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Studies on English Language Teaching in Georgia: A Literature Review (2016-2023)

Abstract

Over the past three decades, English has become the most popular foreign language taught in Georgia. This shift has been driven by various factors, including globalization, political changes in the country, the evolution of teaching methodologies from traditional grammar-translation methods to more dynamic communicative language learning, the emergence of international schools, etc. Additionally, the involvement of native English speakers in teaching, the establishment of teacher certification programs, and advancements in technology have contributed to the growing interest in English language education in Georgia. However, there are relatively few literature reviews on research trends and studies conducted in English language teaching. This literature review analyzes empirical studies published in English in peer-reviewed journals from 2016 to 2023. The review examines the objectives of these studies, the participants involved, the research methods used, the findings reported, and the identified gaps. A comprehensive search was conducted in academic databases, with inclusion criteria requiring the studies to be in English, peer-reviewed, and focused on English language teaching in Georgia published between 2016 and 2023. Thirteen papers met these criteria and were included in the review. The analysis provides insights into the current state of English language education in Georgia, highlights the progress made, and identifies areas needing further research and development.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, English as a Foreign language, EFL in Georgia, Literature review

Introduction

The teaching and learning of English in Georgia has undergone significant changes in recent years, driven by a growing recognition of the importance of English language proficiency for social, economic, and political integration into the global community. As the country strives to align its education system with international standards, particularly after joining the Council of Europe and adopting the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), understanding the current state of English language education is crucial.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 prompted a shift in language education in Georgia, emphasizing the need to learn foreign languages, especially English besides Russian. Private institutions

led initial reforms, introducing British-published coursebooks and communicative teaching methods. However, public schools struggled to adapt due to resource limitations and the lingering influence of Soviet practices. The introduction of the CEFR in 2001 and education reforms after the 2003 Rose Revolution emphasized aligning with European standards.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education developed a National Curriculum for Foreign Languages (NCFL) based on Communicative Language Teaching, later finalized in 2011. English gained prominence, becoming compulsory from first grade in 2009. The Teach and Learn with Georgia (TLG) program, launched in 2010, recruited native English-speaking teachers to enhance language teaching, promoting improvements in methodologies. Despite TLG's suspension in 2012, it had positive effects on local teacher development (Edisherashvili, 2014; Shaverdashvili & Chkhikvadze, 2022).

Efforts to improve teacher preparation included professional standards, mandatory certification, and training programs supported by organizations like ETAG and the British Council. The Cambridge-administered CELTA course became available in 2010, further supporting English language teaching (ELT) development. The government also prioritized integrating technology in education, such as providing mini laptops to first-graders and establishing high-tech classrooms. Challenges remain in teacher training and resource availability, but efforts from both governmental and non-governmental organizations continue to transition from traditional Soviet-era methods to a communicative approach, supporting Georgia's integration into the global community (Shaverdashvili et al., 2014; Edisherashvili, 2014; Shaverdashvili & Chkhikvadze, 2022).

However, along with these developments, there is a lack of scientific studies on EFL, and the field experiences a shortage of empirical studies and literature reviews that provide an overview of the advancements. Thus, this literature review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of empirical studies on English language teaching in Georgia published in peer-reviewed journals from 2016 to 2023. By examining the objectives, participants, methodologies, findings, and gaps in these studies, this review seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and progress in English language education in Georgia. The following questions guided our research:

RQ1: What pedagogical or foreign language aspects have been researched in English teaching in Georgia between 2016-2023?

RQ2: What were the research methods and findings?

The findings of this literature review provides insights into the current landscape of English language education in Georgia, highlighting both the progress achieved and the areas that require further research and development. Understanding these aspects is essential for policymakers, teachers, and researchers working towards enhancing the quality of English language teaching in Georgia.

Methodology

For the literature review, criteria for article eligibility were defined, including language (English), relevance to foreign language learning and teaching in Georgia, inclusion of empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods), publication within the last seven years (2016–2023), and appearance in peer-reviewed, open-access scientific journals.

Exclusion criteria included various types of studies, such as descriptive papers, position papers/conference papers, studies solely involving theoretical analysis, and studies published in the Georgian language.

A systematic search of the Scopus and Google Scholar databases was conducted between March and May 2024. Keywords and search strings included terms like 'Learning English,' 'Teaching English,' 'English language teaching,' and 'Georgia' or 'Georgian.' Additionally, the Journal of the Black Sea Education, a peer-reviewed international regional journal (with double-blind refereeing by international reviewers to ensure academic integrity), was purposefully scrutinized for relevant studies published on EFL in Georgia. In total, 13 studies were identified that matched the inclusion criteria.

Data extraction process consisted of specific information extracted from each included study: publication year, school level, study participants, target foreign language, language level, utilized AI tool, theoretical frameworks, research methods, key findings, and challenges.

Results

The review includes studies spanning from 2016 to 2023. From 2016 to 2023, a total of 13 studies were conducted: 2 papers in 2023, 1 in 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, and 2018; 3 studies in both 2017 and 2016.

Table 1 Participants in the studies

Studies	Participant Group	Number of Participants	Age Range	Proficiency Level (CEFR)	Context	Gender Distribution
Merkviladze (2023)	EFL teachers	61	20-61+	N/A	private and public universitie	N/A
Pachuashvili (2023)	Undergraduate Students	30	N/A	B2	Private university, English Philology freshmen	93% female
Sabanashvili&Garibashvili (2022)	Adult Language Learners	58	20–40	Intermediate	National Defense Academy, military context	62% male, 38% female

Doghonadze et al., (2021)	Higher Education Teachers and Students	466 (360 students, 46 teachers)	N/A	Mixed	EFL teaching/learning, higher education (Georgia)	N/A
Vardidze (2020)	6th-Grade Students	52	N/A	Intermediate	Public school, experimental/control groups	Fairly balanced
Iobidze (2019)	Public School Students	60	N/A	B1	Public school, experimental/control groups	N/A
Kumsiashvili (2018)	Teachers and Students (Private/Public Schools)	142 (59 teachers, 83 students)	N/A	Mixed	10th and 11th graders, experimental/control groups	N/A
Mesiridze & Tvalchrelidze (2017)	Master's Program Students	12	N/A	Postgraduate	International Black Sea University, Higher Ed Administration	N/A
Gureshidze (2017)	Freshmen Students	60	18–20	B1	Various faculties, International Black Sea University	N/A
Rachvelishvili (2017)	Second-Year University Students & High School Learners	399 (308 university students, 86 school students)	N/A	Mixed	Ilia State University, 10th-11th graders (private/public schools)	233 female, 131 male
Tskhvitava (2016)	Agriculture University Students (First/Second-Year)	107	17–21	N/A	Agriculture University, Bachelor programs	N/A
Goctu (2016)	Freshmen English Philology Students	42	18–20	A2-B2	English Philology freshmen	N/A
Chkotua & Tarashvili (2016)	High School Students	50	N/A	N/A	Attitudes towards English learning	N/A

The participants in the studies span a wide range of age groups, from 6th-grade students to university undergraduates, master's students, and adult learners. Overall, 977 university/college students, 331 school students and 166 teachers participated in the studies. Most participants have intermediate (B1-B2) English proficiency, though some groups range from A2 to B2. The age of participants varies from young adolescents to adults in their 40s. Educational contexts include public and

private schools, universities, and specialized institutions such as the National Defense Academy (See table 1).

RQ1: What pedagogical or foreign language aspects have been researched in English teaching in Georgia between 2016-2023?

The goals of the studies focus on various aspects of EFL teaching and learning. The recent study focused on the applicability of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at Georgian universities. One study explores students' perceptions of screencast feedback, examining its benefits and challenges (Pachuashvili, 2023). Another investigates the impact of teaching collocations on adult language learners specializing in military English (Sabanashvili & Garibashvili, 2022). University students' experiences with face-to-face, hybrid, and online EFL teaching between 2019 and 2021 are also examined (Doghonadze et al., 2021). Vardidze's (2020) study on teaching polysemous vocabulary aims to identify effective methods for young learners, emphasizing the reduction of memorization burdens through semantic relations. The significance of metacognitive strategies for reading comprehension is highlighted in another study, while the role of the predicting strategy in improving Georgian high school students' reading comprehension is also explored (Iobidze, 2019; Kumsiashvili, 2018). Autonomous learning is studied through the use of self, peer, and co-assessment in higher education, particularly with MA students (Mesiridze & Tvalchrelidze, 2017). Another investigation looks at the impact of teaching English without textbooks on language achievements (Gureshidze, 2017). The motivational role of achievement goals in English learning and their connection to students' progress is also addressed (Rachvelishvili, 2017; Chkotua & Tarashvili, 2016). In an ESP context, students' attitudes toward textbook-based and teacher-provided vocabulary learning methods are studied, alongside their awareness of vocabulary strategies at an agriculture university (Tskhvitava, 2016). Additionally, the importance of reading for pleasure in improving reading comprehension is explored, as well as the motivation and attitudes of Georgian 10th graders toward language learning and classroom reading (Goctu, 2016; Chkotua & Tarashvili, 2016).

The research trend in these studies reflects a strong focus on enhancing language learning through innovative methods, technology, and cognitive strategies (See table 2).

Table 2 Aims of the studies

Study Topic	Goal

Applicability of NLP in EFL Classes (Merkviladze, 2023)	Explore the use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in EFL instruction and assess teachers' awareness, readiness, and attitudes toward using NLP techniques to reduce speaking anxiety among university students.
EFL Students' Perceptions of Screencast Feedback (Pachuashvili, 2023)	Explore students' views on using screencast video feedback, its benefits, and challenges
Impact of Teaching Collocations (Sabanashvili & Garibashvili, 2022)	Investigate how teaching collocations affects the language competence of adult learners in military English
Experience of Face-to-face, Hybrid, and Online EFL Teaching (Doghonadze et al., 2021)	Study university students' experiences with face-to-face, hybrid, and online EFL teaching (2019-2021)
Teaching Polysemous Vocabulary (Vardidze, 2020)	Identify effective methods for teaching polysemous vocabulary to young learners, reducing memorization burdens.
Metacognitive Strategies in Reading (Iobidze, 2019)	Identify the significance of metacognitive strategies for successful reading comprehension and task completion
Predicting as a Reading Strategy (Kumsiashvili, 2018)	Determine the awareness and impact of the predicting strategy on Georgian high school students' reading comprehension.
Autonomous Learning through Self, Peer, and Co-Assessment (Mesiridze & Tvalchrelide, 2017)	Explore how self, peer, and co-assessment promote autonomous learning, particularly for MA students
EFL Classrooms without Textbooks (Gureshidze, 2017)	Understand the impact of teaching English without textbooks on learners' language achievements.
Achievement Goals in English Learning (Rachvelishvili, 2017)	Identify the motivational role of achievement goals in learning English and their connection to learning progress.
Vocabulary Learning in ESP Courses (Tskhvitava, 2016)	Investigate students' attitudes toward vocabulary learning methods in ESP courses, and their strategy preferences
Reading for Pleasure (Goctu, 2016)	Examine the importance and impact of reading for pleasure on reading comprehension
Motivation and Attitudes toward Reading in 10th Graders (Chkotua & Tarashvili, 2016)	Explore the motivation and attitudes of Georgian 10th-grade students towards language learning and reading

The dominant research purposes in the summarized aims focus on exploring perceptions, assessing effectiveness, and investigating strategies in English language learning and teaching. Key themes include:

Exploring perceptions- Several studies aim to understand students' and teachers' perceptions of various educational tools, strategies, and environments, such as EFL teachers' perceptions and awareness of NLP techniques(Merkviladze, 2023), screencast video feedback (Pachuashvili, 2023), and vocabulary learning methods (Sabanashvili & Garibashvili, 2022).

Evaluating effectiveness - Some studies seek to measure the impact of specific teaching methods or interventions. These include the effectiveness of polysemous vocabulary teaching (Vardidze, 2020), reading strategies (e.g., predicting and previewing) (Kumsiashvili, 2018), and English language teaching without textbooks (Gureshidze, 2017).

Investigating strategies - There is a focus on identifying and evaluating learning strategies, such as metacognitive strategies in reading (Iobidze, 2019), methods for teaching polysemous vocabulary (Vardidze, 2020), and strategies for improving reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

Assessing motivation and *autonomous learning*- Some studies aim to examine motivational factors in language learning, such as achievement goals and attitudes toward learning English (Rachvelishvili, 2017; Chkotua & Tarashvili, 2016), the importance of self-, peer-, and co-assessment in enhancing higher education quality and promoting autonomous learning (Mesiridze & Tvalchrelidze, 2017).

RQ2: What were the research methods and findings?

Research methods in the studies

The studies employed various research methods to investigate different aspects of English language teaching and learning. Pachuashvili (2023) focused on screencast video feedback, utilizing action research to enhance teaching practices by gathering students' perceptions through an online questionnaire, which emphasized their overall experiences, advantages, and technical issues. Sabanashvili & Garibashvili (2022), Merkviladze (2023), Rachvelishvili (2017), Mesiridze & Tvalchrelidze (2017), Chkotua & Tarashvili (2016) used a quantitative approach with a questionnaire survey to collect and analyze data. A general quantitative method was applied across several studies for objective assessment of teaching and learning situations. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach combined surveys and quasi-experiments to explore both qualitative and quantitative data. One study conducted a quantitative experiment on achievement, collecting data on learners' successes and failures (Rachvelishvili, 2017). Another focused on awareness of pre-viewing and prediction reading strategies, utilizing online and paper-based surveys alongside pre-, while-, and post-tests to evaluate participants' reading skills over two months. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a month-long experiment, survey, and interviews, was also employed in some research. The Achievement and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was utilized in one study, which included a close-ended questionnaire and the Achievement Goal Questionnaire (AGQ) to assess learners' attitudes, motivation, and goals in learning English, rated on a 1 to 7 scale (Rachvelishvili, 2017). A quantitative approach was adopted in another study on ESP vocabulary learning, using a questionnaire to measure students' perceptions of vocabulary

learning difficulties and strategies (Tskhvitava, 2016). Finally, a quasi-experimental method was applied in research involving pre-test and post-test assessments across two groups, while several studies primarily utilized surveys as a quantitative data collection method.

The *quantitative* research method is dominant across the studies. Most of the studies relied heavily on questionnaires**,** surveys**,** and experimental designs (such as pre-tests and post-tests) to collect and analyze data. Several studies also used quantitative approaches to objectively measure outcomes such as student perceptions, language achievement, and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Even in studies that employed mixed methods, the quantitative aspect was emphasized for statistical analysis and objective assessment.

Findings in the studies

The findings from the studies reveal several key insights into English language learning and teaching. Merkviladze's (2023) study indicated that teachers possess a basic understanding of NLP techniques and apply them in English as a Foreign Language classrooms. The majority of teachers identified several commonly used NLP tools, including Rapport, Modeling, and Visualization. Students reported that screencast video feedback was clear, beneficial, and engaging, although approximately 50% found it time-consuming. They valued the personalized nature of the feedback, which aided them in revising their assignments (Pachuashvili, 2023). At the Academy of Defense, adult learners pursuing English for career development and further education, despite being at a B2 level, struggled with collocations. They believed that explicit instruction in collocations could enhance their language skills and communication abilities (Sabanashvili & Garibashvili, 2022). Interestingly, the shift to online teaching during the pandemic did not diminish learning quality at Georgian universities; however, both students and teachers faced challenges related to engagement and feelings of loneliness, highlighting the need for better support in fully online settings (Doghonadze et al., 2021).

An innovative Similarity-Based Approach for vocabulary instruction proved to be more effective for long-term retention compared to traditional memorization techniques. Furthermore, a strong positive relationship was identified between learners' reading performance and their level of metacognitive awareness, indicating that students who consciously utilized metacognitive strategies performed better (Iobidze, 2019). The research also pointed out that reading strategies, such as predicting, are seldom taught, and many teachers lack awareness of these strategies, underscoring the need for training and resources (Kumsiashvili, 2018).

In terms of assessment methods, self-, peer-, and co-assessment practices are not widely adopted in Georgian higher education due to traditional teacher-centered approaches, although practical

experience could improve attitudes toward these assessment types (Mesiridze & Tvalchrelidze, 2017). Teaching EFL without textbooks demonstrated rapid improvements in students' language proficiency, boosting their self-confidence and motivation (Gureshidze, 2017). Additionally, different achievement goal orientations—mastery versus performance—were linked to students' motivation and attitudes toward language learning, with high-achieving students favoring a mastery-oriented approach (Rachvelishvili, 2017; Chkotua & Tarashvili, 2016). At the Agricultural University, students expressed a need for a combination of general, academic, and specialized English vocabulary, along with a call for improved vocabulary memorization strategies (Tskhvitava, 2016). Lastly, reading for pleasure was found to have a measurable positive impact on language acquisition, yielding more significant improvements than intensive reading, while high school students exhibited a blend of integrative and instrumental motivation in their language learning approaches (Goctu, 2016; Chkotua & Tarashvili, 2016).

While there are notable positive reactions to innovative teaching methods and tools, significant challenges remain, particularly in the areas of time management, vocabulary learning, and adapting to new teaching formats. Overall, the findings suggest a positive trend towards adopting new methods and tools in education, but also indicate a need for ongoing support and improvement in certain areas.

Limitations of the studies

Among the 13 studies reviewed, six explicitly report limitations that may affect the reliability of their findings. A common limitation noted across several studies is the small sample size, with some research involving only two groups and as few as 30 or 42 participants, which raises concerns about the representativeness of the broader population of EFL students in Georgia. Additionally, the limited geographic scope of some studies, which focused on participants from a single school or university, restricts the generalizability of the results to other regions or institutions. At least one study pointed out its short duration, having been conducted at only one school, indicating that larger and longer studies are necessary to achieve more conclusive results. Furthermore, many studies acknowledged the need for further research on a larger scale to validate their findings and draw more comprehensive conclusions. In general, these studies acknowledge that while their findings are valuable, the small scale and specific contexts limit the broader applicability of the results, and future research is necessary to strengthen the evidence.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review provides an overview of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Georgia from 2016 to 2023, highlighting both advancements and challenges within the field. The findings

from the reviewed studies reveal significant trends and issues, offering insights into the current state of ELT and pointing to areas for future research.

The analysis of the studies reveals a notable decline in the number of published research over the years. In 2016 and 2017, there were three studies each year, but from 2018 onward, the number dropped to just one study per year until 2023 with 2 studies. This decrease in peer-reviewed research output suggests a diminishing focus on empirical studies in English language teaching in Georgia, highlighting the need for more scholarly attention and further exploration in this field.

The dominant research purposes are centered around understanding *perceptions, measuring effectiveness, and investigating learning strategies* within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. The studies show promising results regarding new teaching methods and tools. While quantitative methods provide robust data on language proficiency and teaching effectiveness, a more balanced use of qualitative and mixed-method research would enhance the understanding of EFL education in Georgia. Purely qualitative research remains underrepresented in the literature. Given the complex, interactive nature of language learning, more qualitative studies could enrich the field by exploring learners' motivations, challenges, and perceptions in greater depth. Such research would also be valuable in understanding the evolving role of teachers, particularly as they adopt new technologies and methodologies.

Several limitations within the studies, such as small sample sizes, limited geographic scopes, and short study durations, restrict the generalizability of the findings. These limitations suggest that more large-scale, longitudinal studies are needed to fully understand the broader trends in EFL education across Georgia. Additionally, although the studies focus on the practical needs of learners, such as vocabulary acquisition and motivation, there is a need for more research on teacher development and the integration of modern teaching methodologies into everyday practice.

The literature review underscores a significant evolution in English Language Teaching in Georgia over the past seven years, marked by the adoption of new methods and technologies. While there are positive outcomes associated with innovative teaching tools and strategies, there are also notable challenges that need addressing:

- Further investigation into the effectiveness of innovative teaching methods and techniques
- Expanding research to cover larger and more varied groups of participants
- Application of mixed research methods
- Encourage researchers to publish papers in peer-reviewed journals in English

The reviewed studies provide valuable insights into various aspects of EFL education in Georgia, including innovative teaching methods, student motivation, and the integration of technology in the

classroom. While the findings highlight significant progress, they also reveal gaps in research, particularly in terms of qualitative approaches and long-term studies. Expanding future research to include larger sample sizes, diverse geographic contexts, and a broader range of research methods would strengthen the field and offer a more comprehensive understanding of EFL teaching and learning. Addressing these gaps will be essential for enhancing language education in Georgia and ensuring its continued alignment with global trends.

Limitation of the review

This review has several limitations that should be noted. First, there may be significant empirical studies published in Georgian that were not included, potentially limiting the scope and generalizability of the findings. Additionally, empirical studies within dissertations, which could contribute valuable insights, were not part of the review, possibly omitting relevant perspectives and data. Furthermore, this review was conducted by a single researcher, introducing the possibility of bias in the selection, interpretation, and synthesis of studies.

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