

How Teachers in Georgia Use Language to Encourage Students in Online Language Classes: A Close Examination of Feedback, Discourse, and Participation

როგორ იყენებენ საქართველოში მასწავლებლები ენას
მოსწავლეთა წასახალისებლად ონლაინ ენის გაკვეთილებზე:
უკუკავშირის, დისკურსისა და მონაწილეობის სიღრმისეული ანალიზი

ლიზა ხასაია

თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

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წინამდებარე ნაშრომი იკვლევს, როგორ იყენებენ საქართველოში უცხო ენის მასწავლებლები ენობრივ სტრატეგიებს ონლაინ სწავლების პროცესში სტუდენტთა ჩართულობისა და აქტიური მონაწილეობის ხელშესაწყობად. განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება ეთმობა მასწავლებლის დისკურსს, უკუკავშირის სხვადასხვა ფორმას, კითხვების გამოყენებასა და გაგების შემოწმების სტრატეგიებს.

კვლევა ეფუძნება ლეგიტიმაციის კოდების თეორიას (Legitimation Code Theory – LCT), კერძოდ, სემანტიკური გრავიტაციისა და სემანტიკური სიმჭიდროვის კონცეფციებს. გაანალიზებულია, როგორ ახერხებენ მასწავლებლები აბსტრაქტული ცოდნის სტუდენტებისთვის გასაგებ ფორმად წარმოდგენას და თეორიის პრაქტიკულ მაგალითებთან დაკავშირებას.

ამასთან, ნაშრომი შეისწავლის, როგორ მოქმედებს მაკორექტირებელი და წამახალისებელი უკუკავშირი, ასევე მიზანმიმართულად დასმული კითხვები სტუდენტების მოტივაციასა და მონაწილეობაზე. კვლევა ასევე ითვალისწინებს სტუდენტთა პერსპექტივას და ანალიზებს, როგორ აღიქვამენ ისინი აღნიშნულ სასწავლო პრაქტიკებს.

Keywords: Teacher discourse, Online language teaching, Student engagement, Feedback strategies, Constructive feedback, Motivational language, Student participation, Language simplification, Semantic gravity, Semantic density, Student-centered approaches.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: მასწავლებლის დისკურსი, ონლაინ ენის სწავლება, მოსწავლეთა ჩართულობა, უკუკავშირის სტრატეგიები, კონსტრუქციული უკუკავშირი, მოტივაციური ენა, მოსწავლეთა მონაწილეობა, ენის გამარტივება, სემანტიკური გრაფიტაცია, სემანტიკური სიმჭიდროვე, მოსწავლეზე ორიენტირებული მიდგომები.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, online education has significantly changed the way people engage in learning, particularly in language education. As the global lingua franca, English continues to attract learners from a wide range of cultural and geographical backgrounds, driven by goals such as academic achievement, career advancement, and personal growth. This growing interest has been supported by improved access to digital learning resources, high-speed internet, international teaching networks, and a variety of online platforms that have made language education more accessible and flexible. In Georgia, where English is taught as a foreign language and falls within the Expanding Circle of Kachru's World Englishes model (Kachru, 1985), the shift to online learning accelerated rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic. As education moved online worldwide, schools and universities had to adapt quickly to unfamiliar teaching and learning environments. For many learners, studying English online became more than a necessity; it also provided an opportunity to continue developing language skills for academic, professional, and personal purposes. While some learners studied English out of personal interest, others viewed it as essential for their education or future careers. As online classrooms became more common, language teachers faced the challenge of adapting traditional face-to-face teaching methods to virtual environments. They had to adjust to digital settings where physical presence, immediate feedback, and non-verbal communication were limited. This shift created several challenges, including fewer opportunities for spontaneous interaction, difficulty judging students' engagement, and reduced participation caused by screen fatigue or technical issues. As a result, teachers took on additional roles, not only as educators but also as motivators, facilitators, and sources of emotional support.

This paper examines how classroom interaction in online language learning is evolving, with particular attention to how teachers in Georgia use language to encourage participation and maintain student engagement. It explores the kinds of language teachers use, including encouraging expressions, feedback strategies, and questioning techniques, as well as how students respond to these approaches. By considering both teachers' and students' perspectives, the study examines the linguistic and emotional factors that contribute to successful online language learning. Although online teaching has expanded rapidly, many teachers still receive limited preparation for creating meaningful and interactive virtual classrooms, particularly for beginner learners. Effective online language teaching requires more than simply delivering content; it depends on purposeful interaction that helps students understand new material, build confidence, and develop communication skills. The way teachers communicate, whether through spoken interaction, written messages, live sessions, or recorded lessons, has a direct

influence on student engagement. Since the 1970s, communicative language teaching has emphasised the importance of using language in authentic communication. Hymes (1971) and Canale and Swain (1980) argue that communicative competence involves not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. In online learning, tools such as email, discussion boards, and search engines can support meaningful communication when they are used with clear pedagogical purposes. However, when online lessons become overly standardised or focus primarily on convenience, learning can become passive rather than interactive. Effective online instruction therefore requires a balance between structured content and opportunities for meaningful communication. Synchronous tools such as video conferencing and voice calls allow learners to practise speaking, make mistakes, and receive immediate feedback, all of which are essential for developing communicative competence. Without physical presence, teachers need to communicate clearly and intentionally to support students' understanding and maintain engagement. Written communication through chat or discussion forums can strengthen reading and writing skills, but on its own it is usually insufficient for developing speaking fluency. In Georgia, platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams have become central to online English language teaching, providing spaces where language is practised and interaction takes place. Although students appreciate the flexibility of learning from home, virtual classrooms can make personal interaction more difficult. For beginner learners in particular, the absence of gestures, facial expressions, and immediate clarification may make language learning more challenging. In these situations, teachers need to choose their language carefully so that it is clear, supportive, and encouraging. Beyond delivering lesson content, teachers play an important role in creating an environment where students feel comfortable participating, asking questions, and taking risks. Using open-ended questions, positive feedback, polite requests, and encouraging language helps build trust and maintain student engagement. As Hampel and Stickler (2005) argue, successful online language teaching requires not only technical competence but also emotional awareness and creativity. Ultimately, effective online language learning depends on meaningful communication between teachers and students. This study explores how teacher discourse supports participation and engagement and what these practices reveal about online language teaching in the Georgian context.

Although previous studies have examined online language teaching and student engagement, little research has explored how teacher discourse in Georgian online English classrooms shapes participation through the perspective of Legitimation Code Theory. This study addresses that gap by examining both teachers' and students' perspectives.

2. Theoretical Framework

To better understand how language teachers in Georgia support and motivate their students in online classrooms, this study draws on Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), a framework developed by Maton (2014). LCT encourages us to look beyond what is being taught and consider how knowledge is shared, explained, and made meaningful to learners. While many traditional approaches focus mainly on content, LCT also highlights the language

teachers use as a key tool for building understanding, particularly in the context of virtual learning. In online English classes, where face-to-face interaction is limited and screens replace physical presence, the words teachers choose and the way they communicate become especially important.

Karl Maton's Legitimation Code Theory (2014) focuses on two key concepts: semantic gravity and semantic density. Semantic gravity refers to the extent to which language is connected to real-life situations. When semantic gravity is strong (SG+), language is easier to understand because it is linked to familiar experiences. For example, a teacher might explain the present perfect tense using a student's daily routine to make grammar feel more relevant and easier to understand. By contrast, weak semantic gravity (SG-) refers to more abstract language, such as explaining grammar rules without providing examples. Both approaches are useful, but teachers need to know when to use each one to support learning effectively.

Semantic density refers to how much meaning is packed into language. High semantic density (SD+) involves complex or technical terms, such as modal verbs or subordinate clauses, which may be difficult for beginners. Low semantic density (SD-) uses simpler, clearer language that is easier to understand, particularly in online classes where students may feel less confident. Teachers often begin with simpler language (SD-) and gradually introduce more complex terms (SD+) as students become more confident.

In the online classes observed in this study, teachers moved between these approaches, shifting from simple to complex language and from concrete to abstract explanations depending on students' needs. This helped students remain engaged without feeling overwhelmed. For instance, if a student did not understand a concept, the teacher might simplify the explanation or provide a real-life example (stronger semantic gravity). As students became more confident, teachers gradually introduced more technical terms or abstract ideas (higher semantic density). These strategies are particularly relevant in online learning, where students can sometimes feel confused or disconnected.

LCT provides a useful way of understanding how teachers use language to keep students engaged, explain difficult ideas, and build confidence. It suggests that teaching is not only about delivering information but also about choosing language that best supports students' learning. In online classrooms, where personal interaction is more limited, this careful use of language becomes even more important. It helps strengthen the connection between teachers and students, making learning more accessible and meaningful. Viewed in this way, LCT offers a valuable framework for understanding how teacher discourse shapes online learning and supports student development.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do English language teachers in Georgia use discourse to encourage student participation in online classrooms?
2. Which linguistic strategies are perceived by teachers and students as the most effective for promoting engagement?

3. How can these practices be interpreted through the concepts of semantic gravity and semantic density within Legitimation Code Theory?

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how English language teachers in Georgia use discourse to encourage student participation and engagement in online language classrooms. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and teaching practices rather than establish causal relationships. The research was guided by Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), particularly the concepts of semantic gravity and semantic density, which served as the analytical framework for examining teacher discourse and its role in shaping student engagement.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit participants with direct experience of online English language teaching and learning. The final sample consisted of 58 participants, including 29 English language teachers/lecturers and 29 students from different educational settings across Georgia. Teachers were required to have at least one year of experience teaching English in an online environment, while the student participants represented different age groups and English proficiency levels, ranging from beginner to intermediate. This allowed the study to capture a range of perspectives on communication in online language classrooms.

Two separate questionnaires were developed, one for teachers/lecturers and one for students, to reflect the different roles of the participant groups. The teacher questionnaire focused on instructional language, feedback strategies, questioning techniques, and methods used to encourage participation. The student questionnaire explored learners' perceptions of teacher discourse, including how teachers' language influenced their understanding, confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate. Both questionnaires combined multiple-choice and open-ended questions, allowing participants not only to report their experiences but also to explain them in their own words.

To strengthen the credibility of the study, the questionnaire items were developed with reference to the existing literature on teacher discourse, feedback, student engagement, and Legitimation Code Theory. Before distribution, the questionnaires were reviewed to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the aims of the research. Participation was voluntary, responses were collected anonymously through Google Forms, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Open-ended responses were translated from Georgian into English where necessary and analysed using thematic analysis. The responses were read repeatedly to identify recurring ideas, coded into meaningful categories, and then organised into broader themes. Legitimation Code Theory, particularly the concepts of semantic gravity and semantic density, guided the interpretation of these themes, making it possible to examine how teachers moved between concrete and abstract explanations and adapted the complexity of their language to students' needs and lesson objectives. Quantitative questionnaire data were analysed descriptively using

frequencies and percentages to identify general patterns in participants' responses, complementing the qualitative findings.

Although the study was conducted within the Georgian educational context and involved a relatively small sample, including both teachers and students provided two complementary perspectives on online language learning. Rather than aiming for broad statistical generalisation, the study offers an in-depth understanding of how teacher discourse shapes student participation and engagement in virtual English language classrooms.

4. Description and Analysis of the Research

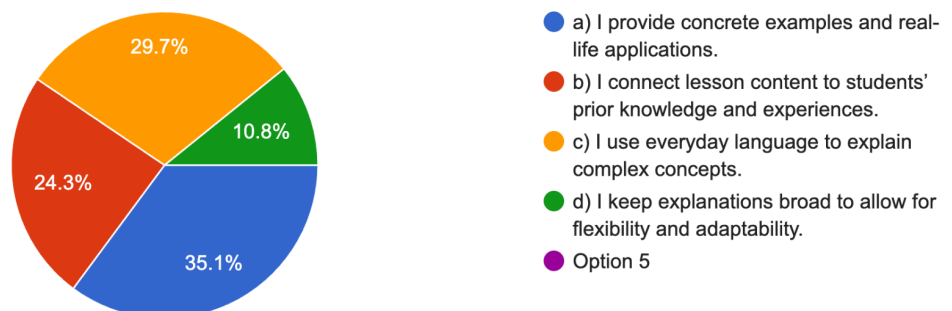
This study included 58 participants, 29 teachers/lecturers and 29 students, who were all actively involved in online English language classes across Georgia. Each participant completed a questionnaire designed for their specific role, with the aim of exploring how language is used to encourage participation, maintain engagement, and support learning in virtual classrooms. Teachers described a range of strategies they use to make their online classes more engaging. About 61% reported that they frequently ask open-ended questions, encouraging students to think more critically and give more detailed responses rather than simply answering "yes" or "no."

Teachers also use a variety of techniques to make lessons easier to understand. The most common strategy, reported by 35.1% of teachers, was the use of real-life examples. This allows students to connect abstract ideas with familiar situations, making new concepts easier to understand. Almost 30% of teachers said they explain difficult concepts using simple, everyday language, an approach that is particularly useful in online classes where students may feel less confident or more disconnected. Another 24.3% of teachers reported linking new material to students' previous knowledge, helping them build on what they already know. A smaller group (10.8%) preferred to keep their explanations more general and flexible so they could adapt their language to different students and teaching situations.

Table 1: Maintaining Contextual Relevance

How do you ensure that your language remains contextually relevant to students during online lessons? (For teachers)

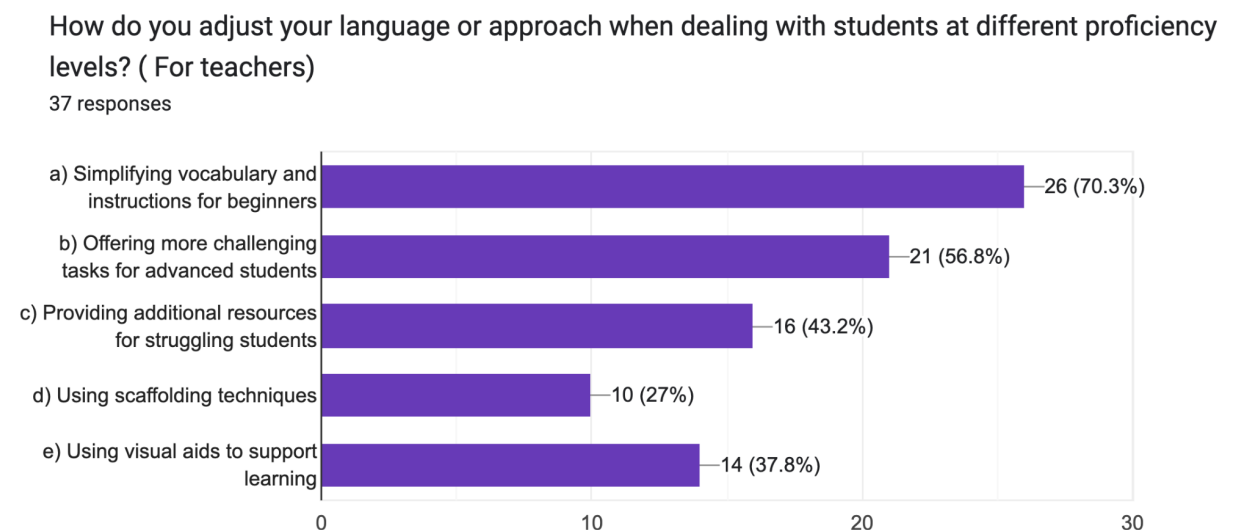
37 responses



These responses suggest that teachers pay close attention to the way they use language to keep lessons clear, relevant, and engaging. Their strategies also reflect an awareness of the challenges of online learning and a commitment to supporting students through effective communication.

Another important aspect was creating a supportive learning environment. More than 70% of teachers said it was important to make students feel comfortable sharing their ideas without fear of being judged. Around 57.5% reported using simple prompts such as “*What do you think?*” or “*Any questions?*” to encourage students to participate and show that every opinion is valued. Teachers also adjusted the complexity of their language according to students' needs. Around 70.3% said they simplified their language for beginner learners, while 56.8% reported giving more challenging tasks to advanced students. These findings suggest that teachers carefully adapt their communication to different proficiency levels, helping students follow the lesson while continuing to develop their language skills.

Table 2: Language Adjustment by Proficiency Level



The chart titled “*How often do you shift from context-specific (concrete) examples to more abstract or theoretical concepts during your online lessons?*” illustrates how teachers use language in virtual classrooms. A clear majority (59.5%) reported that they often move between concrete and abstract ideas. This suggests that many teachers recognise the importance of helping students connect real-life examples with more complex concepts. This type of shifting is particularly valuable in language teaching, where understanding often depends on context.

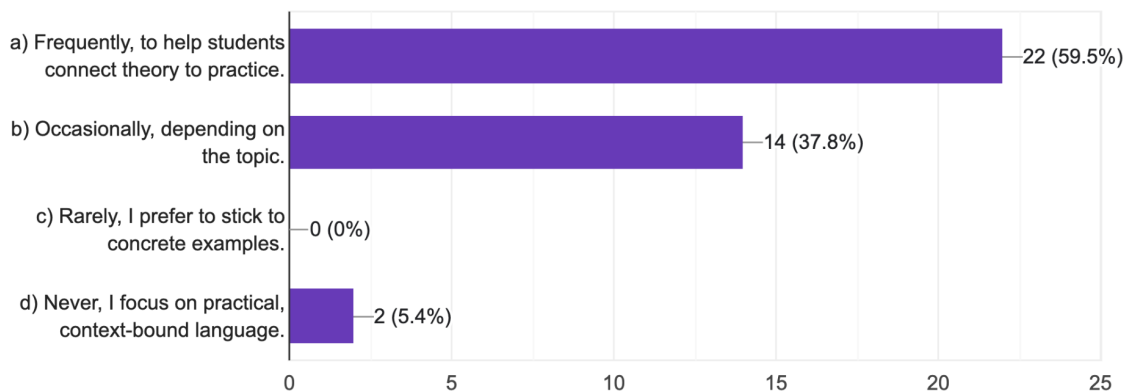
Another 37.8% of teachers said they make this shift depending on the topic. This indicates that teachers adapt their approach to the needs of each lesson, recognising that not every topic requires the same level of theoretical explanation. Interestingly, none of the teachers reported that they rarely used this approach, and only a small number said they never did,

suggesting that most teachers see value in balancing practical examples with more abstract explanations.

Table 3: Shifting Between Concrete and Abstract Concepts

How often do you shift from context-specific (concrete) examples to more abstract or theoretical concepts during your online lessons? (For teachers)

37 responses

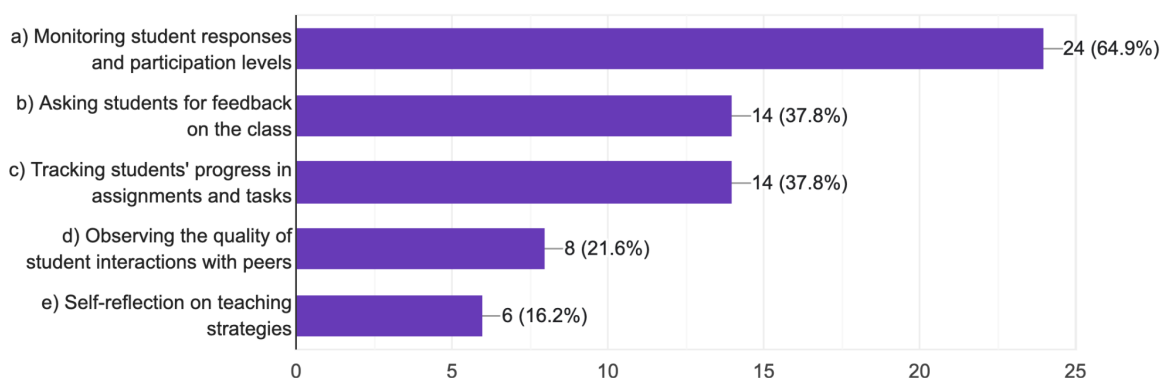


The finding that no teachers reported rarely or never shifting between concrete and abstract language suggests that most educators recognise the importance of connecting different levels of meaning. This approach aligns well with the concept of semantic gravity in Legitimation Code Theory, which refers to how closely language is connected to real-life situations. It also reflects teachers' efforts to keep lessons clear and relevant, particularly in online learning, where abstract ideas can be more difficult to understand without relatable examples. Overall, the findings suggest that teachers make deliberate use of both concrete and abstract language to support students' understanding and maintain their engagement during online classes.

Table 4: Assessing Participation and Engagement

.How do you assess whether your methods for encouraging participation and engagement are effective in an online language environment? (For teachers)

37 responses



One of the main findings of the study was the important role of feedback and praise in motivating students. About 83.8% of teachers said they often combine praise with helpful feedback. This approach allows students not only to recognise what they did well but also to understand how they can improve. Almost all teachers agreed that praise builds confidence and helps students stay engaged. In fact, 81.1% said it helps learners remember and use English correctly. While most teachers preferred a balance between praise and correction, 27% said they focused more on correcting mistakes.

Students also shared their perspectives. About 87.5% said praise made them feel more confident and willing to participate. They found specific praise, such as pointing out exactly what they did well, much more useful than vague or negative comments. Around 85% said praise helped them speak or write English more accurately. More than half of the students preferred feedback that included corrections, while 37.5% said praise alone provided enough motivation. For 57.5%, praise helped demonstrate what "correct" English looked like. Others appreciated clear explanations (61.5%), encouragement to attempt more challenging tasks (41%), and recognition of their effort (20.5%). Students also valued open-ended prompts (56.4%) and polite language (48.7%), which made them feel more comfortable asking questions. Simple phrases such as "*Great job!*" and "*Keep up the good work!*" were mentioned as especially encouraging.

Participation in online classes varied. Around 52.8% of students felt more active, while 28% reported feeling less engaged. Clear examples (73%) and the use of real-life contexts to explain abstract ideas (62.2%) helped students understand the material and remain focused. Open-ended responses in the survey also provided additional insights. Some teachers expressed concerns about excessive praise, suggesting that it could make students overly dependent on positive reinforcement or reduce their intrinsic motivation. For this reason, they emphasised that praise should be genuine, specific, and balanced with constructive feedback.

To support students with different language proficiency levels, teachers used strategies such as speaking slowly, repeating key points, using visual materials, and adapting tasks to

students' abilities. They also used sentence starters to encourage quieter students to participate. Other commonly used techniques included calling students by name, using breakout rooms, and incorporating interactive tools.

Overall, both teachers and students agreed that the way teachers communicate—particularly the clarity, supportiveness, and organisation of their language—has a significant influence on students' learning and participation in online English classes.

The findings of this study suggest that teacher discourse plays a central role in shaping student engagement in online English language classrooms. Viewed through the lens of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), teacher language extends beyond the transmission of knowledge and functions as a pedagogical tool that supports understanding, participation, and motivation. In virtual learning environments, where face-to-face interaction and non-verbal communication are limited, the way teachers communicate becomes particularly important in creating meaningful learning experiences and maintaining student engagement.

The analysis demonstrates that teachers continually adjusted their language according to students' needs by moving between different levels of semantic gravity (SG) and semantic density (SD). Although participants were not consciously applying the principles of Legitimation Code Theory, many of their instructional practices closely reflected its concepts. For beginner learners, 61.1% of teachers strengthened semantic gravity by linking abstract language concepts to familiar, everyday situations, such as ordering food or attending a birthday party. These contextualised explanations appeared to make complex material more accessible while reducing the cognitive demands associated with learning a foreign language in an online environment. Rather than simply simplifying content, teachers adapted the relationship between theory and practice, allowing students to build understanding before gradually introducing more abstract concepts. As one teacher explained:

1. *“I adapt my language by simplifying vocabulary and sentence structures, speaking slowly and clearly, and using repetition when necessary. I frequently check comprehension through targeted questions and visual aids, and I provide sentence starters to support less confident students.”*

Such strategies demonstrate that language learning is not only an academic task but is also connected to everyday life.

With more advanced learners, however, teachers moved toward weaker semantic gravity and higher semantic density. They introduced more abstract language, technical terms, and complex structures to challenge students. This shift was reported by 58.3% of teachers, who said they intentionally increased the complexity of their discourse to match students' growing skills. As one teacher noted:

2. *“For more advanced students, I gradually introduce more complex structures and less familiar vocabulary.”*

These shifts were not random but reflected teachers' careful, often intuitive, understanding of how students develop. Even though they did not explicitly refer to LCT, many teachers applied its principles in practice, using language as a scaffold for learning. Importantly, the study found that teachers used language not only to explain content but also to create a supportive learning environment. In an online setting, where physical presence is limited, the way teachers communicate plays a key role in shaping the classroom atmosphere. Open-ended questions such as *“What do you think?”* or *“Could you try that again?”*, used by 60% of teachers, encouraged participation and helped reduce the distance between teacher and student.

Feedback and praise emerged as another central theme. Nearly all teachers (94.4%) believed in giving specific praise linked to genuine improvement. Students agreed, with 87.5% saying that such praise increased their confidence and motivation. However, many teachers also cautioned against excessive praise. Instead, they aimed to make praise meaningful by linking it to students' effort or progress, which aligns with LCT's emphasis on legitimating knowledge practices. Students also added valuable perspectives to the findings. Many explained that the clarity and tone of teachers' language had a strong influence on how they felt:

3. *“When a teacher speaks in an understanding way, I feel more motivated to participate.”*
4. *“When explanations are clear and the teacher uses words I understand, it is easier to stay focused. But if the language is too difficult, I feel lost and do not want to speak.”*

These responses highlight the importance of managing semantic gravity and semantic density in ways that support learning. Many teachers used practical strategies such as slower speech, repetition, visual materials, and sentence frames. Digital tools, including breakout rooms, addressing students by name, and private messaging, also helped students feel supported and included.

In conclusion, Georgian English language teachers are not simply delivering lessons; they are creating meaningful learning experiences. By adjusting the complexity and relevance of their language, they help students access knowledge, build confidence, and interact more actively in the learning process. In virtual classrooms, where emotional and social cues are less visible, the language teachers use becomes even more important. It not only conveys content but also builds trust, shapes students' learning experiences, and fosters a sense of connection. Recognising this dual role of language, as both cognitive and emotional, can help educators teach more effectively in today's digital learning environment.

4.1. Feedback

The research shows that students respond to feedback in different ways, but not every response contributes positively to learning or motivation. The most productive reactions often involve putting in greater effort, especially when tasks are challenging, recognising mistakes, and looking for more effective ways to learn (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996). At the same time, feedback can sometimes have unintended negative effects. Rather

than feeling encouraged, some students may become overwhelmed or discouraged. As a result, they may avoid difficult tasks, lower their expectations, or adjust their goals simply to maintain a sense of success without making meaningful progress (Bandura, 1986; Mikulincer, 1995; Steinberg, 1996). These reactions should not be interpreted as a lack of effort; instead, they often reflect emotional responses to feedback that is unclear, discouraging, or poorly aligned with students' needs.

In this context, the teacher's role is particularly important. Teachers are not only sources of knowledge but also facilitators who shape learning environments that can encourage or, at times, unintentionally discourage student development. Effective feedback goes beyond correcting mistakes or pointing out what went wrong. It involves setting realistic goals, encouraging students through manageable challenges, and helping them develop strategies for self-regulated learning (Locke & Latham, 2002; Sweller, 1994). It also requires an understanding of students' emotional responses and the ways feedback influences their motivation and self-perception.

Praise, as a particular form of feedback, is widely used to encourage motivation. Teachers frequently praise students for their effort, engagement, achievements, and success in language learning tasks. As many teachers in this study noted, *"Praise boosts their confidence and encourages more engagement,"* and many students reported similar experiences. A well-timed and sincere compliment can increase students' confidence and encourage them to continue participating. However, praise is not always effective on its own. Like any teaching strategy, its impact depends on how it is used. The responses collected in this study suggest that praise loses its value when it becomes too frequent, too general, or disconnected from genuine progress.

Constant praise for minimal effort may encourage students to rely on external validation rather than developing intrinsic motivation. Likewise, telling students they have done a *"great job"* without explaining what they did well can reduce the value of the feedback over time. Some students may become less motivated because they no longer feel challenged, while others may begin working primarily to receive praise rather than to improve their learning. Another concern raised in the literature is the use of comparative praise, where one student's achievement is highlighted at the expense of another's. Such practices may unintentionally create anxiety, resentment, or unhealthy competition within the classroom. Several students in this study also explained that being repeatedly praised for being *"perfect"* created pressure to avoid mistakes, making them less willing to take risks or attempt more challenging tasks.

Most teachers in this study agreed that praise is most effective when it is specific, genuine, and linked to students' progress. Rather than simply saying *"good job,"* they preferred to highlight particular improvements, learning strategies, or successful behaviours. As one teacher explained, *"I provide specific and meaningful praise that focuses on students' progress,"* emphasising growth rather than perfection.

This chapter has explored the role of praise in the learning process. Although praise is generally viewed as a positive teaching strategy, the findings suggest that its effectiveness depends on how it is delivered. When used thoughtfully and combined with constructive feedback, praise can support students' motivation, confidence, and long-term development.

Ultimately, it should recognise individual progress and encourage learners to become more independent, confident, and resilient.

5. Conclusion

Although Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) provided a useful framework for interpreting patterns in teacher discourse, it does not capture every aspect of online classroom interaction. Students' engagement is influenced by a range of factors beyond language itself, including individual motivation, previous learning experiences, technological challenges, and the interpersonal relationship between teachers and learners. For this reason, LCT should be viewed as a valuable interpretive framework rather than a complete explanation of online teaching practices.

The findings of this study suggest that effective online language teaching depends not only on curriculum design or digital platforms, but also on the way teachers communicate with their students. Teacher discourse was found to play an important role in explaining new concepts, encouraging participation, and creating a supportive learning environment. Strategies such as simplifying vocabulary, using familiar examples, asking purposeful questions, and providing constructive feedback appeared to help students engage more confidently in online lessons.

Viewed through the lens of LCT, many of the teachers' practices reflected a natural movement between stronger and weaker semantic gravity as well as different levels of semantic density. Teachers frequently introduced abstract language concepts through familiar, everyday situations before gradually increasing linguistic complexity as students became more confident. This flexibility allowed teachers to make new material accessible without removing the intellectual challenge, suggesting that effective online teaching involves carefully balancing conceptual understanding with students' readiness to learn.

The findings also highlight the importance of feedback and praise. Both teachers and students viewed feedback as most effective when it was specific, constructive, and clearly linked to students' progress. At the same time, several teachers recognised that excessive or overly general praise could lose its motivational value. This suggests that feedback is most beneficial when it supports improvement rather than simply acknowledging performance. Students' responses further emphasised that the tone and clarity of teacher communication influenced not only their understanding of the lesson but also their confidence to participate.

Taken together, these findings indicate that teacher discourse serves both instructional and interpersonal purposes in online English language classrooms. Beyond supporting language learning, effective communication helps establish trust, reduce learner anxiety, and encourage active participation. While the study is limited to the Georgian educational context, it highlights the broader importance of purposeful and responsive teacher communication in virtual learning environments. As online education continues to develop, these findings suggest that professional development should focus not only on digital teaching skills but also on the ways teachers use language to support learning, motivation, and meaningful classroom interaction.

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