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Technology as a tool towards educational reform

Implementing Communicative Language Teaching in Georgia

Natalia Edisherashvili and Dick Smakman

1. Introduction

The advances in digital technology have dramatically changed the way people live in the twenty-first century. Off-line tools are making way for online ones. In the last five to ten years in particular, the number of - oftentimes interconnected - tools that the internet offers has been growing fast. This ongoing digital revolution is affecting the speed and manner with which we communicate and with which we organise our lives. Even our friendships are becoming organised through digital media. Personal and professional relationships are often dealt with in similar ways and simultaneously, and physical presence is no longer a requirement for maintaining contact with those around us in our professional and personal lives.

In teaching settings, too, this revolution is taking place. Schools need to keep up with major developments. Unfortunately, not every school has the funds to do so. Differences between quality of education are often determined by the amount of money assigned to schools for technical adjustments.

In the sovereign state of Georgia, at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, this issue of technical developments and funding is very topical. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia looked irreversibly towards the West, and this paved the way for a newly found self-assurance. In the move towards modernization, the educational system received a high priority. The European and American teaching approaches have since been important models that Georgian education policy makers have been looking up to and trying to emulate. Teaching foreign languages has become one of the top priorities; knowing western languages is considered an invaluable tool that will help open up the doors and help Georgian youth share in the experiences of the Western world. As Communicative Language Teaching is the unofficial western way of teaching, Georgian schools have been trying to adopt this approach and, to further modernize the language teaching system, support it with the digital tools available nowadays.

This article will review the digital opportunities that have become available in Georgia recently, and what benefits and challenges technology application in Communicative Language Teaching brings along in the Georgian context. Suggestions will be made as to how to deal with the existing obstacles and make technology-enhanced language teaching work in Georgia and thus reform education.

2. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and digital aids

Technology and the opportunities it offers for language teaching/learning are very much in line with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. The primary purpose of this method is to equip learners with the communicative competence and skills to function in various situations and communication modes, which these days embraces personal as well as digital interactions.

Communicative Language Teaching is claimed to be an approach maximally oriented at satisfying the practical language needs of the learner. The needs named these days are writing e-mails, navigating the Web, finding information online, chatting online, to name a few. Technology makes it possible to practice the language to meet these needs. For example, while students in the past would practice their writing by producing a letter addressed to an imaginary person, now an e-mail format is recommended for informal writing purposes; instead of reading a text from a course book, there is a possibility to get online and read updated, recent information which would match the learner's needs and current interests. All of these possibilities make the learning/teaching process more authentic and reflect students' real life needs.

3. Technology-enhanced teaching in Georgia

Georgia has traditionally emphasized the importance of education. The country's orientation towards the western education system was underlined when it joined the Bologna process in 2005 and the transformation of the Georgian educational system began. Western-oriented courses in education have been developed and maintained ever since (Japaridze, 2008: 1).

Part of the western approach to teaching seems to be to eagerly latch on to technical developments taking place by implementing physical changes in the classroom which enable teachers and pupils to make use of the latest technical advancements as much as possible. Fortunately, whilst the various sound and film carriers in the past sometimes necessitated serious and expensive changes to the classroom, nowadays any digital tool can be used if computers or laptops are available, and any changes in these tools will not necessitate technical changes. In Georgia, efforts have been made to open up the teaching rooms to the digitization that the western model requires. Once computers, laptops and internet connections have been installed, Georgian schools can freely keep up with the powerful flow of digital improvements.

Integrating new technologies in teaching, and especially in language teaching, has been one of the priorities of the education policy makers in the past few years. Georgia might not be very far ahead in the area of technology-enhanced teaching at this point, but much progress can be observed in this direction (Asatiani, 2011: 38). Education professionals in Georgia say that children will learn better if more technology is brought

into the teaching process (Tabula, 2012: 1). The awareness of the usefulness and inevitability of having modern technology opportunities duly exploited in communicative language teaching is growing rapidly (Nafetvaridze, 2011: 55).

An early sign of such awareness surfaced when the Government of Georgia initiated a project which aimed at providing first-grade pupils of public primary schools of Georgia with locally produced mini laptops called "Buki", which have also been exported to some countries abroad (Tabula, 2012: 1).

Picture 1: First-graders at a public school in Georgia, using mini computers, called "Bukis"[1].

This initiative was widely welcome by schools, as well as by pupils and their parents and, starting from 2011, within the framework of the National Presidential "My First Computer" Program, "Buki" laptops have been provided to all first-graders in Georgia. The computers offer pupils language practice programs together with other educational teaching resources, some of which are already installed on the computer while others can be downloaded from the website created to provide additional study materials for the Buki laptop. The Internet connection on these laptops enables learners to reach out to resources and learning opportunities available online, most of which are in English.

Schools need to prepare the students for modern-day challenges by exposing them to modern day technologies (Tabula, 2012: 2). The introduction of Netbooks is not the only sign of the efforts made toward implementation of technology-enhanced teaching in Georgia. Since 2011 the so-called "Classes of the Future" have been in place. In these computer labs, which are equipped with the latest hi-tech teaching resources, there is no need for pens, pencils or books. Interactive White Boards and monitors are used instead. Students can retrieve electronic versions of past lessons, without going through stacks of papers. All Classes of the Future are connected digitally, and students can compare work and chat about the subjects they study.

The project aims at preparing young learners for a full integration and

functioning in the computer-dominated world, where they will need to have computer skills and computer literacy (Tabula, 2012: 1).

Together with technology and the omnipresence of the Internet comes the importance of knowing a foreign language (Ingorokva, 2011: 15). For a Georgian person to retrieve and understand the information presented on the World Wide Web, it is important to have competency in a foreign language (most notably English). Thus, together with extensive support provided to technology integration into teaching (http://www.taoba.ge), education policy makers in Georgia placed emphasis on intensive language education (Ingorokva, 2011: 15).

Picture 2: A "Class of the Future", showing advanced technology-enhanced teaching[2]

The introduction of modern technologies into teaching since 2011 has been accompanied by teacher training sessions in general computer use (Ingorokva, 2011: 15). However, it seems that teacher preparation and the quality and quantity of the technologies available presently at schools in Georgia are still an issue. Teachers and learners need to demonstrate readiness to accept the teaching paradigm shift towards more technology integration in their teaching/learning practice. As the integration of computer-based teaching is a recent change in the education system of Georgia, there is not much research available to answer the question whether teachers and learners are adapting to the change. However, there are some comments and feedback available on teaching experiences in Georgia by foreign teachers. One American teacher comments on his experience teaching English in Georgia. He says that he faced considerable obstacles in his teaching practice, which was mainly related to the lack of classroom equipment and material (Heyn, 2011: 1)[3] . "Classrooms are ill-prepared, the only tools being a chalk and a book. Printers are non-existent. As for the visual aids – well, only if the teachers want to carry their laptops to school every day," remarks another English instructor. Even though the schools that these teachers are referring to are located in rural areas, and the comments cannot be automatically applied to the schools in the bigger

cities of Georgia, the examples provided illustrate the fact that there is still much to be improved and provided in order to support technology-enhanced teaching in Georgia (Mirren, 2011: 1).[4]

Countries, especially developing ones, cannot afford to stay passive to Information and Communication Technology if they are to compete and strive in the global economy (Jhurree, 2005: 467). As Jhuree further concludes, developed countries have more resources, knowledge, skills and experience in the sphere of technology-enhanced teaching, and developing countries can just "adopt, adapt and apply" the "ready-made" expertise with much fewer efforts (2005: 468). Georgia will need to follow this advice.

4. Georgian expert views on technology enhanced teaching in Georgia

Jhurree (2005) points out that while research data related to technology-enhanced teaching in developed countries abounds, only very few statistics and scientific data are available from developing countries (468). Georgia is not an exception in this respect. Some expert views are nevertheless available.

Perceptions of the principles underlying teaching methods have been changing slowly but steadily in Georgia since Soviet times. According to the Georgian education expert Giunashvili (2009), learning is considered to be a process of "knowledge construction" while being in contact with the social environment rather than a planned and pre-determined plan where a teacher takes the main lead. From this perspective, the role of technology use in education today is invaluable, as these tools help learners and teachers construe their knowledge more effectively than before (Giunashvili, 2009: 9). ICT use in language teaching is especially important in the Georgian context, where access to authentic materials and learning environments is not readily available. ICT helps increase learners' motivation while learning languages, as the need to be linguistically competent in a foreign language goes beyond the classroom boundaries and takes on a much broader and practical character (Giunashvili, 2009: 9); since most of the information that Georgian learners find on the web is in English or another foreign language, it helps Georgian learners see the direct need to learn foreign languages for communicative purposes, and this language becomes a means for learners to become part of the online community (Labadze, 2011: 20).

Other computer-based tools, the benefits of which Georgian education experts have been discussing, include educational computer games. According to Labadze, computer games, which are widely used in the study process in Western Europe, should be actively adopted in the Georgian context as well. According to Labadze, computer games help boost the learners' motivation, making them more independent and involved in the study process. Also, such games offer teachers alternative ways and extra techniques to make their lessons more diverse and entertaining (2009: 39).

Nafetvaridze (2012) discusses social networking sites, which could help teachers make their teaching practice aim at developing learners' independence and self-sufficiency (54). Social networking tools offer learners an opportunity to get connected and interact outside the school for study purposes, which facilitates the implementation of such activities as online project work and joint research. Outside-school study opportunities help teachers save much classroom time, which is often a problem for Georgian teachers, especially for the ones using more communicative methods of teaching (Nafetvaridze, 2012: 54).

The same researcher discusses how social networking tools help teachers move beyond the role of a traditional language teacher, the sole knowledge provider in the study process. She also talks about "the melting red ice", referring to Soviet times and the strict didactic methods of teaching in Georgia those days. With the help of technology, teachers are now given a chance to act as guides and facilitators, and help learners in the learning process (Nafetvaridze, 2012: 55). This view is shared by Labadze (2011), who discusses the changed role of a teacher and the shift towards more communicative methods of teaching in Georgia, and how technological progress has contributed to all that (21).

Nafetvaridze, while talking about the advantages of social networking in the teaching process, also mentions some of the drawbacks associated with this tool. In the language teaching process, for example, the use of social networking does not offer sufficient speaking and listening practice. She points out the difficulty of maintaining the right balance between the educational and non-educational social interaction opportunities that this tool provides (2012: 55). To solve the problem, Nafetvaridze suggests using American educational networking sites, such as "Edmondo"[5], which is a perfect tool to connect teachers, students and their parents. One more educational value that Nafetvaridze attributes to "Edmondo" is an easy-to-use test-creation function (2012: 56). Another website is "Iearn"[6], which is also recommended by the Ministry of Education of Georgia as a Communicative Language Teaching tool for teachers at Georgian schools.

Another use of technology in teaching is Internet-based simulations. Giunashvili elaborates on the positive, motivational effect that simulation activities have on learners and the learning process and how they help transform lecture-style teaching into a more communicative, interactive mode of instruction. Learners take on the challenge and are immersed in a sea of authentic educational work (2011: 14). He further points out the potential of computer simulation in teaching: "High quality computer simulations create a real-life environment, which, in some cases, can even serve as a substitute for missing resources" (2011: 16). Even though Giunashvili does not speak specifically about Communicative Language Teaching, the wide spectrum of opportunities he considers encompasses language teaching aspect as well.

Labadze also discusses the paradigm shift in the current education system in Georgia. He comments on the need to follow in the footsteps of the western world and the need to share some of their practices, such as the

application of more communicative methods of teaching and basing the teaching/learning experience on the concepts of social constructivism. Integration of modern technology in the teaching process contributes to a great extent to achieving such goals (2011: 18).

5. Advantages and challenges of digital aids in CLT

5.1. The available tools

The most common resources available today, offline and online, which might be used in a Communicative Language Teaching class are: language practice software, multimedia simulation software, language games, Word, PowerPoint, teaching/learning sites, virtual worlds. e-mail, Web fora, logs, Instant Messaging, Skype, Facebook, Wikipedia, podcasts, YouTube, and Interactive White Boards. Georgia, like any other country, has the opportunity to implement such tools and needs to negotiate their pros and cons and select the tools that help the modernisation of education.

5.2. Advantages of digital teaching tools

The above-named tools potentially contribute positively to the quality of teaching. Below follows a summary of the benefits these tools offer for Communicative Language Teaching.

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

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

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

Advantage #2. The teaching is more communicative and interactive

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

Advantage #3. More learner autonomy

With the aid of technology, students can make more choices and take on a

more active role in their own learning (Mize & Gibbons, 2000; Page, 2002; Waxmal et al., 2002). They can propose, create, and test independent learning experiences in a foreign language; for example, create their own blogs, post their comments, and make videos. In all of these tasks, language use plays an instrumental role; learners are immersed in purposeful communication, which contributes greatly to the improvement of their overall language proficiency (Ertmer et al., 2012: 430).

Advantage #4. Inexhaustible source of authentic materials

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

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

Advantage #5. Motivating and encouraging effect

Students are more interested in the type of learning which involves activities that reflect their daily life experiences. This way learners see the benefits of their learning practices and the direct application of the knowledge they are trying to gain, which is motivating and encouraging. Motivation is paramount to student success and one of the contributing factors to a more efficient learning process (Valentinm, 2013: 57; Engin, 2009: 1035). Krashen, in line with this, observes that learners with a high motivation do better in second language acquisition (1982: 31). Thus, the motivational role of technology use in Communicative Language Teaching has to be duly recognized.

Advantage #6. Relaxing learning atmosphere

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

Advantage #7. Integrated-skills development

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

More importantly, while working on such authentic, collaborative tasks, learners use their language skills for learning purposes: they read to learn, they listen to learn, they speak to learn - experiences that prepare them for life-long learning. This outcome goes far beyond the classroom boundaries and becomes an important life experience for language learners (Stroller, 2006: 26).

Technology-enhanced learning also provides a multisensory and multiformat environment (Pilter, 2006: 41) which greatly supports learners with different learning styles, preferences and abilities. According to Gardner (1983), in order to achieve optimal teaching outcomes, the learners' individual "intelligences" must never be overlooked. For instance, some learners remember things better when presented in graphic form, some prefer hearing things, while for others seeing things (e.g., words or pictures) move is more useful. The computer can satisfy the needs of many types of learners, making material available to the learner in the form of a text, a video clip or a movie format (Berk, 2009: 11).

Advantage #8. Technical benefits

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

5.3. Challenges brought about by digital teaching tools

Besides being useful ways of improving the classes, the same tools can pose serious challenges to both teachers and the schools. The most dominant ones are listed below.

Challenge #1. Expense of implementation

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

Challenge #2. Finding appropriate methodology

As the computer is only a tool and a resource, not a method that can be used in the process of teaching (Garret, 1991: 74), it is difficult to define beforehand whether it can be exploited to its fullest advantage and thus lead to satisfying results. Elaboration of an appropriate pedagogical approach and method is essential for making technology work and turning it into a useful teaching tool. According to Pilter (2006: 39), "[i]f schools add technology without providing adequate professional development, the only thing that will increase is their electric bill." This idea is shared by Salehi, according to whom the effectiveness of technology use in teaching largely depends on how and why it is applied (2012: 215). Bringing new machines into the classroom simply to seem innovative does not help teaching or learning; on the contrary, in case of misuse, the technology application in the teaching process might have a reverse effect, namely demotivating students, who might perceive their interpersonal connections and personal power as being reduced (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000: 14).

Also, it has been proved that short-term, one-time superficial teacher training programmes in using technology as an efficient teaching tool often turn out to have equally short-term results. More systematic supervision and support needs to be provided to teachers in order to cause a long-lasting effect on their methodological abilities (Ringstadd & Kelly, 2002).

Challenge #3. Keeping up with technological developments

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

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

Challenge #4. Technophobia

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

practice will be hard to achieve (Rozgiene et al., 2008: 32).

Challenge #5. Variation in computer skills

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

Challenge #6. Limited suitability of tools

It has been observed that using technology not only as the content of language learning but also as learning material and as a tool is especially efficient for more advanced language learners. The Internet, for example, offers authentic materials which can be exploited in language teaching. Naturally, the whole process of working on original texts, instant communications and digital correspondence might become a barrier for beginner language learners, who need more explicit, slower face-to-face contact to better understand things and build a linguistic basis. The technical level of students is therefore a factor, besides the cognitive linguistic factors.

Challenge #7. Psychological resistance

Learners' as well as teachers' conservative perceptions about efficient education methods and about how languages are learnt might lead to scepticism towards using technologies as an academic teaching tool (Warshauer, 2000: 24). This concerns was confirmed by the teachers participating in the study conducted by Ertmer et al. (2012: 423); teachers noted that the strongest barriers preventing them from using technology were their existing attitudes and beliefs toward technology as well as their current levels of knowledge and skills. Such resistance comes especially from the students and teachers who belong to instructional cultures where more conservative, teacher-centred methods of language instruction are applied. The study by Warschauer confirmed this.

According to Ertmer et al, to remedy the situation professional development efforts need to be redirected toward strategies for facilitating changes in teachers' attitudes and beliefs (2012: 423).

Challenge #8. Administrative repercussions

E-mailing, online communicating, and planning and tracking the learners' progress can be very time-consuming (Salehi, 2012: 215), and the fact that most administrators still count the actual time the teacher spends in the classroom to determine the workload might be a discouraging factor for educators and make them avoid using technology-enhanced teaching tools (Rizgiene, Medvedeva, Strakova, 2008: 30).

6. Recommendations

From the advantages and challenges described so far, the following recom-

mendations can be deduced. These are useful in particular for countries like Georgia, which are facing a plethora of educational choices already besides having to prepare for challenges which arise from the digital revolution.

Recommendation #1: Curb and control excessive enthusiasm

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

Recommendation #2: Make technology targeted and meaningful

Using innovative, modern tools of technology in teaching seems appealing and attractive. However, using new technologies has to always be serving a concrete academic purpose and this use must never be merely for the sake of introducing something different and innovative in the teaching routine. Technology use should not become an end in itself (Chapman,1998: 2). We must ensure that the teaching is driven by the pedagogy and supported by the technology (Laborda, 2008: 289).

What makes a difference is how you take advantage of the opportunities that new technologies offer for language teaching. As Jones put it, "It's not what it is, it's what you do with it that matters" (1986: 34). A similar attitude is voiced by an American instructor, during the experiment that Werschauer and Meskill conducted. The instructor summarizes his careful attitude towards technology in the language teaching: "It is not so much what I do with the technology, but what technology helps me get the students to do. That is what results in learning" (Werschauer & Meskill, 2000).

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

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

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

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

The teacher is there to do a number of things which require human intervention, such as performing a needs analysis and creating the learning syllabus. A computer may play a role in this, but decisions such as choosing a conversation topic, for example, need to be made by an experienced professional. Thus, it is important to separate the roles and differentiate between the contributions that teacher and technology might make in the process of teaching - the teacher dealing with more analytical, non-linear, or as Barrett and Sharma put it, "fuzzy" areas, and technologies supplementing more straightforward extra learning opportunities (2009: 3).

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

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

Changing the teaching paradigm that teachers are used to is never easy (Dooly & Masats, 2011: 43). Research shows that it is difficult to change teachers' established practices and beliefs, as they are based on their own learning experiences (Pajares, 1992). Thus, personal experiences are important determinants of how teachers think and what they do. Dooley and Masata contend that it is extremely important that teacher training programs incorporate many awareness-raising components about the significance and benefits of technology integration in the language teaching process. Moreover, it is important to expose teacher trainees to technology-enhanced experiences by including technology-based approaches in the teacher training. Teacher trainers need to practice what they preach and make the trainees observe directly the useful effects technology-enhanced teaching can have (Dooly & Masata, 2011: 44).

The point made above is further reinforced by Goldsby and Fazal (2000), who conclude that only those student-teachers who learn to use technology during their pre-service studies are likely to incorporate technology in their future classes (121).

Recommendation #5: Systematically and structurally support computer skills

A considerable amount of training and technical support must be provided by the school and by policy makers to help teachers acquire basic technical knowledge. This will help avoid the frustration and disruption technology use might cause (Rozgiene et al., 2008: 29). Knowing which websites, in-

teractive materials and useful computer programs to recommend to your learners, as well as knowing how to search the Web efficiently, use social networking and other information and communication tools - such as Skype, YouTube, Podcasts, to name a few - is part of the basic technology literacy that the teacher must possess. When these core skills are acquired, there are many ways they can be extended. At an advanced level, teachers may wish to learn how to further use these tools for creating online materials or podcasts, explore virtual learning environment, or video-conferencing facilities.

Recommendation #6: Provide methodology training

According to Dooly and Masats (2011), the use of technology is often met with reservation on the part of teachers as they do not know what the pedagogical application and implication of different forms of technology are (44). According to Mashira and Koehler, "a teacher who is able to negotiate the relationship between content, pedagogy, and technology develops a form of expertise greater than the knowledge of a disciplinary expert, a technology expert and an education" (2006: 1017).

Giunashvili (2009: 10) points out the importance of knowing the methods and pedagogic techniques of how technology can be applied in teaching and how to turn technology into a learning/teaching tool. In Georgia, this problem is attempted to be solved through specially organized teacher trainings, supported by the education policy makers (Ingorokva, 2011: 5).

Recommendation #7: Plan and build school infrastructure

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

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

7. Discussion

There has been a much more favourable environment for technology application in language teaching in Georgia since 2002. Before that time, even a cassette player was a luxury for a Georgian language teacher (Tsitsishvili, 2001), whereas now the majority of schools are connected to the Internet and have more technological opportunities than ever before. Nevertheless, the technology-enhanced teaching modernization process in Georgia is far from being completed. There are many schools, especially in non-central locations and regional parts of Georgia, which await much innovation.

Efforts have been made to develop computer literacy throughout the country, with the help of a project of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, in the framework of which the "Society of Computer Knowledge proliferation" was established. Together with the proliferation of computer literacy comes the need to be better at foreign languages, as, for a Georgian-speaking citizen, being an efficient computer user involves knowing a foreign language.

Language proficiency contributes greatly to being better at, for example, navigating the web. At the same time, having computer-based resources available provides a sea of opportunities for learning languages (Son, 2008: 34). So, language teaching and the proliferation of computer literacy go hand in hand and many efforts can be observed in both of these directions in Georgia. However, in present-day classrooms, technologies are still underused and the expertise and experience in applying technology-enhanced language teaching, infused with an appropriate pedagogic value, is still not in place.

8. Facing the Future

In the twenty-first century we have witnessed a change in foreign language teaching methodology – traditional Communicative Language Teaching is being enhanced with the intensive application of technology, which leads to the modernization of CLT and its better suitability to present-day communicative language needs. The difference with previous developments in the history of language teaching methods is that this time it is not the major principles or philosophy of how languages are learnt that changed, neither has one method been replaced by a dramatically different alternative (as in the case of the Grammar Translation Method being replaced by the Audio Lingual Method, for instance); what changed is the definition itself of what "communicative competence" means in this technology-dominated era. The concept of Communicative Competence broadened considerably to embrace the ability not only of face-to-face communication but also that of digital interaction.

According to Rainie & Horrigan (2005), web communication has become the new norm in people's way of life in the developed countries (59), and computer-mediated language can be regarded as "the community's linguistic norm" (Crystal, 2001: 41). A language educator's job is to reflect on these new norms - to explore their underpinnings, their contexts of operation, and their implications; to reframe and rethink our conceptions of language, communication, and even society. It is through this process of analysis and reflection that we can best decide how we can and should use technology in language learning and teaching (Kern, 2005: 183). Even though technology-integrated instruction is on the way up in Georgia, technology is not yet actively and comfortably used by Georgian language educators in their everyday teaching practices. It will be some time still before technology-enhanced Communicative Language Teaching becomes mainstream in Georgia. The biggest challenge for this country may not be the logistical and practical integration of technology but the reflection

thereon in order for long-term success to become a reality.

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