INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION

PhD PROGRAMME IN EDUCATION SCIENCES

Strategic Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language to Prepare Students for High-Stakes Examinations
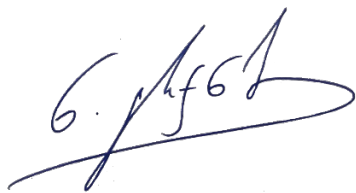
(A Case of Unified National Examinations in Georgia)

Meri Iobidze

Extended Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation in Education Sciences

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Scientific Supervisor: Nikoloz Parjanadze

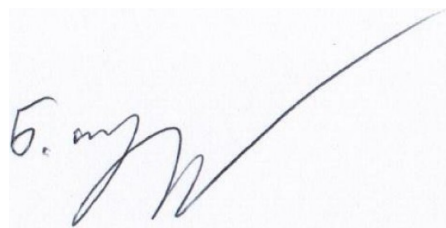Professor, Doctor at International Black Sea University

(supervisor's signature)

Experts (full name & academic title):

1. Prof. Dr. Ekaterine Pipia

2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariam Bandzeladze

Opponents (full name & academic title):

1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nino Uglava

2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nino Nijaradze

3. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tamar Mikeladze

Introduction

Today, the role of the English language cannot be underestimated in the field of education, economy, politics, culture, and these contexts also have a great influence over English shaping its status, as well as the way it is taught as a native tongue, second or foreign language.

Increasing demand on English language knowledge led many countries to introducing certain policies to support English language teaching (from now on ELT). Georgia is not an exception. One of such reforms considered introducing Unified National Exams (from now on UNEs) which determine students' place at university. Also, nearly all employers require internationally recognized certificates proving certain competency of the English language. Moreover, since Georgia was involved in Bologna process in 2005, the Georgian learners have been trying to continue their studies in other foreign universities most of which require high English language competency level. All the facts given above have promoted the desire of studying English and getting international certificates proving linguistic competence.

However, only passing an exam is not enough. Learners need high points as a guarantee to get a place in the Georgian and other foreign universities. Therefore, teaching students through effective strategies is very important. This way a learner gains certain skills and self-confidence that determine desirable results at the exams. All the facts given above led to introducing new teaching methods. However, shifting from old methods to new ones has been difficult for many teachers and schools to accept.

Unfortunately, the fact that since 2005, when the Unified National Exams were adopted, there is high rate of candidate failures in the exams (Geostat.ge, 2019; Naec.ge, 2019), makes it possible to claim that state approved teaching and learning approaches (through national curriculum) does not work well enough to get desirable results. There are many factors which could be the reason for candidate failure, however, teaching and learning methods can be one of the major factors. There have been many obstacles that made EFL teachers incapable of teaching students effectively. As the researcher's personal experience and observations during the conducted research showed some of the complications could have been made by   a large number of students in classes, few hours of instruction and in-class communication, insufficient communicative activities, inadequately equipped classrooms, authoritarian traditional teachers, leaners who are passive listeners as they are too shy to speak English in the classroom. One more important factor, which should also be taken into account, is the impact of the mother tongue on students' and some teachers' as it is used too much in the classroom. The teachers who followed

old methods lacked the understanding of the students' individual needs. Harr (2008) stated that "knowledge is constructed by learners as mentors provide support to enable the learners to make progress on their own" (pp. 12-13). Thus, the teachers have to provide the effective strategies which would lead to forming autonomous learners.

Research problem

As it was mentioned above, Georgia is involved in Bologna process, and to ensure that international standards are observed, there have been certain reforms in the field of education. The parliament has introduced amendments to various legislative acts regulating the education system in the country, including but not limited to, Law of Georgia on General Education, Law of Georgian on Higher Education Level (Muskhelishvili, 2019; Bregvadze, 2013). The reform in Georgia brought the promotion of the English. The curriculum was changed, consequently old course books and teaching methods were replaced by new up to date ones. The aims of the new curriculum required new approaches and teaching strategies [CITATION Nat19 \l 1033]. Many educational reforms are oriented on teachers as their competencies may be under question. Certain part of the reform is focused on teachers, making them change their previously approved attitudes. A teacher-centered model was changed into a learner-centered approach, but teachers still have leading roles in the development of learners' knowledge. In EFL classes students have become active listeners and presenters. However, old methods are still widely utilized, and this can be a major challenge leading to low performance on high stakes exams.

The introduction of the Unified National Exams led teachers and learners to pursuing short term learning objectives, which is passing the lowest threshold of the UNE. Statistical analysis provided by National Examination Centre (Naec.ge, 2019) prove that averagely students get points close to minimum competency level. They are not prepared for a real-life communication where they are to use the language, in this case English, meaningfully and with communicative purpose. Besides, as our research showed, many young people at schools do not possess certain strategies that could help them in reach their linguistic aims.

Research objectives

The purpose of this study is

- to examine the perceptions, attitudes and practices of the Georgian teachers and learners in the way of teaching and learning to be prepared for high-stakes exams;
- to identify the benefits as well as the downsides of metacognitive teaching and learning strategies.

The main objective of the research is to investigate whether using metacognitive strategies

- affects the students' performance positively
- boosts learners' motivation
- increases the positive attitude toward learning in English
- helps students manage their learning process and become autonomous learners

The main objective of the research was to identify all possible advantages and disadvantages of utilizing metacognitive strategies in reading, writing and listening comprehension in EFL. Whether it boosts performance and helps forming independent learners. Only three skills are discussed. Speaking skill is not reviewed as it is not included in the UNE.

Novelty

This study has novelty because

- it shows a new up-to-date approach towards teaching and learning;
- little research has been done in Georgia concerning the UNE. Previously, the content of the UNE was not discussed in accordance with the aims of national curriculum;
- few sources are provided for the Georgian teachers discussing usage of metacognitive strategies within the Georgian settings;
- in addition, the match between Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (from now on the CERF) and the Georgian National Curriculum aims is discussed.

Urgency

The research is significant for different reasons. Firstly, it investigates the reasons of low assessment of Georgian learners in PISA[1]. Besides, despite the fact that there is a body of research on utilizing metacognitive strategies effectively, there is very little research about the Georgian context. The teachers are trained and taught different activities, but they are very often at a loss how to teach the strategies to form autonomous learners. The dissertation can provide guidance for them. Moreover, it also focuses of learning strategies. Low achieving students are not employing effective strategies, or they are not using any strategies at all. This research can provide guidance for them as well.

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1 PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. Every three years it tests 15-year-old students from all over the world in reading, mathematics and science. The tests are designed to gauge how well the students master key subjects in order to be prepared for real-life situations in the adult world (http://www.oecd.org/pisa/)

Practical value

The study has a clear practical importance as it describes the specificity and importance of implementing effective teaching and learning strategies and classroom activities. The findings may positively impact teachers' classroom practices and, therefore, contribute to the improvement of the educational process in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. The practical value of the research is also determined by the fact that the dissertation is an up-to-date resource for teachers, especially for the Georgian teachers as it deals with the Georgian context. It will also be interesting for policy-makers, school authorities and learners as they can find important information about how to improve teaching and learning.

Theoretical value

The theoretical basis of the current research is:

- Three Circle Model [CITATION Kac \l 1033]
- Wheel Model (McArthur,1987)
- Theories about the communicative competence (Hymes, 1973; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Crowe, 2003)
- Ideas of communicative teaching and learning (Rogers, 2002; Richards & Renandya, 2002)
- Metacognitive strategies (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Wenden, 1998; Brown, 2007)
- Metacognitive Strategies and Self-efficacy (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Pajares, 2002)
- The role of planning, monitoring and evaluation (Cross & Paris, 1988; Brown, Armbruster & Baker, 1986).
- The role of metacognitive strategies in vocabulary acquisition (Gu, 2005; Schmitt, 2000).
- The role of metacognitive strategies in listening comprehension. (Steinberg, 2007; Vandergrift, 1997; Goss, 1982; Ferris, 1998).
- The role of metacognitive strategies in EFL writing. (Graham & Macaro, 2008; De la Paz, 1999),

Researchers state that metacognitively educated learners become judges of their own learning. And can identify weaknesses and strengths. Successful learners monitor their learning; they plan strategies, adjust effort appropriately, and evaluate the success of their ongoing efforts to understand (Brown, Armbruster, & Baker, 1986, p. 49). Accordingly, theoretical conceptual framework is shaped by our belief that forming an independent learner is the key to success in

the modern field of education in order to meet current demands of the knowledge-based society. Thus all the theories discussed in the dissertation shape a strong theoretical statement for the necessity of metacognitive strategies to support efficient teaching and learning.

Research questions

The research questions that guide the study are:

- Does metacognitive strategy training enhance EFL learners' reading, listening and writing skills?
- How can metacognitive strategies facilitate comprehension while reading, listening and writing in EFL?
- What strategies do teachers use in their efforts to facilitate EFL competence?
- What strategies do learners use while learning EFL?
- What strategies do learners use to handle comprehension?
- How can metacognitive strategies be taught most effectively?
- What is the impact of the use of metacognitive strategies in high-stakes exams over the test results?

Research hypotheses

The research tested the following hypothesis:

1. *Null hypothesis*: EFL learners using metacognitive strategies and learners who are not using metacognitive strategies show the same achievement in high-stakes exams.
2. *Alternative hypotheses*:

EFL learners using metacognitive strategies show higher achievement in high-stakes exams than the learners who are not using metacognitive strategies.

EFL learners using metacognitive strategies show lower achievement in high-stakes exams than the learners who are not using metacognitive strategies.

CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW ON STRATEGIES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR HIGH STAKES EXAMS

While discussing teaching English as a foreign language (from now on TEFL), the concept itself needs to be analyzed more closely. This concept is closely linked to Kachru (1985) who theorized the spread of English throughout the world and assigned EFL to outer circle. This

division is important as teaching and learning EFL differs from teaching and learning of English as a second language. (ESL)

Strategy awareness is crucial for teachers and students. Educational psychologists have long promoted the importance of metacognition for regulating and supporting student learning (Bain, 2012; Tomlinson, 2003).. Kuhn and Dean (2004) state that metacognition means that a learner possesses a toolkit of strategies, and in case of necessity an individual learner has the ability to choose the right tool, relevant strategy to deal with a specific problem in a specific context. Flavell (1979) defines that when it refers to metacognition, the process involves constant and active monitoring of cognition – cognitive processes occurring in a learner's brain. Being aware of one's own mistakes and the ability for self-correction is crucially important for effective and efficient learning[CITATION Bai12 \l 1033]. It is claimed that metacognitive teaching and learning helps learners' development and forms autonomous learners who despite the lack of complete grammar or lexical knowledge can involve themselves in communication.

When discussing reading skill development in connection with utilizing metacognitive strategies, it should be noted that given strategies are effective as they deal with regulation of cognition. According to Goodman (1970) there are two reading strategies top-down and bottom-up which can be used while conducting reading task. Top-down processing involves activating prior experience and identifying which information to retain. Bottom-up strategy involves identifying lexical units, morphemes, grammar cues to infer the meaning. Duke & Pearson (2002) favor following strategies: predicting, using think-alouds, using text structures, using visual models, summarizing and questioning. According to Schmitt (2000) there are two general approaches in vocabulary teaching: implicit and explicit. Implicit vocabulary teaching means that the word meaning is inferred from the context (Huckin & Coady, 1999).hich provides learners with richer sense of word's meaning and use. Also, incidental vocabulary teaching gradually improves learner's vocabulary and reading skills. Finally, incidental vocabulary teaching raises motivation.

Another complex skill which can be developed by utilizing metacognitive strategies is listening. Listening tasks should be chosen with great care so that they should be challenging, but also not discouraging learners (Hung, 1998). To develop listening skills in learners' metacognitive activities of planning, monitoring, and evaluating can be applied (Goh, 1997).

Top-down and bottom-up strategies should also be discussed in connection with listening comprehension. Many instructors favor top-down strategies as predicting, listing and comprehension questions are included in it (Birjandi, & Rahimi, 2012; Clement, 2007; Field,

2008). However, bottom-up strategies provide students with lexical, grammatical and pronunciation features which can also be helpful for better understanding of the listening task (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010.)

Writing skill which is one of the most challenging for learners can be improved by utilising metacognitive strategies (Rogers, & Graham, 2008; Kiuhara, Graham, & Hawkin, 2009). Different researchers give priorities to different strategies. A controlled practice is very important while conducting a task; while teacher actively involves in the process of writing (Webb, 2009; Porte, 1995). Another strategy facilitating writing skill development is free writing. Strategy suggested by De La Paz (1999) involves giving multiple free writing tasks to high school learners not correcting mistakes thoroughly.

Another strategy facilitating writing is process approach (Brown, 2001). Given strategy is oriented not on outcome but on the process of writing. Instructors who favour the process approach encourage learners to give a draft of the ideas and than expand it. Thus, the students are more motivated and encouraged to improve writing skills.

Graham (2008) and Cohen's (1998) suggest that teaching writing should involve direct teaching of the strategies, practicing and letting student choose the one they think is most effective in certain context.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH CONTEXT AND HIGH-STAKES EXAMS IN GEORGIA

During previous century, high rate of corruption involved bribery and nepotism in education. This issues got big deal of attention from society and was debated in the mass media. (UNDP, 2004). High rate of bribery was caused by the fact that there were two ways to obtain a university place. First, the student had to take private tuition from the lecturers involving in admission process. Second bribe the admission body. In both cases the students were provided with pre –arranged questions for the entrance exam. (Orkodashvili, 2010). Thus, there was no control over education which led to producing inadequate, poor quality education

After Georgia became a member of Bologna process, Georgian educational system changed significantly. According to the reform the applicants to higher education (HE) need to acquire high test scores in the Unified National Examinations (UNEs) to gain access to higher education institutions. Applicants to public as well as private universities are required to sit the UNEs. The exam points determine their grant ant and place both in public and state universities.

In recent years, test scores have come to dominate the discourse about schools and their accomplishments. High stakes exams are commonly provided to raise nation's competency in education. The Unified National Examinations are considered as high stakes exams. Low scores received at the exam prevents student from graduating from school or leads to not getting a place at university

The three main goals of the UNE are:

- Fight against corruption
- Equal opportunity for all social layers
- Meritocracy selection

Implementation of the UNEs created a more transparent testing system and decreased the rate of corruption in the academic system. Also the exams prompted the revision of secondary school study programs [CITATION EPP09 \l 1033]. Moreover, the requirement of UNEs made it obvious that new teaching methods were necessary. It led to forming teacher-training courses that would facilitate them upgrade their skills and meet new challenges

The test in English language on the Unified National Exams examines only a small part of the possible knowledge of the domain of knowledge. A foreign language implies having at least four main areas of competence: writing, reading, listening and speaking. UNEs examines only writing and reading competences and only part of them. The test checks a very limited volume of knowledge. It is quite irrelevant when during English language exam the entrants never have to say a word in an English.

After the comparison of the requirements of the National Curriculum and the format and requirements of the National Examinations was made by the researcher, it was clear that the problem is that the knowledge and skills examined by the Unified National Examinations are not close to the requirements of the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum provides broader requirements for a student. The researcher's opinion coincides with Ghvedashvili's (2019) who claims that in spite of the fact that some issues required by National curriculum are included in the exams, which mainly concerns reading and writing skills, the test format does not allow the entrants to reveal skills required by National curriculum [CITATION Ghv19 \l 1033]. These are students' social skills, creativity, wit, care for their peers, leadership and others.

It is reasonable to discuss if the Georgian National Curriculum has links with the worldwide accepted document and if curriculum goals coincide with the requirements which document demands from the learner. In Georgia, graduates from school and those wanting to get a place at

university should possess B1 level proficiency in all four skills. As it is obvious there are certain links with the Georgian National Curriculum and CEFR in terms of knowledge the B1 level student should possess.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

The main goal of the research as stated in the introduction was

1. to identify if/how metacognitive strategy training can facilitate reading, listening and writing comprehension in English as a foreign language;
2. to find out what strategies teachers use in their efforts to facilitate comprehension;
3. to learn about the strategies learners use to handle comprehension;
4. to find the ways to teach metacognitive strategies most effectively.

Research Methods

The research involved following methods

- literature review
- Experiment
- A pre-test, a while-test, post-test

- Statistical analysis of data obtained through the experiment
- Interviews with students and teachers
- Lesson observations
- Self-reflection
- Teacher training

The research was conducted in one of the Georgian public schools which is oriented on enriched and accelerated learning of physics and mathematics. As the reserch was focused on the strategies leading to high performance in the UNEs, the participants of the experiment were chosen from finishing grades: 11 and 12. Moreover, the public school was chosen as it had big number of students of different needs and abilities, which made the research challenging, but interesting.

The experiment lasted for three semesters. Two studies were conducted. One took place in 2016-2017 academic years and the second one- in 2017-2018 academic years. There were two (2) experimental (40 pupils: 20 12-graders and 20 11-graders) and one (1) control (20 pupils – 12-graders) groups in 2016-2017 academic year. Out of the two experimental groups, Group 1 consisted of 12-graders, and Group 2 – 11-graders. In the following 2017-2018 academic year there was some student mobility at school; thus, the researcher retained only 18 pupils in the experimental group (Experimental Group 2, which resumed to continue participation in the experiment in 2017-2018 academic year). As for the control group, one of

the 12-grade groups was randomly selected – the ones who did not participate in the experiment in the previous year. The group consisted of 19 pupils. All three groups which initially joined the experiment in 2016-2017 academic year, and one control group which was involved in the study in 2017-2018 academic year, were mixed ability groups. Cambridge A2 Key English Test for Schools[2] (with 11-graders in the study of the academic year 2016-2017) and B1 Preliminary Tests for Schools[3] (with 12-graders in the study of the academic years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018) were used as a pre-, while- and post-tests to ensure a higher validity and reliability of the testing process as well as the accuracy of the research outcomes.

The students worked on metacognitive strategies. The experimental group received explicit instruction on metacognitive strategies beginning from the first day of the course.

Interviews were conducted with the teachers who worked in the public school where experiment was conducted. The number of the teachers involved were in the research process was only three as they taught 11 and 12 graders. Certain teachers taught experimental and control groups for 2 years. The interview was conducted in English and was recorded by the permission of the interviewees. The interview was conducted prior to experiment in order to identify several issues.

Group interviews were conducted with the students prior to the experiment to identify their attitudes and experience concerting learning EFL. The interview was conducted in their native language, Georgian. The native language was used to eliminate the problem of misinterpreting or misunderstanding of the questions given.

Also, prior to the experiment the teacher training was conducted where using meta-cognitive strategies was promoted. The presentation was made in PowerPoint and was conducted in the same school were experiment took place. The presentation contained the definition of metacognitive strategies and the importance of their usage. The teachers were encouraged to teach students strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluating. They were advised to teach students how to think and encourage them to self-reflect. In this case they would be able to deal with different reading tasks independently.

The workshop was conducted during training. Different activities were linked to certain metacognitive strategies. The researcher presented material from Unified National Exam papers of the English language. The teachers assigned the certain strategies to each of them and did modelling for each other. Certain tasks were completed by the teachers themselves and afterwards self-reflections were made. This way they identified how successful the chosen strategy was in terms of fulfilling the task. The last stage of the training was discussion of advantages and advantages of utilizing metacognitive strategies in the class settings. Many meaningful ideas were generated.

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2 Cambridge University Press. (2014). *Key English Test for Schools*. Cambridge. UCLES.
3 Cambridge University Press. (2014). *Preliminary English Tests for Schools*. Cambridge: UCLES.

Further, experimental group members were taught explicitly on how to monitor their reading, writing and listening process, summarize, question, clarify, and draw inferences. The training procedure was performed basically in English. However, the students were encouraged to use their native language in case of necessity.

The researcher taught the experimental group and conducted action research. Self-reflection helped to identify the most effective strategies that led learners to better comprehension.

After the experiment group interview was conducted with students to find out their attitudes towards English language learning and changes in their learning process. The interview was conducted in Georgian.

Experiment results

In order to observe all the developments throughout the experiment, the tables below provide holistic overview of the pupils' achievement throughout the experiment.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
UNEs Sample Test	19	69.21	15.870	.045	.524	-1.523	1.014
Valid N (listwise)	19						

Table 1 Study 1 - Control Group UNEs Sample Test Results

Table 1 shows 2016-2017 academic year CG results of the UNEs sample test which they wrote as an additional post-test after the experiment. The mean of the group is 69 points out of 100. Standard deviation is quite high 15.88, but with small-size groups this may happen because even one outlier can increase the rate of standard deviation. Though skewness of the test results stayed within an acceptable range (+1/-1), kurtosis is over -1 (-1.523) which means that the CG test results are slightly scattered and not normally distributed.
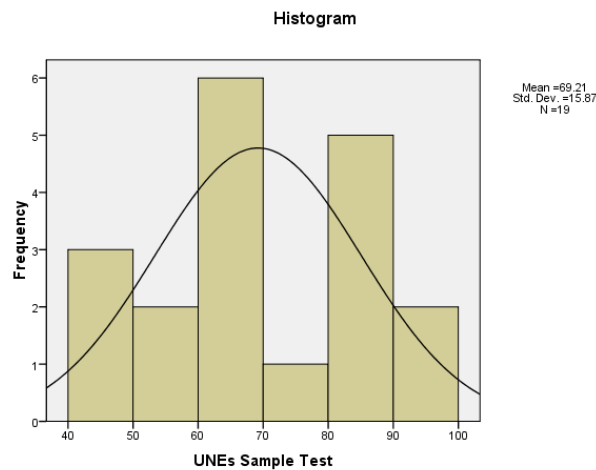
Figure 1 Study 1 - Control Group UNEs Sample Test Normality Test Results

Thus, figure 1 clearly shows that CG test results are acceptable in terms of skewness, but kurtosis shows that there are many outliers in the group, thus there is no homogeneity in the test results.

It was interesting to observe the EG1 results in the UNEs sample test.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
UNEs Sample Test	19	79.84	15.115	-.788	.524	.016	1.014
Valid N (listwise)	19						

Table 2 Study 1 Experimental Group1 UNEs Sample Test Results

As the table 2 shows, the EG1 showed much better results in the UNEs sample test, as the mean of the group was almost 80 (79.84) out of 100 as compared to 69.21 of the CG test results. As for the skewness is stays within statistically acceptable range, and kurtosis is almost within the acceptable range. Thus, the EG1 performance allowed to conclude that the intervention introduced by the research was effective. Table 3 compares and summarises Study 1 CG and EG1 results in the UNEs sample test. The researcher did not discuss the UNEs sample test results for the EG2 here, as the EG2 were 11-graders. Their test results in the UNEs sample test from the study 1 were compared to their UNEs test results in the study 2 to show the development in their case.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
UNEs Sample Test - EG1	19	79.8421	15.11535	-.788	.524	.016	1.014
UNEs Sample Test - CG	19	69.2105	15.86953	.045	.524	-1.523	1.014
Valid N (listwise)	18						

Table 3 Study 1 - CG and EG1 UNEs Test Results Compared

Study 2 results were also summarised to observe the pupils' performance throughout the experiment.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
UNEs Sample Test 1 - EG	18	76.94	9.078	-.262	.536	-.836	1.038
UNEs Sample Test 2 - EG	17	89.35	5.873	-1.151	.550	1.089	1.063
UNEs Sample Test 1 -CG	17	70.18	24.143	-.936	.550	.101	1.063
UNEs Sample Test 2 -CG	18	77.39	17.085	-1.195	.536	2.194	1.038
Valid N (listwise)	14						

Table 4 Study 2 UNEs Test Results for CG and EG Compared

Table 4 shows the dynamics of the Study 2. EG showed a much better performance in the UNEs sample tests in the Study 2; the value added from the test 1 to the test 2 is higher for the EG as compared to the CG; the mean of the EG test 1 was 76.94 and 70.18 for the EG out of 100 points. The mean of the test 2 for the EG was 89.35 and 77.39 for the EG group; accordingly, the mean results of the tests for the EG were much better. As for statistical significance, the EG showed better results in this respect as well. Skewness and kurtosis for the EG mostly stayed within the acceptable range; the CG also showed good performance in this respect, however, the achievement of the EG was much higher.

In order to better visualize overall research scenario, the researcher developed figures to summarise the test results throughout the whole experiment.

Study 1 - Control and Experimental Groups Pre-, While- and Post-Test Results (Comparison of Means)
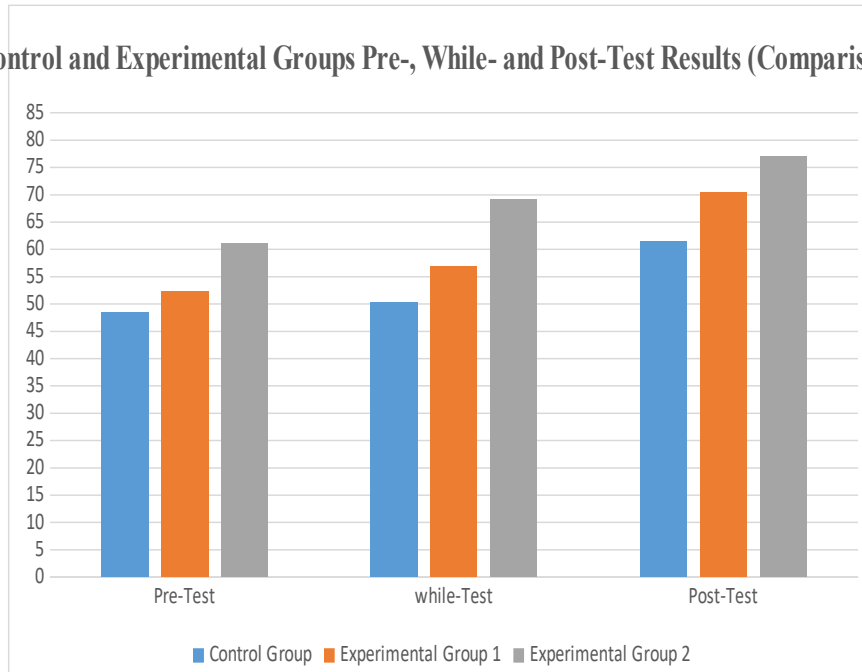
Figure 2 Study 1- CG, EG1 and EG2 Pre-, While- and Post-Test Results

As figure 2 shows, all three groups showed growth in test achievement, however, it should be noted here that the EG2 test results were provided here to observe the dynamics of the development; however, their test results are not comparable to the CG and EG1 test results as Cambridge KET (A2) tests were used with the EG2 and Cambridge PET (B1) with the CG and EG2. Thus, the CG and EG1 test results are to be compared in this case.

Study 2 - Control and Experimental Groups Pre-, While- and Post-Test Results (Comparison of Means)
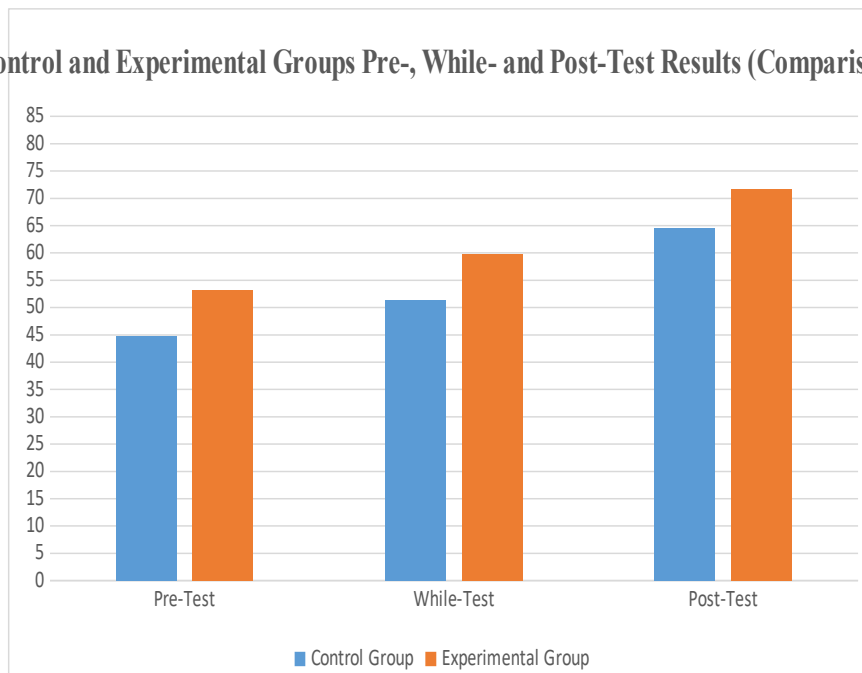
Figure 3 Study 2 - CG and EG Pre-, While- and Post-Test Results

Figure 3 shows the CG and EG test results development in the Study 2; though both groups show improvement, the value added of the EG is much higher (see table 30 for the comparison), which once again, gives grounds to state that the intervention did prove effective throughout the whole experiment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching metacognitive skills is a valuable use of instructional time for EFL teachers. When learners reflect upon their learning strategies, they become better prepared to make conscious decisions about what they can do to improve their learning. Strong metacognitive skills empower language learners. The study revealed a strong positive relationship between reading performance of learners and their level of metacognitive awareness. The experimental group learners employed metacognitive strategies more consciously, more purposefully.

Developing metacognitive skills provides a key to learners to perceive their own learning as active and not passive. Therefore, the crucial role of metacognition in successful learning clarifies how students must be taught, use metacognitive control, and apply their cognitive resource in a better way. The inferences that can be drawn from the reviewed literature in terms of studies related to reading strategies is that the intervention of teaching metacognitive strategies has advantages for EFL learners. One of the keys to develop learners' reading comprehension in the target language is to learn what strategies are, when and how to apply them, and. more importantly, how to evaluate their use of these strategies. In the process of learning, instructors attempt not only to engage learners, but also to encourage them to be active in this process

As for recommendations, students should definitely be taught strategies of reading. Students need to be informed about the steps they have to take before, during and after a reading activity, and then they need to practice the recommended strategies. Students should be informed about how to monitor their reading activity and how to prepare an evaluation plan after the reading activity. They should be guided in preparing a reflective diary and in the questioning of themselves. Students should be taught the steps to be taken and the strategies to be adopted in guessing the end of a text and finding its main idea.

A greater number of long-term studies should be held on learning a foreign language, problem-solving and reading comprehension, which is in those areas where metacognitive strategies are used efficiently, and measures aimed at the implementation of those strategies should be developed.

1. English language has become a key to career success. Consequently, EFL teaching and learning got big amount of attention. Learners wishing to get high education have to pass UNE. Moreover, young people who want to access better jobs need to prove their English language competence level by internationally recognized certificates. Knowledge of English language is a necessity for those who want to pass high stakes exams.

2. Lesson observations showed that the teachers use out of date methods. The most widespread method that was used during teaching was GMT which was stated to be less time consuming and most teachers favored it as the meaning of the word was given directly to the students. Consequently, misunderstanding of the word meaning would not take place. However, the test results revealed challenges of word usage. The students were provided only one specific meaning of the word and thus, they were unable to utilize the same word in different context.

3. Lack of technological resources decrease learners' motivation and the lessons become dull. As the school was public, funded by states, there was not enough technological devices. Lack of possibility to use technological devices led to rare practice of different skills, especially listening. Moreover, all lessons were the same and students found them boring and uninteresting.

4. Learners take private tuition as there is a lack of trust in schools and teachers. Although teachers had passed teachers' certification exams held by the Ministry of Education and Science, the trust in them was still low. Reasons of low trust were following: firstly, the teachers used old methods which were conspicuous to the learners. Secondly, much relied on Unified National Exams and parents and students could not risk relying only on the knowledge provided by school. Thirdly, some parents believed that tuition was necessary even if the learner and school teacher assumed that certain student did not need any extra classes.

5. The lack of academic hours and big number of learners in the class decrease the quality of teaching and learning. During the teacher training it was revealed that some teachers were aware of modern teaching strategies, however they could not utilize them in classroom setting as they had very few academic hours and big material to cover. Besides, it was more difficult to deal with mixed ability classes with many students. Moreover, another challenge was attendance of the students. They missed many classes which also hindered their success and teachers were also demotivated.

6. Both teachers and students are oriented on passing exams. They do not teach and learn for the future usage of the language. After introducing UNEs school teachers and students became focused on passing them successfully as learners' future career depended on them. As only three skills: reading, writing and listening were tested at the exams, educators and learners worked mostly on given skills. They became oriented on short term results- getting satisfactory points at UNE. However, during their studies at universities and participating in international educational events they faced communicative challenges.

7. Students who use metacognitive strategies have better results in reading, writing and listening. Experimental group members showed much better results during experiment compared to control group members. Results proved that though there was improvement in all groups, but

experimental group was more successful, and the points were higher. Moreover, utilizing metacognitive strategies helped low achievers become more proficient in English.

8. The learners who are able to regulate their learning have higher motivation and self-confidence. As the students practiced metacognitive strategies and mastered the strategies of planning, editing and reflecting, they became more confident about their learning. Self-reflection helped them in identifying their weak and strong points as well as finding the strategies that best suited them. Self-assurance led to raising motivation. As the learning process became interesting and comprehension became achievable for them, they were eager to do more learning.

9. Their attitude towards learning in English is positive. The raise of motivation and self-confidence which was promoted by the use of metacognitive strategies changed students' attitude towards English language learning. This mostly concerns low achievers. As they saw progress in their attempts to acquire knowledge of the English language, their attitudes became more positive and the process of learning was not frustrating for them.

10. The students with high usage of metacognitive strategies can handle unknown contexts and identify appropriate strategies for certain tasks. Constant practicing of metacognitive strategies assisted students in becoming autonomous learners, they were able to use the strategies not only in certain specific context but also applying them to other tasks. This led them to successful comprehension.

11. It is recommended to conduct the similar study in more general setting and involve more teaches. In addition, the study did not cover private schools. It is recommended to conduct the research in private schools in order to compare the outcomes of the private and public schools.

Major Research Findings of the Dissertation Are Presented in the Following Publications:

1. Iobidze, M. (2017). Effective strategies raise writing competence of high school learners. *IRCELT 2017 Conference: 7th International Research Conference on Education, Language and Literature*. Tbilisi, International Black Sea University, vol. 2, p. 545-552.

2. Iobidze, M., (2018). The impact of metacognitive instruction on high school learners' listening comprehension. *The Scientific Journal Association* 1901 SEPIKE, (21), p. 24-28.

3. Iobidze, M. (2018). Appropriateness of ability grouping in English as a foreign language in Georgia. *IRCELT 2018 Conference: 8th International Research Conference on*

Education, Language and Literature. Tbilisi, International Black Sea University, vol. 2, p. 318-322.

4. Iobidze, M. (2019). Effective metacognitive strategies to boost English as a foreign language reading comprehension**.** *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region*, 4(2), p. 116-137.

5. Iobidze, M. (2019). Using metacognitive strategies to overcome challenges in essay writing (Case of High School Students of Georgia). In *Modern Trends in Education: Perspectives for Reform Initiatives in Georgia* Saarbrücken: LAMBERT Academic Publishing. p. 75–85.