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Exploring micro- and macro-levels of discourse in digital parent-teacher communication: a methodological framework

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Current studies have foregrounded the contribution of discourse analysis to the study of the internet as a preferred interaction medium where social, psychological, cultural, and professional dimensions of meaning are co-constructed in naturally occurring communication. Studies have also emphasized the significance of parental partnerships with others regarding the wellbeing and success of pupils. However, little research has systematically examined how parents and teachers engage in digital communication during times of crisis and how meaning is negotiated within these interactions. The present study aims to address this gap by presenting and illustrating a discourse-oriented methodological framework designed to analyze meaning construction in a digital parent-teacher forum. This framework integrates both micro and macro analytic levels to explore discourse dynamics in digital interactions. Guided by Conversation Analysis, Discursive Psychology, and Positioning-Displaying Language Analysis, which favor naturalistic interaction as the object of analysis, the microanalysis explores (1) the specific discursive actions performed by forum participants in interactional post sequences and (2) the ways in which these participants position themselves in digital written discourse. The macro-analytic lens is guided by Positive Discourse Analysis, a critical approach emphasizing that “critical” does not necessarily imply “being negative” but rather includes the proposition of alternatives and the facilitation of constructive change within educational discourse. The analysis revealed that initial posts shaped the trajectory of interaction, with participants discursively positioning themselves through figurative language and textual strategies. Teachers often portrayed themselves as fighters, while some parents responded with critical metaphors, highlighting tensions and identity negotiations. A turning point emerged when a participant redirected the discussion toward systemic reform, offering a constructive discursive path. These findings underscore the value of interpretative pluralism in understanding stakeholder interactions and suggest that digital forums can foster inclusive dialogue, though they may be limited in driving institutional change.

KEYWORDS

discourse analysis, conversation analysis, microanalysis and macroanalysis, digital interaction, parent-teacher communication

Introduction

In recent years, digital communication has become an essential component of parent-teacher interaction, with online platforms shaping social, psychological, cultural, and educational exchanges. As Meredith (2019, p.241) notes, “the internet has become a predominantly interactional medium” where various dimensions of discourse are co-constructed and examined “in the making” (Vásquez, 2022, p.4) in written WhatsApp messages, forums, and emails.

Despite the increasing prevalence of digital discourse in education, little research has systematically explored how parents and teachers actually engage in these interactions and construct meaning through online communication. Understanding parent-teacher digital discourse is particularly relevant in periods of educational tension, as online discourse serves as both a key resource and potential challenge for educators navigating complex social and institutional dynamics.

Discourse analysis provides a powerful tool to examine “the interplay between language and social relations and practices” (Vásquez, 2022, p.4), offering insights into how participants construct meaning and negotiate relationships in digital educational spaces. Vásquez (2022, p.6) further highlights the advantages of studying digital discourse, noting that online interactions are observable, capturable, and free from the observer’s paradox (i.e., the phenomenon where the act of observing something alters the thing being observed). Given the increasing reliance on digital communication in education, it is crucial to develop methodological frameworks that allow for both micro- and macro-level analysis of discourse (Gee, 2015) within these settings.

This article aims to fill this gap by presenting a discourse-oriented methodology that is guided by Conversation Analysis (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2017), Discursive Psychology (Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007), and a Positioning-Displaying Language Analysis, three approaches that have been integrated in previous studies on parent-teacher digital discourse (Gamliel and Kupferberg, 2024). Specifically, the methodology shows how microanalytic tools derived from these approach¹.

These approaches are based on the assumption that when people interact in face-to-face talk or in digital writing (e.g., forums, or WhatsApp), they carry out actual actions (e.g., narrating, explaining, criticizing, etc.) in interactional sequences that researchers can explore to find out what participants say, how they say it and how they position their identity vis-à-vis others.

The article opens with a theoretical framework comprising two sections: (1) an exploration of micro-macro levels of analysis (Gee, 2015), and (2) a review of key publications on parent-teacher communication. Then, the methodology section establishes a guiding methodological principle advocating the use of two or more qualitative methods (Chamberlain et al., 2011) to illuminate participants’ actions and positioning. The methods, Sequence Analysis (Meredith et al., 2021) and a Positioning-displaying Language Analysis (Kupferberg, 2016), are presented and illustrated by examples from data collected

in the digital forum “*Education 2020—for a More Effective Educational System*.” The findings derived from micro-level analysis are then evaluated at a macroanalytic critical level. The discussion highlights the significance of this approach for educators and researchers seeking to enhance digital communication practices in educational contexts.

Micro and macro levels of digital discourse analysis

The division of data analysis into levels has always challenged discourse analysts (Gordon-Roth, 2020) who attempt to bridge “the divide between participants’ micro-level interactions and macro social and cultural systems rooted in historical traditions.” (Given, 2008, p.150). Gee (2015, p. 3) frequently cited definition distinguishes between two basic discourse levels:

“Little ‘d’ discourse analysis studies how the flow of language in use across time and the patterns and connections across this flow of language make sense and guide the interpretation. (e.g., the forum posts used to illustrate the methodology. [The authors]). Big ‘D’ Discourse analysis embeds little ‘d’ discourse analysis into the ways in which language melds with bodies and things to create society and history.”

At the microanalytic level, we are guided by the assumptions of three discourse-oriented approaches which share the idea that discourse means the completion of a communicative action by means of language (Hanks, 1996). Specifically, Conversation Analysis (CA) (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2017²), stresses that it is essential to explore the sequence of turns in an interaction in order to reveal important features of the process.

Second, following Discursive Psychology (DP) (Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007) we emphasize that positioning is a central process in naturally occurring discourse whereby individuals locate one or several dimensions of their identity in relation to others. Meredith (2019) and Meredith et al. (2021) adapt the ideas of face-to-face Conversation Analysis and Discursive Psychology to naturally occurring digital written interaction. These authors emphasize the option of analyzing digital posts sequentially.

Third, we are also guided by a discourse-oriented approach to language resources (Kupferberg, 2016) which underscores the idea that positioning can be explored by analysing language resources such as pronouns, rhetorical questions and figurative language.

For example, pronouns show how participants wish to position themselves in relation to others as individuals (“I”) or as groups (“we”) (Malone, 1997). Rhetorical questions emphasize the importance of a specific topic or the participants’ objection to that topic (Kupferberg, 2016). In line with Georgakopoulou (1997), in our data-oriented microanalytic phase, while we do not study these resources as preconceived lists of linguistic devices, we pay attention to the specific functions of these devices in the context in which they are produced.

Figurative language (such as metaphors, similes, and figurative phrases) is also defined as a positioning resource (Kupferberg, 2016), whereby we talk, or write and, potentially, think about something in

¹ Following Schwandt (2007) and Author 2 (2016), a research approach is hierarchically defined as having theoretical and methodological components and a method of analysis contribute to the understanding of meaning construction within forum discussions.

² These scholars acknowledge the contribution of Sacks’ pioneering work which is beyond the scope of this article.

terms of something else (Semino, 2008). For instance, in Example 1 lines 18–20 below, the post writer uses figurative language to summarize the teachers' positioning as *soldiers fighting a war* in their attempt to obtain a better salary.

Previous empirical studies on figurative language foreground its functions in interactional discourse. It often organizes the main idea of the text, enhances interpersonal communication, and expresses the individual's positioning in relation to others (Kupferberg and Green, 2005, 2008). In addition, figurative clusters (FC) (i.e., two or more sequentially ordered figurative forms such as metaphor and simile) often signal critical moments in digital discourse (Cameron and Stelma, 2004) and complexity (Green and Kupferberg, 2020; Hillel-Lavian and Kupferberg, 2023).

At the macro level, the researchers may examine the findings gleaned via the microanalytic level in the social, cultural, and educational context in which they occurred. Our analysis is guided by critical discourse analysts such as Rogers (2018) and Bartlett (2018) who emphasize that the term “critical” does not necessarily imply that the researcher is identifying negative features. Bartlett (ibid.) further advises the critical discourse analyst to focus on solutions rather than problems and to demonstrate how competing discourses can be effectively combined.

Parent and teacher communication

A respectful and trustworthy partnership between parents and teachers in schools is essential for the students, teachers, and parents. Communication is at the heart of such a partnership (Ozmen et al., 2016). Studies show that a key component of parental satisfaction with the school is cooperation between the family and the school, including a good relationship with the teacher (Paccaud et al., 2021) and positive attitudes towards them (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Additionally, teacher well-being has been found to be associated with optimal cooperation with parents (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011). One of the most significant challenges that schools traditionally face is the commitment to creating stronger connections between the school and families by opting for more meaningful family presence and involvement. Many teachers have called for stronger connections and greater involvement from all members of the educational community (Carrión-Martínez et al., 2021).

There are various ways to maintain communication between schools and families, including parent-teacher evenings, face-to-face meetings, phone calls, letters, emails, text messages, and school websites (Kuusimäki et al., 2019). Studies indicate that the prevalent communication channel nowadays is a digital platform through which the vast majority of information is transmitted (Johari et al., 2022). The findings show that parents and teachers agree on the importance of using a digital platform for communication and engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 placed the digital communication channel at center stage (Erdreich, 2021) and accelerated research on the desired interaction between families and schools during times of crisis (Haller and Novita, 2021). The use of new technologies and the development of virtual learning, where the relationships between educational institutions, families, and students are present, have become a new educational paradigm no longer tied to the circumstantial situation originating from the pandemic (Carrión-Martínez et al., 2021).

To the best of our knowledge, few studies have examined the real-time natural and informal online communication between teachers and parents who interact with each other about educational practices based on their social roles rather than their institutional affiliations.

Research questions

Building on the literature review, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

How does the theoretical and methodological distinction between levels of analysis enhance the exploration of digital interactions between parents and teachers in the forum posts?

How do microanalytic Sequence Analysis and Positioning Displaying Language Analysis contribute to the understanding of meaning construction within parent-teacher digital discourse in the forum posts?

Methodological framework

Methods of analysis

The microanalytic level espouses Integrative Pluralism (Chamberlain et al., 2011), a methodological principle (Schwandt, 2007) (See note 1) whereby two or more qualitative methods work together to probe the same data. The Sequence Analysis is inspired by computer-mediated microanalytic CA (Meredith, 2019), which specifies that the analysis be conducted by paying attention to the *sequence* of digital turns (i.e., the posts participants produced). Accordingly, this analysis instructs the researcher to explore the formation of action within the sequence of digital turns as they unfold in the digital threads. The Positioning-Displaying Language Analysis calls for the identification of positioning language resources, including figurative forms (Kupferberg, 2016) within and across posts.

As for the definition of figurative forms, in this article we adopt the Pragglejaz Group's (2007) hands-on definition. Figurative forms, such as metaphors, and similes, comprise one word or a phrase whose meaning in the analysed text is different from the basic dictionary meaning. For example, the Merriam Webster Dictionary entry for the verb “fight”³ has non-figurative (‘to contend in real battle or physical combat’) and figurative (‘to put forth a determined effort’) meanings. Thus, following the Pragglejaz Group definition, we could infer that the meaning of the verb *fight* in Example 1, lines 18–19 below, is figurative because it is not a physical fight. In Examples 1–4, figurative forms are marked in italics.

Data collection

The data were systematically collected by capturing screenshots of 7 threads and 537 posts written in a public forum titled “Education 2020—for a more Effective Educational System” in August 2022.⁴ The

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/268856833645322>

forum invites teachers, parents, school principals, kindergarten teachers, and anyone who cares about education to participate⁵. The forum aims “to generate discourse that will contribute to the education system in general and specifically to the teachers.” The data derived in this way are naturalistic since they have been produced without the researcher’s intervention (Meredith and Potter, 2014).

Our digital units of analysis are hierarchically ordered (1) threads of posts focusing on a theme initiated by the author of the opening post (OP); (2) posts responding to the OP that are defined as digital turns; (3) figurative language used by the participants (e.g., metaphors, similes).

To register in the forum each participant was requested to provide a photo and a short general description that are presented at the beginning of the post. By clicking on the photo, the participant’s description is displayed and thus we were able to distinguish between teachers, parents, and other professions. At times, this group division was also supported by the content of the posts. Additionally, when participants referred to previous posts, they were required to specify who the addresses were.

Data selection procedures

A systematic selection process was implemented to ensure that the examples presented in the analysis most effectively capture the dynamics of digital parent-teacher discourse explored in the study. Since discussions within the forum often exhibited recurring patterns and themes, the selection process prioritized posts that best illustrate key aspects of the interaction, including negotiation of meaning, and participants’ positioning.

The chosen examples provide rich contextual insights without unnecessary redundancy, reflecting the diversity of conversational exchanges that emerged during the educational crisis of August 2022. By selecting these posts, we ensured their alignment with the study’s methodological framework, emphasizing interpretive depth over broad coverage to facilitate a nuanced exploration of digital interactions.

Ethical issues

Several ethical issues arose when we planned the study and as we became involved in its analysis (Ditchfield, 2021). The authors contacted the forum moderators to obtain permission to use the forum posts. This was done although the forum rules do not prohibit the use of the forum posts for research. The moderators approved the use of the forum posts and expressed satisfaction emphasizing that this study may contribute to achieving the goal of the forum: “a more effective education system.”

To ensure participant anonymity, all identifying details, including names and profile pictures, were excluded from the dataset. Posts were analyzed without direct reference to personal identifiers, and quotations used in the study were modified where necessary to prevent identification while maintaining analytical integrity.

Illustrative examples

Microanalysis

Examples 1–4 show how we integrated the two methods in an attempt to identify the participants’ actions and identity positioning at the microanalytic level. Example 1 is the post that opens the thread (OP).

Example 1: I am a teacher *fighting for the salary that I deserve*

I am a teacher,
For 32 years I have been a teacher,
I arrive at work at 8 a.m.,
I teach,
I prepare lesson plans,
I mark exams,
I do further training,
I speak to parents,
I come to conferences,
Meetings,
Classroom evenings and individual conversations.
Half of all my work is unpaid,
It is free of charge.
I am not the minister of education,
I am not the committee planning the reform,
I am not a supervisor or a policy maker.
I am a teacher,
A teacher fighting for the salary that I deserve,
A teacher who is fighting, head held high,
who has attained all the ranks.
Do not blame me for things that have nothing to do with me,
Reforms, laws, administering the education system; it does not interest me.

The content, structure, and language resources, including figurative language, suggest that although the post writer used the first person singular “I,” she probably intended to represent all Israeli teachers. This observation is supported by our analysis, which suggests that the text was carefully planned (Ochs, 1979) before being exposed to the public eye with the intention of calling upon other forum participants to act.

Planning is shown by the line division, which foregrounds four inter-connected themes: (1) Israeli teachers’ daily chores (lines 3–11) are presented via present simple habitual stories (e.g., I arrive at work at 8 a.m., I teach, I prepare lesson plans); (2) Teachers are underpaid (lines 12–13); (3) Finance Ministry officials can raise teachers’ salaries. This theme is reiterated via negative sentences (lines 14–16); (4) In lines 18–20, the post writer produced a figurative cluster comprising a metaphor and two formulaic phrases (“fight,” “head held high,” and “who has attained all the ranks”), which sum up the teachers’ positioning with regard to the crisis: they are conducting a military battle for fair remuneration.⁶ (5) In the last two lines of the post, the

⁵ This phrasing reflects the original wording used by the forum administrators, who distinguish “kindergarten teachers” from “teachers” to emphasize their distinct professional roles within the Israeli educational context.

⁶ Formulaic phrases are summative expressions of wisdom such as proverbs, slogans, and sayings generally learned and used as wholes (Honeck, 1997: 79).

writer emphasizes how devoted she is to her job and that she has no time for anything else.

Forty-eight teachers responded to the OP's highly planned call for action that same day, expressing their full support. Thus, for a moment, they positioned themselves as a united digital group of teachers whose characteristics are depicted in the OP: dedication to their pupils and chores but fighting to receive a fair salary. In Example 2, we present some of the teachers' responses to the OP:

Example 2: Stinging words

- *Absolutely right.
- **Stinging words.*
- *I agree with each and every word.
- *She is so right!!
- *Precisely! She is r i g h t!!
- *Every word, *spot on!!!!* Well done fpr this important post.
- *Every word is *rock solid*.
- *Good job for what you wrote!!!
- *Precise and powerful. *The truth is out in the open.*
- *A piercing and accurate post.

In Example 2, the teachers expressed their support using exclamation marks and other typographic elements to accentuate their approval. In addition, they complemented their written responses with metalinguistic figurative forms (i.e., relating to the features of the discourse used in the forum) such as metaphors (*stinging words*) and formulaic phrases (see note 3): *the truth is out in the open* and *every word is rock solid*, which probably enhanced the momentary crystallization of an online group positioning.

The parents' reaction to the OP was different. Example 3 contains a digital conversation that took place after the teachers had interactively co-constructed their approval of the OP. The participants were a male parent (P1) criticizing both the OP's overt demand to raise the teachers' salaries, as well as the preceding enthusiastic response of 48 teachers illustrated in Example 2. Subsequently, two teachers (T1 and T2) attempted to explain to P1 what it means to be a teacher in Israel in 2022. Finally, P2, a female parent, further criticized the OP, using a powerful and insulting metaphor.

Example 3: You embody the contagion that affects senior teachers

P1: Take all your work hours, divide them by your day off every week plus 2 months in the summer plus time off for Passover, Sukkot [Jewish holidays, the authors] and the day after each holiday. How many work hours does it come out to per day? I guess it does not come to 8.45 h like the rest of the country. Right?

T1: A teacher has a huge number of work hours that are not counted. Preparing lesson plans, communication with parents, composing exams and papers and marking them, writing reports and certificates, and more. And over and above that, can you really compare an hour of work facing 30–40 pupils who are children—each of whom has different abilities and needs, some of them very challenging and/or special needs—to an hour of work in an office in front of a computer or facing a single adult client? Perhaps the time has come to *stop comparing apples and oranges*?

T2: It's time for parents to understand that *we are not babysitters or vacationers in a fancy five-star hotel*. Until you understand that,

you can do calculations and you will always *feel like losers*. We are professional teachers who work hard and honorably every hour of the day. Sometimes we are substitutes for you, the parents; stop treating us with suspicion.

P2: There are 2 sentences that you wrote that arouse great concern for the educational future of my children. You wrote: Reforms, laws, and administration of education do not interest me—I get my instructions from above and carry them out. *The education system is on the brink of bankruptcy*, but it does not interest you?! So, this *struggle* is not yours? You hug the children, but you do not have an opinion about what is going on in the education system? I think *you embody the contagion that affects senior teachers* who carry out what they are instructed to do.

In response to P1 who positioned teachers as regular officials, T1 emphasized the differences between office work and teaching heterogeneous overpopulated classes. For this comparison, she used a metalinguistic formulaic phrase embedded in a rhetorical question (i.e., emphatic rhetorical statements. Kupferberg, 2016)⁷: *Perhaps the time has come to stop comparing apples and oranges?* This combination of a protesting rhetorical question and a formulaic phrase forcefully foregrounds T1's criticism of the parent's first post. Subsequently, T2 reinforces T1's response by adding two metaphors embedded in negative utterances,⁸ emphasizing that teachers have a serious job: *It's time for parents to understand that we are not babysitters or vacationers in a fancy five-star hotel*.

P2's response shows that she misinterpreted the OP's last two utterances, thinking that they show that the OP writer is not interested in education. P2 used three rhetorical questions to criticize the OP. The first question is marked by exclamation and question marks. Then, utilizing an extremely offensive metaphor, she summarizes her attack on the OP writer and other veteran teachers: *'I think you embody the contagion that affects senior teachers who carry out what they are instructed to do'*. In this way, she presents a negative "portrait" of the teachers that does not accept the teachers' *fighting features* positioned in Example 1 vis-à-vis the forum participants.

In Example 4, a forum participant who is neither a teacher nor a parent responds to the preceding parent-teacher interaction, as shown in Example 4:

Example 4: The education system is striding towards an abyss

The education system, as it has been for ages, is striding towards an abyss and dragging pupils, teachers, and parents with it. Due to disorganization and overall basic principles, we have lost the essence of an educator. Teachers for whom education is a vocation are leaving this important profession, *and the children are paying a heavy price!*

Example 4 turns the spotlight from the parent-teacher forum's exchange of views to the entire education system. The post's author

⁷ For a detailed description of the integrative use of different figurative forms with other linguistic forms see Kupferberg and Green (2005) and Kupferberg (2016).

⁸ An utterance is defined as a context dependent unit that has a communicative function even if it is not grammatical (Quirk et al., 1985).

conceptualizes the education system in terms of a powerful unidentified entity that drags its innocent victims, “pupils, teachers, and parents, with it.” In other posts, not presented in this methodologically oriented article, participants used additional figurative forms which conceptualized different dimensions of this entity as “a huge apparatus whose unwieldiness is frightening,” “a monster,” “a small cult,” and “a broken system,” emphasizing that it must change. Taken together, the education system is compared to an unknown, enormous, dangerous, and frightening entity, and the pupils, teachers, and parents are its helpless victims. In the following turns, the forum participants agreed on this solution and offered ideas as to how to carry out the change (Gamliel and Kupferberg, 2024, 2025).

Macroanalysis

Following Rogers (2018) and Bartlett (2018), under a macroanalytic critical lens we emphasize (1) that the term “critical” does not necessarily imply that the researcher is identifying negative aspects, and (2) that the critical discourse analyst should focus on solutions rather than problems. In this vein, we further argue that the forum participants did reach a consensus regarding the most appropriate course of action, explicitly identifying specific adjustments needed to achieve the intended educational improvements (Gamliel and Kupferberg, 2024, 2025). However, the parent-teacher forum on which this study focuses does not serve as a platform for formal policymaking. It mainly provides a location for the participants to vent troubled feelings and thoughts in times of crisis, such as the crisis in August 2022, when the teachers’ professional identity was publicly denigrated as we show in Example 3. The history of the Israeli education system and the numerous reforms that have attempted to improve it, show that an examination of this kind expounds upon the idea that the present crisis is deeply rooted in the past. A sustainable resolution requires strategic intervention by specialized educational policymakers who possess the expertise to implement effective changes (Gamliel and Kupferberg, 2024, 2025).

Discussion

Two methodologically oriented questions guided the analysis of the illustrative examples in this paper. How did the theoretical and methodological division into levels of analysis enhance the exploration of the forum posts? How did the microanalytic Sequence and Positioning Language Analyses contribute to the quest for meaning in the forum posts?

The division into levels of analysis allowed us to probe the actual flow of naturally occurring digital turns microanalytically, identify the main discursive actions that were carried out in the forum, and foreground the parents’ and teachers’ positioning vis-à-vis each other. In the written forum data, the participants could not express meaning via body language, facial expressions, and prosody (i.e., the acoustic features of speech). Consequently, our analysis focused on textual components such as structure, content, language resources including figurative language, and typographical elements.

The sequence procedure illuminated the strong impact of the first post on the ensuing interaction. Example 2 illustrates how 48 teachers collaborated in a powerful and emphatic expression of support for the call for action in Example 1 and readily positioned themselves

vis-à-vis the parents and other participants. In the face of this online identity, the parents reacted discursively. Some endorsed the call for action, and others rejected it critically (Example 3).

The Language Analysis further identified and foregrounded the functions of figurative forms within and across digital turns by stressing the essence of participants’ actions and positioning. Within turns this analysis summarized main ideas (e.g., *Teachers are fighters* in Example 1). Across turns, as shown in Example 2, metalinguistic figurative language was used to consolidate the meaning of the teachers’ group positioning expressed in the first example. In Example 3, one parent criticized the teachers’ identity positioning by figuratively delineating a negative collective portrait of teachers: *I think you embody the contagion that affects senior teachers*. A turning point in the interaction occurred when a participant who was not involved in the teacher-parent interaction used figurative language to draw the participants’ attention to the urgent need to change the Ministry of Education instead of wasting time on useless talk. This action offered the participants a positive and efficient discursive trajectory.⁹

In short, the Sequence Analysis contributed by showing how the different discursive actions were carried out interactively online by a real group of parents and teachers in a time of crisis. The Language Analysis further illuminated focal points of view in the interaction (e.g., Teachers see themselves as *fighters* vis-à-vis some parents who think that teachers are *an illness*). In addition, as shown by Example 2, metalinguistic tropes “lubricated” the interaction and the construction of a group positioning.

These findings also underscore the value of interpretative pluralism in discourse analysis. By acknowledging multiple layers of meaning and positioning, educators and researchers can better understand the complexity of stakeholder interactions in educational settings. Interpretative pluralism allows for the coexistence of conflicting narratives, which is essential in navigating emotionally charged and ideologically diverse conversations. This approach encourages educators to remain open to alternative perspectives and to engage in reflective dialogue that fosters mutual understanding.

Examining the findings produced from the microanalysis under a critical macroanalytic lens (Bartlett, 2018; Rogers, 2018), we argue that the digital parent-teacher forum provides a suitable location for discussing cardinal issues for parents, teachers, and others in a time of crisis, but is not suitable for furthering comprehensive design changes in the Israeli education system.

The methodological framework described in this article has several advantages. It focuses on digital discourse and clarifies how, in the absence of body language and prosody, the researcher can integrate analyses that foreground the actions performed by participants and organize the essence of these actions in a naturally occurring online written discourse. However, the forum has its limitations because actual changes probably cannot be carried out online.

From a practical standpoint, educators can apply these insights by fostering structured online forums within their institutions to facilitate transparent dialogue among stakeholders. For example, school leaders might use discourse analysis techniques to identify recurring themes in parent-teacher communication and address misalignments in

⁹ See Gamliel and Kupferberg, 2025 for discursive trajectories in parent-teachers communication.

expectations. Teachers can also reflect on their own positioning in digital interactions to enhance empathy and responsiveness. These applications can help bridge communication gaps and promote collaborative problem-solving in educational communities.

Building on these findings, the following Conclusion section summarizes key contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

Conclusion

This study examined parent-teacher interactions within a digital forum, in times of an educational crisis. The sequence analysis demonstrated how initial posts set the trajectory of engagement, while the language analysis revealed the central role of language resources including figurative language in framing group identities and reinforcing perspectives. These findings suggest that online forums provide a dynamic space for negotiation of meaning and collective identity formation in digital discourse.

The methodological approach applied in this article contributes to the understanding of digital discourse by integrating microanalytic and macroanalytic perspectives. This study demonstrates how linguistic and structural elements compensate for the absence of traditional communicative cues (e.g., such as body language and prosody), offering insights into digital interaction dynamics. Additionally, it underscores the importance of informal online discussions in amplifying teacher and parent voices outside institutional constraints.

In summary the findings reinforce the importance of providing authentic representational spaces for teachers and parents in the education system. Informal digital discussions highlight focal points of conflict and present an opportunity to enhance expectation alignment between key educational stakeholders. As such, policymakers should consider strategies that connect digital discourse with institutional decision-making, ensuring that teachers, parents, and students have a direct and meaningful role in shaping educational reforms.

Furthermore, educators and school administrators can benefit from incorporating discourse analysis into professional development programs. Training in interpretative pluralism and positioning theory may equip practitioners with tools to better navigate complex interactions and foster inclusive dialogue. By translating analytical insights into actionable strategies, educational stakeholders can cultivate more responsive and equitable learning environments.

Limitations and future directions

The study has several limitations. The qualitative analysis is confined to a specific digital forum, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Additionally, while the study highlights discursive interactions, it does not assess the direct impact of such conversations on policy-making or institutional change. Moreover, the forum itself, while facilitating engagement, does not serve as a platform for implementing systemic reforms.

Further studies could expand the scope of analysis to multiple online platforms to examine variations in digital parent-teacher discourse. Investigating long-term trends in such interactions could provide deeper insights into how online engagement influences educational policymaking. Additionally, research into hybrid models

of communication, combining digital and face-to-face interactions, could enhance our understanding of the effectiveness of online forums in shaping educational discourse.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by The Ethics Committee of MOFET Institute. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent for participation was not required from the participants or the participants' legal guardians/next of kin in accordance with the national legislation and institutional requirements.

Author contributions

RG: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. IK: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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