners at the National University Entrance Exams in English in 2013 as was revealed in Study 4 among twelve-/thirteen-year-old participants (compare Table 10.5 and Figure 10.3). However, the fact that learners' language proficiency in the National Entrance Exams was checked through reading and writing skills only, and not through speaking, as in the case of Study 4, makes it difficult to form accurate assumptions as to what the results would be if learners' communicative abilities were tested through speaking at the National Exams. As already mentioned (Section 10.2.3), since active language production requires higher language competence than its mere comprehension, it is generally believed that learners' proficiency level demonstrated through productive skills, and particularly speaking, tends to be lower than that revealed through receptive skills (Saville-Troike, 2006:137). Based on this judgment, we could expect even lower proficiency results at the National Exams if applicants' language abilities had been checked through speaking instead. One of the explanations for this, then, could be that students who took part in the National Entrance Exams came not only from Tbilisi, where the most efforts have been made to transform the language education, but also from all the regions of the country, where learners' proficiency level in English might be expected to be lower (because of the much poorer resources and reform outreach) than that of learners living in the capital. Thus, exploration of the situation in Georgia's non-central regions was beyond the scope of the present dissertation and could be an area to be profitably further explored in future research.

Further comparison of the results of the most recent National Entrance Exam in English in 2013 (Figure 10.3) with the results of a similar exam from the late 1990s (Tkemaladze et al., 2001:138-139), which was of the same level of complexity (B1) and which used a similar format of testing (reading and writing exercises only), revealed roughly the same results (see Section 10.3). This finding is indicative of the fact that considerable efforts made on the Georgian government's part since the 1990s to transform the language education system into a more communicative one have not made any viable difference: these efforts have not been reflected in Georgian learners' actual language proficiency to any measurable degree thus far.

Effect of school type and exposure to extracurricular language learning on secondary school learners' communicative proficiency in English (RQ2)

School Type

The results of Study 4, in which I investigated the learners' communicative proficiency at secondary schools in Tbilisi, are in line with the results revealed by Study 3, English lesson observations, in that they both reveal better teachers' as well as learners' performance at Private, and in particular Private Central, than at Public schools. This means that the quality of teaching offered at various schools in Tbilisi, together with other factors, might have its considerable bearing on the final results obtained – learners' communicative proficiency in English (see Figure 10.4). Whereas the proficiency level of most of the private school pupils is in the range of A2-B2, which satisfies the achievement level requirements proposed in the policy document for the age group under investigation, the vast majority of public school participants were in the A0–A2 proficiency level range (Table 10.6), which is not satisfactory according to the official language standards of Georgia.

The reasons why the nature of language teaching as well as learners' communicative proficiency achievement levels are better in the private than the public sector might include certain other factors than the better quality of language instruction offered at these schools. As far as language teachers are concerned, at private schools, higher teacher salaries, better working conditions, smaller class sizes, and in most cases, a better teaching and learning resources, together with teaching environment and school infrastructure are likely to be playing a crucial role in their better performance and their closer compliance with the language teaching methodology requirements (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008:18).

As for the learners, here the factor of their social background has to be considered. The fact that most of the private school students belong to the more privileged social class, who are more likely to see the possibility of their travelling, studying or working abroad as more realistic than their public school peers, might make them more motivated to learn foreign languages and more appreciative of the practical skills-oriented teaching. Generally, increased motivation and perception of the immediate practical need of a learning experience, on its part, is conducive to learners' enhanced learning capabilities. The private school learners are also the ones who are more likely to have had more extensive extracurricular language learning opportunities – they are the ones who are more likely to have already traveled, studied or lived abroad than their public school counterparts. Consequently, Private school learners' better performance should be attributed not only to more communicative teaching practice employed at school, but also to other positive factors involved in their case.

To sum up the analysis of the results of all four studies presented in this dissertation across the different school types, it can be claimed that whereas the situation with regard to CLT is more or less the same at all schools at a theoretical level, there are significant differences across the various school types as far as the practical aspect of things is concerned – language teaching practice as well as learners’ actual communicative proficiency. The situation is better at Private Central schools, followed by the Private Peripheral type; at the two types of public schools, the situation with respect to Communicative Language Teaching practice and learners’ communicative proficiency results are almost identical, falling behind the results obtained at either category of private schools significantly (see Figure 10.5).

Effect of extracurricular language learning

Only certain types of extracurricular language learning opportunities were detected to have a positive effect on learners’ communicative proficiency outcomes. It turns out that language education received through a private tutor is not very useful for improving learners’ communicative proficiency in English in Georgia, whereas private language schools and exposure to native speech were confirmed to be means conducive to the acquisition of better communicative skills by learners (see Figure 10.5).

The reason for the above findings might be that, when taking lessons with a private tutor, learners find themselves face-to-face with the tutor only, and typically activities in the lesson do not tend to be focused on real communication but on an exchange of lesson-oriented sentences between the pupil and the teacher. At language schools, on the other hand, learners – who form groups consisting of up to 12 students – have more opportunities for engaging in natural conversation in the target foreign language; and there, teachers have more opportunities for conducting more skills-oriented activities through more communicative teaching patterns – using both group and pair work. Moreover, private schools try to brand themselves as practicing ‘modern and communicative’ methods of language teaching, methods which are believed to be largely unavailable at public schools in Georgia. ‘Communicative’ and ‘interactive’ are some of the widely used buzzwords employed for promoting private language school services in Georgia.

Exposure to a native-speaking environment or language instruction provided by a native speaker teacher was found to be the best supplement to the language education provided at secondary schools in Tbilisi. When a student is exposed to native speech, his or her communication in the target foreign language becomes purposeful, which can be regarded as a positive factor for developing learners’ communicative proficiency.

Study 4 also revealed that it is private school learners who tend to be exposed to the types of extracurricular language learning that have been proven

to be significantly more efficient than others at improving their communicative proficiency in English (see Figure 10.7). This finding, 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 Figure 9.1) and outside (see Table 10.7), resulting in the end-product of a significantly higher communicative proficiency than their public school peers can achieve, who seem to be deprived of such opportunities.

11.3 CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

So far I have summarized the findings of the studies looking into the current situation in Georgia with regard to Communicative Language Teaching. The question now is what efforts need to be made so that better communicative proficiency is achieved in language, and more specifically English, teaching in Georgia. Thus, in what follows, I will provide recommendations for each of the challenge identified during the investigations.

Challenge #1: Lack of understanding of the general principles and recommendations of the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages of Georgia

The issue of Georgian language teachers' low awareness of the existence and contents of the document which forms the policy they should be implementing and, most importantly, the understanding of the main principles the official curriculum offers has been an important one since the post-Soviet years and is still evident today (Tkemaladze et al., 2001:38). Even though it is assuredly not the sole reason for the deficiencies observed today in CLT at secondary schools in Tbilisi, this low awareness of and lack of accountability in complying with the official foreign language teaching recommendations, as revealed on the teachers' part in the present research, definitely takes its toll on the overall situation in the ELT field in Georgia.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that more efforts be directed towards better explaining the need of complying with and higher awareness on the teachers' part of the general contents and recommendations of the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages. Unless more action is taken in this regard, little account will be taken of the language policy recommendations – new teaching goals it sets, learning standards it defines and teaching approaches it proposes. This will prevent the new policies from informing the actual teaching practice.

Challenge # 2: Lack of knowledge and understanding of the didactic principles of Communicative Language Teaching

It is not uncommon for language teachers to be unaware of the didactic principles and theoretical base of the language teaching method they are supposed to employ. Consequently, they hold such misconceptions as that the only thing that efficient teaching takes is some experience and the short-term initial supervision of an experienced teacher.

A similar situation as described in the preceding paragraph was observed with regard to Georgian teachers of English in Tbilisi. Study 1 (Chapter 7) of the present dissertation revealed that there is a palpable lack of understanding of the didactic principles of CLT, as well as of general language teaching and learning theory, among the Georgian teachers of English interviewed (see Tables 7.8 and 7.9).

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the prevalent myth that certain people are just “born” good teachers is dispelled (Uhlenbeck, 2002:243), and concrete efforts must be made in order to help teachers acquire a more profound understanding of the theory of teaching. More attention should be given to both disciplinary and pedagogic content knowledge³ provision to prospective teachers at university level (Richards, 2011:6) in Georgia. This will prevent teachers from having considerable gaps in their understanding of the main principles upon which they should be basing their practices. Before such a change at university level can yield results, which is a longer-term prospect, it is recommended that a theoretical component be added to the teacher training courses currently offered in Georgia. It is believed that teachers with solid knowledge of the underlying didactic principles and pedagogic value of a method “make better and more appropriate decisions about teaching and learning and arrive at more appropriate solutions to problems than a teacher without such knowledge” (Richards, 2011:22). Richards (2011) further argues that a well-prepared teacher, with a solid background in both disciplinary as well as pedagogic content knowledge, manifests the abilities to cater to the communicative needs of the learner, to set the right goals, adapt the teaching material, as well as to choose

³ “Disciplinary knowledge”, according to Richards, includes language and learning theory, the history of language teaching methods, theories of second-language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics, whereas “pedagogical content knowledge” concentrates on more practical knowledge, drawn from the study of language teaching and learning, such as curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, classroom management, and skills teaching (Richards, 2011: 6).

the right practice and evaluation tasks (Richard, 2011:6). This makes a substantial difference to the quality of language teaching (Richards, 2011:7).

Furthermore, in the present generation of teachers, the acquisition of “Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge” – an ability to understand in which ways it is most beneficial to integrate technology into teaching, what traditional means it should replace and which it should not replace – has also become essential for language teachers (Richards, 2011:7). According to Mishra and Koehler (2006), this could involve being able to use a certain technology, to create materials and activities using technology as well as being able to teach through technology (cited in Richards, 2011:8). Thus, it is recommended that proper account be taken of the importance of providing teachers with Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) and the skills for its application. The integration of technology into teaching, in general, and in particular in language teaching, has become a necessary component of the professional competence of the present-day language teachers, who need to keep pace with present-day learners’ communicative needs (Richards, 2011:7).

In Georgia, information technology has just started entering the field of education and is still largely underused. This is mainly due to the small scale of technology-infused teaching/learning opportunities provided at educational institutions, as well as to a lack on the part of education providers of the skills necessary for technology-integrated teaching (Edisherashvili & Smakman, 2013:80). Hence, providing teachers in Georgia with assistance and guidance in this direction is of the utmost importance.

Challenge # 3: Lack of relevant CLT skills

Having a profound theoretical understanding, even though a prerequisite, does not often on its own lead to efficiency in actual teaching practice, and “training in the techniques and procedures of a specific method is essential” (Richards & Rogers, 2001:250). According to Richards (2011), “the teacher has to have a repertoire of techniques and routines at her fingertips” to make the lessons consistent, structured and targeted. Each language teaching method requires a different set of skills and techniques in the teaching process, and so CLT is no exception. It is generally accepted that CLT skills are much more demanding than those needed for a more conventional type of teaching, such as the Grammar-Translation Method.

Efficient CLT skills were largely conspicuous by their absence in most of the English lessons observed at secondary schools in Tbilisi. Even if, according to Tkemaladze et al. (2001:112), the explanation offered in 2001 for the above circumstances was to attribute the failings to an “almost total absence of teacher training for teachers”, surely this argument no longer holds validity. All the teachers approached within Study 1 reported having had some kind of training course, most of them even claiming to have had a “number of them” (see Section 7.2.2). There is also evidence that the Georgian government has

been making efforts in this direction by building a special Teacher Training House for this purpose in 2011, which is proclaimed to be delivering teacher training on a regular basis (see Section 5.4).

However, the results of Study 3, English Language Lesson Observations (see Table 9.8), as well as the challenges reported by the teachers in relation to their teaching skills (see Table 7.10), confirm that there is a need for teachers to have training to help them acquire the necessary CLT skills. This finding makes our questioning of the quality and relevance of the teacher training courses currently available in Georgia legitimate. Hence, in the light of the present research findings, a list of recommendations is presented below with regard to what elements teacher training courses delivered in Georgia must comprise in order to meet the needs of secondary school language teachers.

Recommendations:

Teacher training should include a practical component

Teacher training courses in Georgia should not only aim at providing theoretical knowledge or help teachers practice their skills in a simulated context, but should also include an actual teaching practice component. Currently, teacher training courses involve no on-the-job training component, and for this reason, the sessions bear a rather general character, overlooking the practicalities of specific teaching environments.

Also, it should be mentioned that the need for more intensive training to equip teachers with the proper teaching skills has become more pronounced with the introduction of CLT as a recommended language teaching method. Earlier, in teacher-dominated classrooms, where mostly whole-group activities were expected to take place, and where the teacher was the center and served as a single source of information, it was easier to manage classroom processes. In student-dominated CLT classrooms, however, the teaching/learning processes, which are more spontaneous, individualized and diverse, are much more complicated to handle (Janssen et al., 2013:18). Consequently, teachers need to be consulted and guided on these practical matters more than before.

Teacher training should focus more sharply on developing critical thinking and analytical skills in language teachers

According to Richards (2011), training programs need to be aimed at not only equipping teacher trainees with a mastery of teaching skills, but also, as he puts it, with “specialized thinking skills” (2011:22). As Richards further observes, actual teaching practice involves “engaging in sophisticated processes of observation, reflection, and assessment and making decisions about which course of action to take from a range of available alternatives” (Richards, 2011:10). Kumaravadivelu (2008) argues that teacher training courses should

not just “pass on a body of knowledge” of ELT, but should rather be “dialogically constructed by participants who think and act critically” (2008:182). If theoretical knowledge is necessary for making informed decisions with regard to classroom practice, then an ability to analyze the actual teaching processes is necessary if a teacher is to be able to “theorize from practice” (Richards, 2011:22).

It is recommended that teacher training courses in Georgia include components which will contribute to the development of critical thinking and analytical skills in teachers, a faculty which was largely absent in the teaching practice of the Georgian teachers observed both at public as well as private schools. According to Kumaravadivelu (2008), the above goal can be achieved through involving local teachers in peer observation, feedback sessions and each others’ teaching practice analysis. Supervised group discussions and collaborative work where knowledge and skills will be shared are also believed to contribute to the efficiency and development of better analytical skills on the part of language teachers (Richards, 2011:25). Thus, placing more focus on developing teachers’ independent critical thinking and analysis skills will help teachers derive much more benefit from the training, which will thereby have a longer-lasting and more progressive effect. The classroom, as Janssen et al. (2013:17) observe, is a “habitat” which defines possibilities and limitations for the study participants – teachers as well as learners. It is a place where a complex combination of interactions takes place – physical, emotional as well as intellectual – and being able to interpret those strands appropriately and to determine the right ways to react in a given context is an important competence that an efficient language teacher has to possess.

Teacher training should take more account of the local context and teacher needs

There is evidence that in other countries undergoing similar transformations in the field of ELT to Georgia, even in cases where teachers have been sent abroad on a one-year teacher training course in an attempt to transform their teaching practice into a more communicative experience, such efforts have failed due to the barriers and constraints imposed by the practicalities of the local context (Kavanagh, 2012:734).

It is strongly recommended that teacher training courses in Georgia take more account of the Georgian teaching context. In Georgia, as Study 3 revealed, teacher-related challenges are the most dominant ones, followed by practical challenges related to the implementation of CLT itself, with learner-related challenges being minimal (see Table 9.8). Considering this information, training can be made more focused and made to deal with problems not in a general, but rather in a targeted manner, which will help make the training experience more relevant and efficient for local teachers (Kumaravadivelu, 2008:172).

More systematic and longer teacher training courses

Mastery of teaching skills takes much time and supervised practice. It takes time before newly-acquired teaching skills develop into automatic routines, which once internalized eventually lead to more flexibility and “improvisational teaching” (Tsui, 2009:190; Borg, 2009:163). Thus, as Study 3 revealed, it can be argued that as long as training courses offered to teachers continue to be short-term, unsystematic or lacking in post-training supervision/observation components, they will tend to provide equally short-term and unsystematic results. Hence, it is recommended that post-training supervision be provided to teachers, in order to provide more prolonged assistance with new methods, and that supervision include post-graduation lesson observations, to evaluate teachers’ acquired competence in practice, as well as post-lesson feedback, to help teachers reflect upon and analyze their own strengths and weaknesses (Uhlenbeck, 2002:243).

The effect and success of teacher training courses needs to be properly assessed

To estimate the success level of teacher training, it is also essential that its effects and outcomes be adequately measured. As remarked in the study conducted in Georgia by Tkemaladze et al. (2001), often the success of a training course is assessed in terms of its frequency and number of trainees involved, rather than by any positive effects it has on teachers’ actual teaching practice (2001:115).

The above argument applies to the present-day situation in ELT in Georgia as well, and highlights the need that teacher training programs include not only teacher preparation but also evaluation of their progress, as well as the assessment of the impact of training courses on teachers’ classroom practice. This will help make training sessions more targeted at teachers’ actual needs and their classroom practicalities.

Challenge # 4: Lack of language proficiency on the part of the teachers

According to Richards (2011), unless the language teacher possesses at least an intermediate level of language proficiency, it will be very hard for him/her to teach a language communicatively or to meet certain requirements that a communicative language teacher needs to be capable of: to provide a good language model, maintain use of the target foreign language in class, provide accurate explanations, give correct feedback and provide language enrichment opportunities for learners (2011:3).

Lack of language proficiency might result in a number of problems in a communicative language lesson: among these are sticking to the old-fashioned, form-focused language teaching, which is less demanding in terms of communicative abilities, and/or being overly dependent on the teaching

resources used, such as textbooks and exam materials, and/or a lesser probability of teachers conducting communicative activities or encouraging “improvisational learning” (Medgyes, 2001:415). All the problems listed above, as well as deficiencies in teachers’ communicative proficiency, were observed in many of the classes at secondary schools in Tbilisi, Georgia (see Table 9.8).

Recommendations:

According to Richards (2011), insufficient attention is given to the issue of language teachers’ communicative proficiency in many TESOL teacher-preparation programs (2011:4). This applies no less to Georgia than to other EFL countries. Existing solutions employed to overcome the deficiencies in practicing teachers’ communicative proficiency include linking the language component to the methodology component in teacher training programs (Kahmi-Stein & Brinton, 2009:91) and using lesson transcripts to help teachers develop a command of classroom language (Cullen, 2002:162). Introducing certain types of problem management in this regard might serve to lessen the problem – assigning teachers only those classes which match their language proficiency level, or encouraging them to assume such CLT-compatible teaching roles which are less-demanding in terms of their linguistic abilities. However, the issue still remains problematic, as improving one’s communicative proficiency, especially at an adult age, is no mere short-term effort.

Challenge # 5: Classroom infrastructure: class size and resources

Working with large classes is a factor believed to be causing problems in the process of teaching, classroom management as well as evaluation. The arrangement of CLT activities and CLT-compatible interactions (see Sections 3.7 and 3.10.3) in larger classes tend to result in many classroom management-related difficulties.

Observations of language classes at secondary schools in Tbilisi in Study 3 revealed that the number of learners ranges from around 25 to 35 students per group at public schools, and around 12 to 20 at private schools. Even though according to international standards the above reported number of students is not considered to be too large a group (Tkemaladze et al., 2001:17), the issue of large classes surfaced in the teacher interviews, questionnaires (see Tables 7.10 and 7.12) and to a notable degree during the actual classroom teaching (Table 9.8) as one of the biggest problems for practicing teachers in Tbilisi.

Lesson observations also showed that classroom arrangement and lack of equipment and teaching resources are posing higher barriers to CLT implementation than class size does (see Table 9.8). No evidence of any technology being used in language classes was observed at any of the public

secondary schools in Tbilisi (except for one Public Central school, where the 'Future Class'⁴ had recently been installed, but had not been duly exploited yet). Even CD players were scarce, let alone general access to computer and Internet resources.

Recommendations:

Keeping the class to a reasonable size is advisable where the teaching of languages, and particularly Communicative Language Teaching, is concerned. Communicative lessons result in significant levels of noise, chaos and movement, for which more space and more CLT-friendly classroom arrangement is needed as well as better classroom management skills on the teachers' part.

As far as teaching equipment and resources are concerned, it should be noted that a lack of technology makes many CLT experiences impossible, such as conducting listening or video activities; making the requisite information technology available for teaching or learning purposes is also very important in CLT lessons, as this provides a myriad of opportunities for direct access and exposure to authentic language and communication.

Hence, it is strongly recommended that the environment in language classes at secondary schools in Tbilisi become more CLT-friendly and better equipped technologically. This will facilitate CLT implementation for Georgian teachers who are already struggling with many of the practicalities of their everyday teaching (see Table 9.8).

Challenge # 6: Inadequate assessment system

An inadequate assessment system is believed to be a serious deterrent factor in the process of language teaching and learning transformation (Kavanagh, 2012:731). In Georgia, the language standards and aims on the one hand and the language assessment system, on the other do not seem to be compatible.

Even though in the National Curriculum for Foreign Languages the importance of communication skills and competences is emphasized (see Chapter 6), neither the assessment system employed at schools, nor the National University Entrance Exams is any aspect of communication covered. Reading and writing are the main areas assessed in English language examinations today,⁵ the assessment of learners' communicative abilities being largely ignored. In such circumstances, there is little likelihood that the situation with regard to CLT will change to any significant degree. This assumption can be further reinforced by the present research findings:

⁴ For more information about the 'Future Class' at secondary schools in Georgia, see 5.5.1.

⁵ For more information about the samples of the assessment forms used in Georgia see Chapter 10, footnote 10.

Georgian language learners prefer to focus in lessons on final test and exam materials and on skills practice rather than on developing authentic communication abilities (see Section 8.3; Appendix 8.2). This finding reveals learners' preoccupation with focusing on whatever is tested in the forthcoming tests and exams. Thus, it can be concluded that as long as language assessment maintains its largely form-oriented character, little change can be expected with regard to transforming form-focused teaching into a more communicative type; both teachers and learners in Georgia will continue to be tempted to widely ignore communicative activities and the development of real communication skills in the study process.

Also, given the absence of external evaluation, all responsibility for testing and evaluating language learners' progress, right up until the National University Entrance Exams, remains mainly in the hands of individual school teachers' and, to some extent, in school administrations' hands. Such total independence and lack of accountability makes language teachers in Tbilisi less motivated to comply with the officially recommended CLT, rendering the assessment system lacking in consistency and standardization across various school types.

Recommendations

It is recommended that a more standardized and centralized language assessment system be employed for checking learners' proficiency in foreign languages in Georgia. All assessment/testing forms employed – for ongoing, mid-term and end-of-year language proficiency assessment at schools as well as at the National University Entrance Exam in foreign languages must be harmonized with the principles of CLT. This would motivate teachers as well as learners to sharpen their focus on communicative skills and competences in their lessons, and would considerably contribute to the transformation of the grammar-oriented language teaching, so frequently observed in language classes today in Georgia, into a more communicative teaching/learning experience.

It should also be acknowledged that an assessment of communicative abilities (in particular, speaking) is a much more complicated process, requiring much better competence on the teachers' part than grammar-oriented testing systems are (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008:18). Consequently, it is recommended that, in the absence of the much-needed skills and expertise for assessing learners' communicative competence, teachers are not left to cope alone with these challenges, and that relevant support in terms of test design as well as marking criteria is provided. A more standardized, centrally-imposed assessment system is likely to reduce the inter-teacher as well as inter-school difference and to make the assessment system for languages in Georgia more reliable (Tkemaladze et al., 2001:21).

Furthermore, including an external evaluation component at least once or twice each academic year may also be expected to be beneficial, as the sense of accountability and of responsibility for meeting official policy requirements will be raised. According to Tkemaladze et al. (2001), standardization and external evaluation will give rise to a “realistic national curriculum”, one in which teachers will be motivated to try to comply with the curriculum requirements as well as feeling more conscientious about the outcomes of their teaching (2001:113). External evaluation will also increase the scope for objectively evaluating how closely the language teaching and learning process at secondary schools in Tbilisi meets the existing language proficiency standards.

Learner-related challenges have not been discussed in the present section, as they were found to be causing insignificant levels of challenge in the process of English language teaching and learning. No negative attitudes towards the currently proposed language teaching method, not any kind of serious resistance to any of the CLT principles, either in theory (questionnaires; see Section 8.3) or in actual practice (observations; see Table 9.8), were detected on the learners’ part. This means that learners are not problematic agents in the process of CLT implementation in Georgia.

11.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As for the limitations of the present research, the fact that only a short period of Georgia’s language teaching reform could be studied in this work could be considered as a shortcoming. Even though the language curriculum was transformed from a grammar-based into a communicative one in 1997, the second, more intensive wave of language education reform commenced only in 2009. Consequently, the intervening period may have been too short to allow for fully gauging the effects of the latter reform on language teaching in Georgia.

Another limitation might be that the effects of the implementation of CLT were explored only in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, which confines the scope of generalization of the present research findings to that city only.

The fact that learners’ communicative proficiency was checked through speaking only can be identified as another shortcoming of the present study. As argued earlier in this dissertation (see Table 10.2), writing is also a productive skill through which communication takes place, and one which is believed to be a less demanding form for assessing one’s foreign language proficiency than the spontaneous process of speaking. Accordingly, speaking could in the present study have been supplemented with writing tasks to make the whole assessment process more comprehensive and balanced.

11.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the above-outlined limitations of the present study, and reflecting upon prospective areas of future research to be undertaken regarding CLT, the following suggestions can be provided:

- Since there are reasons to assume that the situation observed in Tbilisi in the present study with regard to CLT in Georgia, as well as with regard to learners' levels of communicative proficiency, will be different from that in the provincial regions, further research needs to be undertaken beyond the capital, in various parts of the country.
- Given the fact that English is far and away the most popular foreign language in Georgia, the teaching of which is highly prioritized and supported by employers and parents almost without exception, a rather different situation is expected with regard to the teaching/learning of other foreign languages at secondary schools in Georgia. Thus, since the present study focuses on English language teaching only, it is highly recommended that similar research be undertaken with regard to the other major Western foreign languages taught at secondary schools in Georgia: German, French and Spanish. This will help provide a more comprehensive overall picture of foreign language teaching, as well as opportunities to contrast and compare the teaching and learning situations across various foreign languages in Georgia.
- Since in the present study learners' communicative proficiency was checked through the speaking skill only, learners' communicative abilities should now be explored through writing as well. Such study outcomes will provide valuable information regarding whether speaking really does place a heavier burden on language learners than writing does when they are applying the acquired foreign language for communicative purposes (Saville-Troike, 2006:147). Also, as speaking is not the only aspect that CLT is concerned with, a further investigation of multi-dimensional language knowledge and ability could provide more comprehensive information about the language proficiency of Georgian learners of English.
- Since in the present study a univariate analysis approach was employed for the data interpretation purposes, a multivariate method can be applied for deeper exploration of the possible interactions between the variables included in the present study. Also, in the present study, in certain cases, the population size of some variable sub-groups was not big enough to show significant differences even though the raw data revealed considerable variations. Thus, it is recommended that the investigation is conducted with bigger population samples (in the case of the 'teacher age' and

‘extracurricular language learning’ factors, for instance). The present investigation will provide a good framework and basis for such further research.

11.6 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study have a number of practical implications for policy makers as well as for teacher trainers and for practicing teachers. With this study I have tried to contribute to the pool of knowledge regarding the English language teaching and learning situation at secondary schools in the capital of Georgia. Such data are extremely important for planning further steps and making more informed and empirically-based decisions at many distinct levels of the implementation of CLT. To now, language education reform decisions in Georgia have been based upon the copying of practices from other contexts or upon making intuitive choices. This legacy of an approach to policymaking not grounded upon empirical data might well be, in concert with other factors, a significant reason why efforts to date have not been properly reflected in improvements in learners’ actual communicative proficiency.

The comprehensive exploration of English language teaching and learning in Tbilisi has revealed that a wider-scale, successful integration of Communicative Language Teaching in the ELT field is feasible and realistic in the Georgian context as long as certain criteria are met, certain requirements are satisfied and certain factors are taken account of. Significantly better situation detected in this study at private schools is a proof of the above-made claim.

Fortunately, unlike in many non-Western contexts, the principles and teaching/learning paradigms that CLT offers do not come into conflict with the ingrained Georgian teaching and learning norms. Neither any kind of emotional or cultural resistance is encountered towards this method on policy makers’, school administrators’, teachers’, or learners’ part. On the contrary, in Georgia, a Western country with a Soviet legacy that it is trying to overcome, the learning of foreign languages, and in particular English, is seen as a tool to once and for all integrate into and become an inseparable part of the ‘Western world’. Taking into account future aspirations and socio-political situation in the country, it can be expected that language education in Georgia will continue to progress and be further prioritized.