Teacher Self-disclosure as Essential Factor for Instructional Strategy and Content Building in ESL Writing Classroom

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Abstract: Past studies found that teacher self-disclosure positively impacted the socio-psychological aspect of teaching and learning within its dimensions of amount, relevance and negativity. However, much understanding about teacher self-disclosure today is derived from quantitative studies using established scales, conducted in non-Asian countries and usually in high school or college settings. Investigations pertaining to teacher self-disclosure in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom and its effects on language learning are limited. Using the qualitative approach, this exploratory study, therefore, aimed to investigate factors essential for understanding teacher self-disclosure in the Malaysian ESL writing classroom. An ESL teacher was observed in an Academic Writing course that comprised 32 lecture and tutorial contact hours at a private institution of higher learning in Malaysia during a fourteen-week semester. A one-to-one teacher interview was then conducted to supplement the observational data. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyse data transcriptions using NVivo 12. Two main factors emerged from the analysis, revealing that the ESL writing teacher employed self-disclosures as instructional strategies and content building strategies. Teacher self-disclosure, therefore, has important implications for teachers and the teaching of writing in the ESL classroom.

Keywords: Content building, ESL writing, Instructional strategy, Relevance, Teacher self-disclosure.

1. Introduction

According to Santrock (2009), the interaction between personal characteristics and behavior between the environment and social contexts is a vital process for human development. In the classroom, the socio-psychological aspect of teacher-student interaction is an important element of teaching and learning strategy. Sound instructional strategies provide students an opportunity to focus on their internal processes of learning through cognitive, behavioral and affective reinforcements.

Positive teacher-student engagements, therefore is crucial for ESL students in their second language acquisition process, especially L2 writing as language learning strategies employed by teachers or students may hinder or encourage learning (Cui, 2022; Pishgadam et al., 2021; Ramdani & Rahmat, 2018).

Instructional communication researchers posit that the socio-psychological trait of teachers revealed through self-disclosures are an innate part of the classroom communication dynamics. Arghe et al., (2020) and Lamb et al., (2016) stated that building teacher-student relationships is an important communication strategy and it is established through the personalization of course content. As interpersonal communication is the process through which teaching and learning takes place, teachers are often engaged in dialogues with their students through self-disclosures. Teachers may voice out their personal opinions, emotions or their experiences while explaining course content, important concepts or exemplifications. Thus, teacher self-disclosure is the "teacher statements made in the classroom about oneself that reveals information that would otherwise be inaccessible to students" (Sorenson, 1989, p, 260).

Past and recent researches on teacher self-disclosure have attempted to establish the types of disclosures (Cayanus & Martin, 2008), breadth and the depth of disclosures (Jebbour, 2018; Cayanus & Martin, 2002), reasons for disclosures, and when and how disclosures take place in the socio-psychological contexts and their effects on interpersonal relationships (Wang & Guan, 2020, Jebbour, 2018, Cayanus & Martin, 2003a, Sorenson, 1989). In the teaching and learning context, positive relationships between teacher self-disclosure and variables such as classroom participation (Liu & Zu, 2021; Jebbour & Mouaid, 2019; Goldstein & Benassi, 1994), clarity (Zheng, 2021; Shrodt, 2013), motivation (Wang & Guan, 2020; Strickland, 2016; Christopel, 1990), solidarity and trust (Wheeless & Grotz, 1976), out-of-classroom communication (Aniljeet, Pakirnathan & Suppiah, 2018; Knapp, 2008), and affective learning and interest (Qin, 2022; Sanders, 2014, Chory & McCroskey, 1999) were established. Teacher self-disclosure is also known to have positively impacted teaching and learning on online platforms such as Facebook (Cayanus, Martin & Goodboy, 2009) and computer-assisted learning (Serag, 2011).

As interpersonal communication is the process through which teaching and learning takes place, teachers are often engaged in dialogues with their students. This interaction builds an ongoing interpersonal relationship between teachers and students through self-disclosures. Self-disclosure is the central element of Irvin Altman and Dalmas Taylor's Social Penetration Theory (1973). Griffin (2010) defines Social Penetration Theory as "the process of developing deeper intimacy with another person through mutual self-disclosure," (p. 114) while Wheeless and Grotz (1976) ; Cozby (1973), and Jourard (1971), explain that self-disclosure is the exchange of any messages about the self that a person communicates to one another on the basis of trust and solidarity. The variety of topics (breadth) and the intimate details (depth) of the information shared between two or more individuals determine the nature of social relationships. Thus, teacher self-disclosure is the "teacher statements made in the classroom about oneself that reveals information that would otherwise be inaccessible to students" (Sorenson, 1989, p, 260). Cayanus and Martin (2004, 2003b 2002) revealed that teacher self-disclosure consists of three dimensions, namely amount), relevance and valence. These dimensions have been expanded in recent studies which now include positivity and negativity (Wang & Guan, 2020), depth and duration (Jebbour, 2018) and appropriateness (Cayanus & Heisler, 2013).

However, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding about teacher self-disclosure, especially on the Malaysian ESL teacher-student interpersonal dynamics in the teaching and learning contexts. Most studies pertaining to teacher self-disclosure have been carried out in the United Sates, and more recently in the Middle East, Iran, Turkey, Japan and China in the context of teaching English as Foreign Language. So far, teacher self-disclosure is understood through students' perceptions of teacher self-disclosure, categorized under the dimensions of amount, relevance and negativity (Cayanus & Martin, 2008) and quantified using the 14-item Instructor Self-disclosure Scale developed by the same authors. The study reported in this paper, however, had employed a qualitative methodology using classroom (teacher) observations and a one-to-one teacher interview to record occurrences and other evidences of teacher self-disclosure in a Malaysian ESL writing classroom. Therefore, this exploratory research aimed to answer the following research question: What factors are essential for explaining the concept of teacher self-disclosure in a Malaysian ESL writing classroom.

2.   Literature Review

Problems in English as Second Language writing

Being competent in L2 writing skills is an integral part of an undergraduate's university life. However, many ESL undergraduates find that writing is the most difficult skill to master. Prakash (2012) contends that positive mental processes inculcated in the classroom affect positive learning behaviors of learners. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of the mental processes that affect their students. These mental processes include personal belief systems, attentiveness, memorizing, problem solving and creativity. These cognitive processes in turn translate into behavioral strategies that help to break psychological barriers and make teaching and learning accessible. Teachers need to be aware of suitable learning and teaching strategies for different learning situations in the ESL writing classrooms. Although linguistic incompetence has led to complications in ESL writing among undergraduates (Daud et.al., 2021; Siti & Lilliati, 2021, David et.al., 2015; Kho-Yar & Tan, 2015; Mah & Gek, 2015), literature also points out that ESL students' writing proficiency, especially in creating, elaborating and expressing effective content are affected by the lack of effective teaching strategies in the ESL writing classroom (Rozana, 2019; Mimi, Nooreiny & Mohammed, 2017).

In a study conducted by Nooreiny and Munusamy (2015), 30 undergraduates from a Malaysian public university were interviewed to gauge difficulties they faced as ESL learners. Their study revealed that students indicated classroom learning as dull as it was mostly lecturer-centered and lecturers depended heavily on power-point presentations. Students also pointed out that the teaching concept that focused mainly on lecturers transferring lessons straight from the curriculum and not from their experiences, knowledge or creativity had created a passive class environment with no communication established between them. In recent studies, Ng and Yeo (2020) on the other hand had surveyed 35 Malaysian teachers to gauge their perceptions of teacher-student closeness. The results showed that 62.8% of the teachers reported a moderate to high relationship conflict levels. This, in turn correlated with the students negative academic performance, disinterest in lessons and school avoidance. This is further supported by Ahmad et.al. (2021) study who found that the lack of meaningful student-teacher interaction in the classroom and dependency on textbooks created passive learners who were disengaged from real world concepts and views. The study concluded that proactive student centered cooperative learning strategies should be expedited. These findings indicate that there is a need to find new ways of improving the pedagogical practices and strategies of ESL instructors to improve teaching and learning.

Literature reporting studies pertaining to teachers' self-disclosure as a tool of instructional communication in areas of ESL teaching and learning, especially ESL writing, are also lacking. One which is available is Eckhart's (2011) case study in a writing class of 27 undergraduate American and Asian students. The teacher disclosed personal viewpoints and experiences on issues of pain, sickness and death following which the students were encouraged to write about their experiences with loss or death of a loved one. The results revealed that the respondents reacted positively to the teacher's self-disclosures and indicated that they should be informed about life-changing events. Being informed of the teacher's personal struggles drew them closer to the teacher and changed their attitudes towards their writing tasks where they took personal interest and autonomy towards completing their work.

Another related study was conducted by Pakirnathan and Kepol (2018) in a quantitative study on 57 ESL undergraduates in a private institution of higher learning in Malaysia. The results of the study showed positive correlations between perceived teacher self-disclosure and the respondents' writing performance in academic argumentative writing, especially in terms of amount and relevance. The respondents perceived teacher self-disclosure especially positive when teachers were opinionated and clear in their attitudinal dispositions towards current events in the campus and community. A quasi-experimental study was further conducted by Pakirnathan, Kepol and Suppiah (2021) on 60 Malaysian ESL undergraduates from a writing course who participated in focus group interviews. Seven themes were generated based on the participants' experiences in regards to the effects of teacher self-disclosure. These included themes pertaining to learning strategy, writing strategies, content generating strategies, affective learning, teacher-student communication, classroom climate and appropriateness.

The studies above show that teacher self-disclosure is worth investigating as a promising teaching and learning strategy in the ESL writing classroom. This is important as mastery in writing skills complements the overall proficiency use of the English language skills of an ESL learner.

3. Methods

A two-step mixed method qualitative approach was used to achieve the purpose of the study. Using purposive sampling, an Academic Writing lecturer from a Malaysian private university was selected. The lecturer was a Malaysian, female, 44 years old and has taught Academic Writing for more than 15 years in undergraduate programmes. Permission was first obtained from the administrators and the course lecturer for data collection. In the first phase, data was collected through classroom observation. The lecturer was observed over a span of eight lecture sessions that covered 32 class hours aided by video- and audio-recorded on a camcorder. An observation form was used by the researcher to record instances of teacher self-disclosure such as talk about self, or personalised contexts of content explanations, opinions, and experiences. The recordings were then transcribed and thematically analysed. The themes were inductively derived from the codes identified in the data collected. The software NVIVO Version 12 was used to manage the collected data. Two inter-raters with ELT backgrounds were roped in to ensure consistency in the identification and catergorisation of teacher self-disclosure while, member checking with the teacher was conducted to validate the qualitative data. In order to further elicitate the teacher's experiences, a one-to-one teacher interview was conducted two weeks after the observation period. This was the second phase of data collection. The interview lasted about 45 minutes. An interview protocol containing six questions was designed to answer the research question. Based on the recommendation of Castillo-Montoya (2016), in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the interview protocol developed, the researcher adopted the interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework. The teacher was asked about her experiences of self-disclosing in the classroom, what kind of instances induced the use of self-disclosures and if she would use such disclosures in the classroom in the future. The interview was audio recorded, transcribed for thematic analysis and the emerging themes managed by using the NVIVO-12 software. The themes were further validated by the two inter-raters mentioned above.

4. Results

The main factors identified from the data were the pedagogical and content factors. These factors were labeled as instructional strategies and content building, respectively. Each factor was supported by sub-factors which contributed to a more in-depth understanding of the factor as shown in Figure 1.1 below.
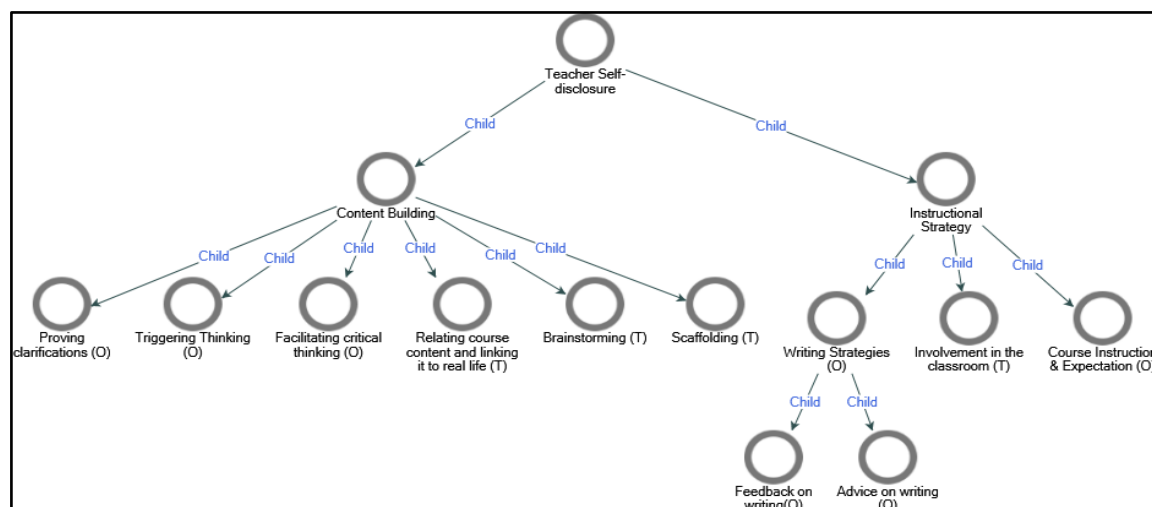
Fig. 1.1 Factors are essential for explaining the concept of teacher self-disclosure in a Malaysian ESL writing classroom

4.1 Theme 1: Instructional Strategies

The first factor identified for a comprehensive understanding of teacher self-disclosure in the ESL argumentative writing classroom was instructional strategies. Personalized instructions through teacher self-disclosure was one of the main strategies through which the teacher executed course instructions and her expectations, explained what constituted good writing, provided feedback on the students' argumentative writing, and used her own experiences of learning to write argumentative essays to advise her students. Through self-disclosure, the instructions for course fulfillment and learning strategies, for both argumentative writing and second language acquisition, were clarified and simplified for students' understanding and application.

Instructional strategies could be categorized into the following sub-factors that showed the form, content and use of the disclosures: course instruction and expectation, writing strategies, feedback on writing, language learning experiences and classroom atmosphere. These sub-factors are described below:

Course Instruction and Expectations

Course instructions included the teacher's expectations of ESL writing requirements, assignment and examination briefs, and rules and regulations pertaining to project submissions. This is evidenced by the following excerpt obtained from the classroom observations:

> "…So, what are the effects/consequences of not reading the assignment guidelines? What did I do…marks are deducted, because you don't follow the format, ok, you forget to submit assignment on time, this has happened before, so, to me, this is how it is…" (OBS 8)

Writing Strategies.

Language learning strategies are an important aspect of ESL learning and past research (e.g., Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013) has demonstrated that many factors affected ESL teachers' teaching strategies and ESL students' learning strategies especially in L2 writing. However, students' understanding and the appropriate application to fulfill writing tasks determine the success of these strategies. The researchers observed that the teacher used self-disclosures in the form of her own experiences and opinions to provide learning strategies for writing effective argumentative essays. The excerpt below demonstrates the teacher's own tactics and her opinions in comparison to the students' strategies while writing argumentative essays:

> "…So, usually, my tactic in writing argumentation is to first, to be able to come up with a sound thesis statement- I mean taking a stand on the notion given. Simply by understanding the context, definition of terms and then deciding to agree or disagree with it…" (OBS 2)

Feedback on Writing.

The researchers observed that the teacher had employed self-disclosures through her views and opinions on students' general and argumentative writing. These feedbacks were personalized opinions, based on her professional observations and experiences as an academic writing teacher and of argumentative essay writing.

> "…I think many of us will do this. Start the essay by quoting definitions from dictionaries. That is the easiest way to do it. 'According to Cambridge dictionary…' students always do this…because they don't know what to write…find the term but not explain the term in context…" (OBS 6)

Advice on Writing.

It was also observed that the teacher self-disclosed her own learning experiences in the ESL writing classroom with the intention of advising her students on good writing. Using her own language learning experiences, the teacher compared her writing strategies with the students' strategies, even evaluating the effectiveness of such strategies in tertiary writing. An example is demonstrated in the excerpt below:

> "…Usually, I will take note of the key terms, to understand the context of the argumentation. They serve as a guideline to remind me the elements that make up argumentations, ok…"   (OBS 2)

Involvement in the Classroom.

A teacher is responsible for creating a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment for his or her students. It was observed that when the teacher self-disclosed, she appeared more relaxed, poised and was able to communicate effectively with the students.

According to the teacher, the students were more willing to participate in discussions and even gave verbal and non-verbal responses when she self-disclosed. She said:

> "...Yes, I think they are more willing to participate in the classroom and tutorial discussions, they are more willing to give personal opinions - they are not reserved or shy, they even volunteer, they seem to be confident in answering - at least they don't look away or stare at me. In the lecture, some actually give verbal feedback, some give non-verbal feedback, but this has increased. They are more engaging, makes it easier to discuss tutorials..." (T1S1)

Because her students were more responsive during the lectures, she was motivated to implement self-disclosures in her teaching strategies. She said:

> "...I feel that the environment is lighter, I don't feel so stressed while delivering the lectures, I feel better when I realize that the students are responding to me when I self-disclose. I feel the students are more interested and it actually motivates me when I am preparing the slides, the lectures, I have started using illustration and etc…not notes..." (TIS1)

4.2   Theme 2: Content Building

The second factor that contributed to the understanding of teacher self-disclosure is content building. Effective delivery of content is an important component of teaching and learning. In a writing classroom, it is vital that students are exposed to stimulating content to help them visualize and make sense of ideas, both known and unknown. It was observed during the lectures and tutorials that teacher self-disclosure was an important tool that facilitated the teacher to use her experiences and opinions in order to explain important facts, principles, concepts, attitudes and values related to the lecture or essay topics that the students were being exposed to. The teacher used self-disclosure when providing clarification, brainstorming, recalling course content and linking it to real life, scaffolding, triggering thinking, and facilitating critical thinking.

Providing Clarifications

The researchers observed that teacher self-disclosure was useful in the ESL classroom in aiding the teacher to provide elaborations, examples and relating course content to personal experiences as shown in the following excerpts:

"…testing of animals in the medical laboratories. This is a popular argumentative topic. I need to make a stand. For example, I am an animal lover. I have a cat and two dogs at home. They are like family, you know. But I am also aware that both my beagles are popular specimens for lab animals…" (OBS 9)

The teacher also explained during the interview that she found self-disclosure a practical technique when she needed to explain complicated terms and introducing new concepts in the classroom. She said:

"...I think it will be a very good practice, especially beneficial for students if teachers could relate their experiences rather than depending on textbooks, journal or academic materials, especially for content based subjects that use a lot of theories..." (TIS1)

Brainstorming.

When asked during the teacher interview, at which point of the writing lesson the teacher felt self-disclosures were the most significant, the teacher suggested that it was during the brainstorming sessions while introducing new topics. This is shown by the excerpts below:

"Many of them admit that they don't do a lot of reading, so, it's good that the lecturer kind of gives them an idea on which they can explore." (TIS1)

The teacher also opined that self-disclosures were important in helping students to personalize examples and the experiences of others. When they were able to do this, they could revert to their own experiences and write from their own perspectives. The teacher explained that such approach made the teaching of writing more interesting. The teacher's opinion is shown in the excerpt below:

"...Learning is actually a different thing from applying the skills, so when teacher self-disclose, they are actually humanizing the writing courses, and get students to relate these topics to real-life experiences. So, when students are able to see how their personal experiences, personal opinions can affect the way they write, then they'll probably be more interested in writing, or more positively inclined in the approach towards writing per se..." (TIS1)

Recalling Course Content and Linking It to Real Life.

The teacher explained that it was easier for the students to remember course content, especially ideas that she related in class during lectures and tutorials. This had proven to be an effective strategy for students while completing assignments and essays. The teacher said:

"...I did ask them personally whether what I told them in class actually helped them to write, and it actually worked, because they got to think about the topic, they could recall some of the points I made about myself in relation to the topic..." (TIS1)

Scaffolding.

The teacher informed the researcher that the students had informed her that they could apply her ideas as a point of departure and reference to compare their own experiences during their own essay writing process. This revelation is further supported by response on how her disclosures affected the students' essay writing. She said:

"...students have told me that my disclosures got them to focus on the topic, obtain different perspectives for discussions and also allowed them the space to construct their own ideas when I asked them to give their personal opinions or experiences..." (TIS1)

Triggering Thinking.

During the lecture sessions it was observed that teacher self-disclosure was an important factor that enabled the teacher to ask questions based on her own observations and intrigue. These disclosures were given as triggers or stimulations while guiding her students before or after discussions. The questions that she asked were usually open-ended with no single correct answer. These questions were followed by fast-paced opinions on the topics being discussed to aide students' answers or justifications for argumentative essay topics. This type of self-disclosure is evidenced by the excerpt below:

"…For me, mercy killing, or, euthanasia, I wonder what it is. Does it imply kindness to the terminally ill patient? And why some people are against mercy killing. Do you think it's ethical?" (OBS 6)

Facilitating Critical Thinking.

The data from the classroom observation also revealed that the teacher used self-disclosure to facilitate critical thinking among students in the writing classroom. The teacher employed her personal judgments on related topics of discussion before asking the students to decide their stance on the particular topics. The following example that set off the students' critical thinking opportunities was based on the teacher's reservations on about reality T.V. shows as shown in the excerpt below:

"…But you may also want to think. How much reality actually exists in the word 'reality' show? Have you ever wondered how much of it is actually scripted?" (OBS 8)

The teacher opined that her self-disclosures provided more avenues for her students to open up. She said after observing their teachers, they in turn, would self-disclose their own personal experiences and ideas in their essays. She explained:

"...If students get used to this kind of communication style, they might be able to apply it to themselves - in putting out their own opinions or experiences in their essays..." (TIS1)

5. Discussion

Overall, the results of this study have revealed four main factors that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the concept of teacher self-disclosure in an ESL writing classroom. Since teacher self-disclosure occurs within the classroom or an educational context, it is logical that the factors pertain to the teacher and aspects of teaching and learning in the classroom. The conceptualization of teacher self-disclosure requires all the four factors - pedagogical, content, communicational and personal - to be taken into account.

Significantly, the study has extended the dimension of relevance in the context of ESL writing where teacher self-disclosure was an important factor for providing writing instructions and strategies as well as content building, most notably in improving idea generating, scaffolding techniques, triggering thinking and critical thinking among ESL students. This study is also aligned with past studies which reported that relevant teacher self-disclosures to course content improved interpersonal relationality between teacher and students. The factors are individually discussed below.

The results showed that teacher self-disclosure was helpful for the teacher to facilitate explanations regarding course requirements and expectations. As shown in past researches, relevant teacher self-disclosures were beneficial for explaining course objectives and assignments. This can be associated with the findings of Cayanus and Martin (2004), Cayanus, Martin and Weber (2003) and Scott and Nussbaum (1981), where relevant teacher self-disclosures attributed to clear teacher instructions about the course and the preparation of course assignments. This effect of teacher self-disclosure can be expanded in this study to include instructions for examination, procedures and strategies for grade achievement, which may otherwise be treated with confidence in classes with examinations. In this study too, teacher self-disclosure also allowed the expression of teachers' personal

attitudes towards the quality of writing that was expected from the students, the importance of adhering to assignment submission dates and avoiding plagiarism.

The current study also discovered that teacher self-disclosure can be a practical tool to be used as an instructional communication strategy to inform students on the available writing strategies, through personalized feedback on writing and sharing the teacher's own language learning experiences. These strategies would be significant in implementing successful writing performance strategies that are not found in textbooks but available in the students' immediate learning environment. This provides an avenue for the teacher to ponder on his/her own writing challenges, mistakes and writing strategies, which are later translated into essential advice on improving writing, providing support for argumentation, choosing topics, the importance of practice, and reading and engaging in peer reviews. Personalized feedback adds a personal touch compared to the pen and paper strategies of providing feedback on ESL writing for the students. These self-disclosures would be particularly effective in the process writing stages of drafting and revising of written assignments.

Self-disclosure was an important tool for the ESL teacher to provide extended details on definitions and course concepts or key terms, relate content to real-life experiences, issues and events, and explain discussion points in the classroom. This study further extends this understanding by adding that relevant teacher self-disclosure also affects the cognitive outcomes of ESL students' thinking and learning processes in the ESL writing classroom. Teacher self-disclosure has potential to be instrumental in improving L2 writing acquisition in the ESL writing classroom when used in the process of brainstorming, scaffolding, triggering thinking and critical thinking, all of which are crucial for building content, engaging students' prior knowledge and old experiences to current knowledge and new experiences (Cui, 2022; Pishgadam et al., 2021).

As suggested by Liang (2007), scaffolding is the result of teachers' sharing of knowledge and linking their experiences to current thinking. This study showed that when the teacher self-disclosed during brainstorming sessions and explained key words in argumentative topics, the ESL students were able to translate them as new ideas that were not part of their schema (knowledge). Thus, teacher's self-disclosure contribution to content generating strategies can be instrumental in creating independent or autonomous L2 writers. Oxford (1999) and Oxford and Crookall (1989) defined this strategy as associated with students receiving messages from teachers and using this information to acquire, store and retrieve during their language learning process. This is especially significant for a writing classroom where students actively produce and reproduce information and experiences during the production of written texts.

This study further discovered that teacher self-disclosures, which were usually the tip-off point for generating questions, paved way for the teacher to guide the ESL students during discussions by questioning them from time to time. This usually occurred during the pre-writing stages of writing that involved the discussion of generalized but complex topics that needed critical evaluation, justifications and judgments in the argumentative classroom. When the questions or topics were highly cognitive, teacher self-disclosure generally helped to provide the basis for questioning and also clarifying the issues in particular contexts. This is further supported by Muijis and Reynolds (2011) who stated that effective teachers who raised more process questions and frequent questioning improved students' performances.

Finally, this study also showed that teacher self-disclosure provided an avenue for critical thinking in the argumentative writing classroom. This was an effective strategy for the teacher in disclosing personal opinions and judgments related to the topics of discussion, making inferences to her own experiences and observations, questioning on the consistency and reliability of information regarding issues, events and practices and then asking students to provide their own personal judgments or perspectives. These disclosures could be helpful for ESL students to evaluate their own pool of resources or existing opinions of essay topics, realign their own judgments, views and opinions, and write their arguments based on new and convincing perspectives.

6.   Conclusion

In this study, two factors related to the teacher and activities of teaching were identified as essential factors for understanding teacher self-disclosure in an ESL writing classroom. This study posits that teacher self-disclosure in the ESL writing classroom can be better conceived by

understanding the relationality between teacher and students. This relationality can be understood in terms of the two factors of instructional strategies and content building which mainly show the form (eg. past experience, opinions), content (eg. writing strategies, language learning experience) and use (eg. giving instructions regarding assignments, giving feedback) of teacher self-disclosure. The two factors can also be understood in relation to the three dimensions of amount, relevance and valence proposed by Cayanus and Martin (2002), and how the dynamics of teacher self-disclosure impinge on ESL students' learning. This study also suggests that the dimension, relevance, remains the most significant in conceptualizing teacher self-disclosure in the ESL argumentative writing classroom. This study is significant as a comprehensive understanding of teacher self-disclosure would enable ELT practitioners to potentially use teacher self-disclosures more actively and intentionally as an instructional communication tool in the ESL argumentative writing classroom. They should be aware of the powerful impact of their self-disclosures on the cognitive and affective development of their students and create socio-psychological communicative opportunities that are beneficial to ESL students learning to write. Future studies, on the other hand, can enhance this investigation further in two ways. One, by addressing the sampling limitation. The data presented in this study is gathered through purposive sampling involving one ESL female teacher. Literature points out that self-disclosure is subjective to demographic factors such as age, gender, religious-political-social and educational statuses of the discloser. Therefore, more teachers from varied demographic backgrounds could be employed to enrich the one-dimensional data presented in this study. Two, ESL students' experiences and outcomes of the teacher's self-disclosures should be investigated further to enrich and triangulate the qualitative data pertaining to teacher self-disclosures.

7. Co-author Contribution

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author1 carried out the fieldwork, prepared the literature review and overlooked the write up of the whole article. Authors 2 and 3 assisted in the data analysis, while Author 4 supervised this entire project.

8. Acknowledgement

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