

The Impact of Teacher Self-Disclosure on Student Participation in the University English Language Classroom

Mohsine Jebbour and Fatima Mouaid
Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University

Previous studies have implemented a quantitative method to explore the relationship between teacher self-disclosure and student participation in the educational context, particularly in communication courses. In this study, a qualitative method in data collection and analysis is used to fill this methodological gap to observe whether teachers' use of self-disclosures to explain the course content encourages student participation during the teaching-learning process in the university English language classroom in Morocco. Four teachers of English agreed to support this study by planning to include relevant self-disclosures in class. The research method for data collection is direct observations of undergraduate students in six English language courses in the department of English studies. Based on the results, this study suggests that teachers' use of self-disclosures to explain the course material served as an effective instructional practice, without using questioning techniques or cold-calling, to motivate the learners to self-select turns to interact with their teacher and reciprocate their personal information while engaging in occasional laughter.

Many university instructors have had the experience of teaching classes where they struggle to engage their students in active classroom participation (Rocca, 2010). Instructional communication researchers have considered teacher self-disclosure – that is, teachers' sharing of personal information to explain the course content in the classroom – a way to foster various aspects of student participation (Cyanus, Martin, & Weber, 2003; Cyanus & Martin, 2004; Cyanus & Martin, 2008; Cyanus, Martin, & Myers, 2008; Cyanus, Martin, & Goodboy, 2009; Goldstein & Benassi, 1994).

Although these studies have contributed to the understanding of the effects of different dimensions of teacher self-disclosure on classroom outcomes, focus has been on the quantitative analysis of teacher self-disclosure and student participation rather than on conducting a qualitative analysis of the two variables. Moreover, all these studies took place in communication courses at American universities. Thus, one reason that motivates this study is to fill the current methodological gap in the literature by implementing a qualitative methodology to examine the impact of teacher self-disclosure on student participation. The dearth of what types of teachers' self-disclosures students may respond to in previous studies justifies the need for using a qualitative approach in data collection and analysis. As such, this article will identify the types of self-disclosures that teachers use and show whether they are essential to student participation by extending research on the two variables to the university English language classroom in Morocco.

The purpose of the present study is to observe whether teacher self-disclosure encourages student participation during the teaching-learning process in the university English language classroom in Morocco.

Determining whether teacher self-disclosure is effective in affecting student participation would be significant not only by furthering understanding of teacher self-disclosure as an instructional practice in the classroom context, but also by establishing new research venues on teacher self-disclosure as an important communication behavior in language teaching.

Results from this manuscript will redound to the benefit of university teachers who consider student participation a sign of effective learning. The demand for creating enough opportunities to engage language learners in the course material at the university level justifies the need for more effective teaching practices. Thus, teachers who are open to adopt the implications derived from this study might better promote learners' oral performance during the educational process. This study will further help researchers uncover interesting areas of inquiry that previous researchers have not recognized in the educational context, thereby contributing to the development of a new theory on the implementation of teacher self-disclosure in classroom teaching.

Literature Review

Teacher Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure was first a subject of research in interpersonal relationships in psychology and communication studies respectively. In psychology, Jourard described self-disclosure as "the act of revealing personal information to others" (Jourard, 1971, p. 2), maintaining that sharing personal information with people is an underlying criterion of a healthy personality. In communication studies, Wheelless and Grotz (1976) introduced research on self-disclosure in the teaching-learning context, defining the construct as "any message about the self that a person communicates to another" (p.

338). Given that self-disclosure by teachers has been a subject of research in the educational context since the 1970s, new operational definitions of the concept have emerged. For example, Sorensen (1989) referred to teacher self-disclosure as “teacher statements in the classroom about self that may or may not be related to subject content but reveal information about the teacher that students are unlikely to learn from other sources” (p. 260). Goldstein and Benassi (1994) added the dimension of profession by defining teacher self-disclosure as “a teacher’s sharing of personal and professional information about himself or herself in a believable way” (p. 212). When teachers involve in self-disclosure in the classroom, they can share their learning and work experiences, personal problems, values, opinions, beliefs (Fusani, 1994), information about their families, personal feelings, daily outside activities, and personal histories (McBride & Wahl, 2005).

Different dimensions govern the process of teacher self-disclosure in the classroom. These include amount, depth, positivity, negativity, relevance, and appropriateness. Amount pertains to the number of personal issues shared during interaction, like using five disclosures in one course. Depth is concerned with the intimacy of one’s personal information (West & Turner, 2010), where more depth is considered socially undesirable with both classmates and teachers (Myers, 1998). Positivity entails disclosing “good” aspects of one’s life like getting an A at the university. Negativity pertains to “bad” aspects of one’s experience in the classroom, such as drug addiction. Relevance involves sharing disclosures related to the course content (Cyanus et al., 2009). For instance, an instructor can share an experience of collecting data when he/she was a student while teaching research methodology. Appropriateness is concerned with the content (i.e., topics) of teachers’ personal disclosures in the classroom; in this regard, teachers’ personal experiences/stories, information related to their family, relatives and friends, personal opinions, and personal interests or hobbies were found to be appropriate topics in the classroom context (Zhang, Shi, Tonelson, & Robinson, 2009). Alternatively, students reported self-disclosures about sex, religion, and politics to be inappropriate in class (Cyanus & Heisler, 2013).

Although instructional communication researchers have considered different dimensions of teacher self-disclosure when measuring the construct, the operational definition used for inclusion in this study is teacher self-disclosure, which involves a verbal communication of personal information to explain the course content (relevance) in the classroom. This definition puts emphasis on the function of personal information when it is relevant to the course material because past research recommended that teacher self-disclosure be used to clarify the course materials

presented for students (Cyanus & Martin, 2008; Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988; Wambach & Brothen, 1997). More importantly, teacher self-disclosures that are not related to course content may be considered inappropriate in the educational context (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006).

Student Participation

Burchfield and Sappington (1999) referred to student participation as “the number of unsolicited responses volunteered” (p. 290). It can come in different forms, including students’ questions, comments (Fassinger, 2000), and self-disclosures (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994). We addressed these three forms of student participation in this manuscript. Several studies have stressed the benefits of student in-class participation in higher education (Weaver & Qi, 2005). When students contribute to class discussions, they engage in higher levels of critical thinking, including analysis and synthesis (Smith, 1977); improve communication skills (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005); earn higher grades (Handelman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005); and learn the target language (Abebe & Deneke, 2015).

Research has provided evidence that the instructor’s communication behaviors are essential to promote higher levels of student participation (Fritschner, 2000; Myers, Martin, & Mottet, 2002). One of these communication behaviors is teacher self-disclosure. Ebersole, McFall, and Brandt (1977) studied the reciprocity of self-disclosure and found that students who had previous classes with a teacher responded to him/her with more self-disclosure than students who did not have previous classes. Approximately two decades later, Goldstein and Benassi (1994) agreed that the reciprocity effect is in existence, indicating that teacher self-disclosure creates an interpersonal atmosphere in the classroom and decreases the power differential between teachers and students. In a follow-up study, Wambach and Brothen (1997) reported no relationship between observed teacher self-disclosure and student participation. The reason why the authors found no association between the two variables may be linked to the study’s sample which involved a mix of soft and hard disciplines or the types of self-disclosures used by teachers in classroom teaching. Soon other studies confirmed that the amount of teacher self-disclosure is positively correlated with students’ participation (Cyanus et al., 2003) and communication for relational, excuse making, and sycophancy motives in the classroom (Cyanus & Martin, 2004a). Further, the amount and relevance of teacher self-disclosure motivate students to communicate for functional and participatory motives (Cyanus & Martin, 2008), ask questions about the

course materials and assignments (Cayanus, et al., 2009), and use active information-seeking strategies to clarify their understanding of the course content (Cayanus et al., 2008). Based on these results, this study extends research to the university English language classroom to examine the impact of relevant teacher self-disclosure on student participation.

Method

Research Problem

The purpose of this study was to observe whether teacher self-disclosure encouraged student participation in the English language classroom at the university level in Morocco. More specifically, the objective was to assess if teachers' use of self-disclosure to explain the course content would have an immediate effect on the following three forms of student participation: asking questions, making comments, and reciprocating self-disclosures. To address this issue, the following research question was formulated:

RQ1: Does teachers' use of self-disclosure to explain the course content encourage student participation in the English language classroom?

Setting and Participants

This study was limited to undergraduate courses in the department of English studies at the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Dhar El Mahraz at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah University in Fez, Morocco during the academic year 2016-2017. The study took place in six English language courses, namely Spoken English, Guided Reading, Introduction to Media Studies, Public Speaking and Debate, Applied Linguistics, and Pragmatics. The rationale for choosing these courses was that they aimed at creating a communicative atmosphere in the educational process. The six courses were held entirely in English and were taught by four non-native speakers of English. Two of them were professors, and the two others were student teachers with at least twelve and two years of teaching experience respectively:

Spoken English—A male student teacher
 Guided Reading—A female student teacher
 Introduction to Media Studies—A female student teacher
 Public Speaking and Debate—A male assistant professor
 Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics—A female senior professor

As for Spoken English and Guided Reading, they are first-year courses and had between 90 and 110 male and female students in each course. Regarding Introduction to Media Studies and Public Speaking and Debate, they are second-year courses and had between 50 and 70 male and female students in each course. Concerning Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics, they are third-year courses and had between 24 and 40 male and female students in each course. The students' ages ranged from 17 to 25. It is essential to note that attendance is not mandatory in the Department of English in the city of Fez, and hence teachers never check student absenteeism. Also, students often leave or enter the class while teachers are running sessions; therefore, providing the exact number of students and their gender in each course was an elusive task.

Instrument and Procedures

Given that verbal teacher self-disclosure and student participation are phenomena occurring in class during the teaching-learning process, the effective way to investigate the interplay between the two variables is by direct observation. However, a possible problem with observations is the "observer effect". That is, when the participants know that they are being observed in a certain context, they could change their behavior instead of doing what they actually do (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In this research, the "observer effect" was reduced in that the researchers had already had prior contact with students in other classes before the "official" observed and recorded sessions.

Prior to observing classes, the four instructors, after having a clear idea about our research problem and being assured anonymity, agreed to support this study voluntarily by incorporating their own self-disclosures to explain the course content in their classes. The implication is that teacher self-disclosure was intentional and planned before inclusion in the course material. Each class was observed near the middle of the semester for one session lasting two hours. The first author served as the observer, who sat at the back during each observation to collect qualitative data from the six sessions. To guide the note taking process, a classroom observation sheet (see Appendix A) composed of four sections was developed.

Section one. Section one gathered data about the name of the course, the date and time of each class, and the level of students.

Section two. Section two aimed to note down verbal examples of teachers' self-disclosure while covering the course material.

Section three. Section three sought to collect information on students' verbal reactions to their teachers' self-disclosure. It documented students' questions, comments, and self-disclosures when used to respond to relevant teacher self-disclosure.

Section four. Section four recorded the unexpected reactions/phenomena that followed teacher self-disclosure.

Overall, the observation sheet assisted in collecting specific data to assess the impact of relevant teacher self-disclosure on student participation. An audio-tape recording device was also used as a backup in case of a manual failure and to ensure collection of complete information.

Data Analysis

To answer the research question as to whether teachers' use of self-disclosure to explain the course content encourages student participation in the English language classroom, thematic analysis was employed by transcribing only the teachers' self-disclosures and students' immediate reactions. The transcribed data were checked by the two researchers to ensure that there are no misspelled words, grammatical mistakes, or irrelevant information. Eight extracts were excerpted from the six observed courses. Subsequently, preliminary codes were assigned to examples of teachers' self-disclosures and students' immediate responses. After multiple coding of the data, it was helpful to develop themes that were supported by extracts from the six courses. In this respect, we provided the name of the course from which each extract was taken. Then we described, explained, and discussed the self-disclosures produced by teachers (T) and the immediate reactions (i.e., asking questions, making comments, and reciprocating self-disclosures) alongside unexpected phenomena produced by each student (S).

Results

As shown in Figure 1, the identifying types of teacher self-disclosure were personal experiences, opinions, likes, and friendship, which elicited the observed forms of student participation (i.e., questions, comments, and self-disclosures) and other interesting incidents, specifically laughter. In other words, such types of teacher self-disclosure were found to encourage students to communicate with their teacher and reciprocate their personal information while unexpectedly engaging in occasional laughter.

Teacher-Student Communication

Teachers' use of personal disclosures helped foster rich communication between teachers and students in the educational process. More specifically, the instructor's personal experiences encouraged students to engage in the course material by asking questions as Extract 1 from Spoken English indicates:

T: "When I was in the U.S.A., I used to go with some international students to a nursing house every week to play games with senior residents. It was an amazing experience."

S1: "Sir, did you study in the U.S.A.?"

T: "Yes, I studied and worked in the U.S.A."

S2: "Can I give a presentation about community service?"

T: "That'll be interesting..."

In this incident, T introduced the importance of community service in student life in his class, but the learners were not familiar with the concept. Thus, T explained community service by employing his personal experience (i.e., when I was in the U.S.A...), which made Ss perceptive by the self-disclosure, encouraging S1 to self-select his turn to ask a question, although irrelevant to the course material, that elicited additional personal information about T. Right after that, S2 automatically self-selected her turn to make a request (can I give a presentation about...?), which quickly brought focus on the course content.

Likewise, personal experiences by the teacher encouraged students to make comments as Extract 2 from Pragmatics shows:

T: When I was a student in the United States, I thought French dressing would be like ours, something simple including vinegar, but it was sweet. From that time, I stopped taking all the salad dressings.

S1: Like Sushi here (i.e., Morocco).

T: Sushi, yes.

S1: [Interrupting] I mean raw fish...

T: Yes, raw fish. For us, we have to fry fish.

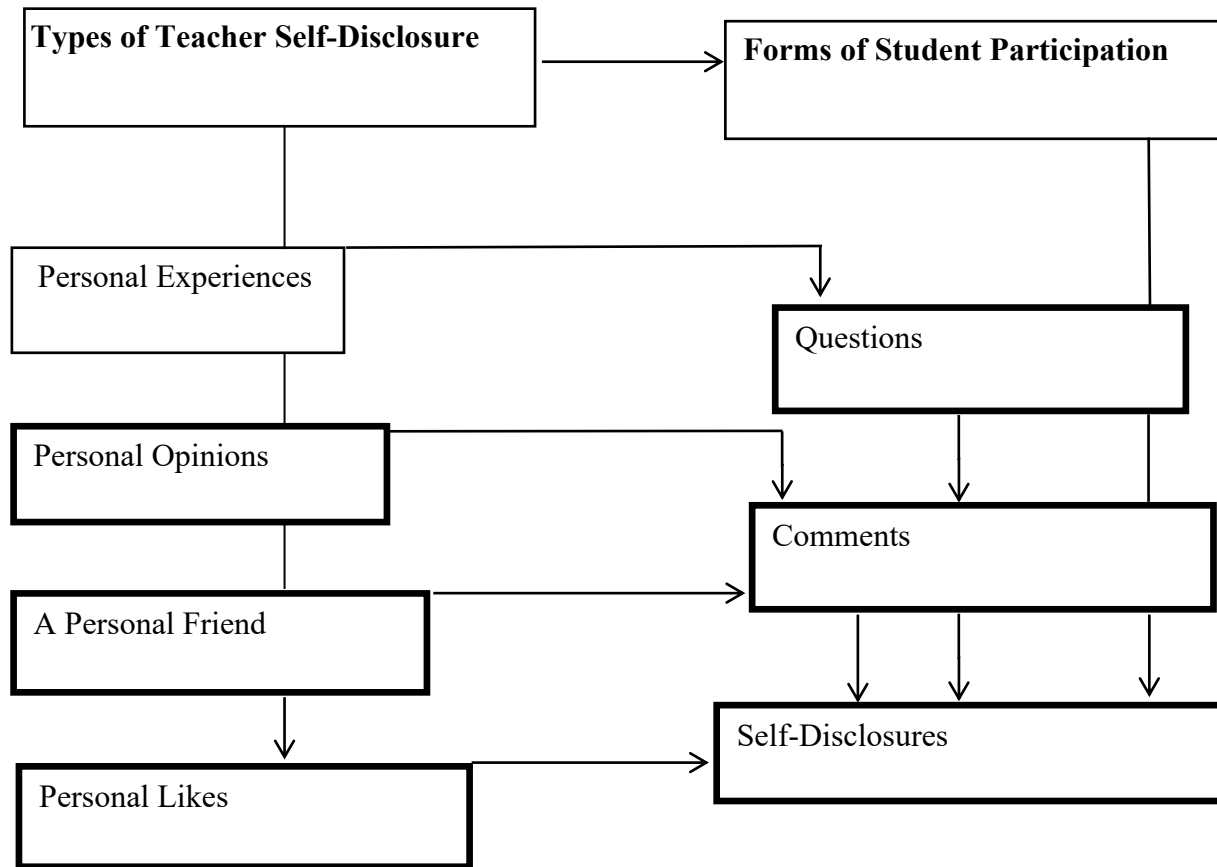
In Extract 2, the instructor was discussing an issue related to food in a foreign culture. The T self-disclosed her experience with food when she was a student in the U.S.A. Her personal disclosure encouraged S1 to self-select her turn to comment on the topic by giving another example (i.e., "like Sushi here") to show a sign of understanding the course content presented by T. In this incident, T's personal disclosure enabled the learner to self-select her turn to engage in a short yet important communication with her teacher.

Additionally, the teacher's personal experiences motivated students to share their personal opinions as Extract 3 from Applied Linguistics posits:

T: I still remember when I came across Valentine's Day I did not know what it was. So, I did not celebrate it.

S1: I think that in a context like ours [Morocco] we can't learn deep culture of English people because deep culture exists in the language where it is naturally learnt.

Figure 1
Summary of forms of student participation in response to types of teacher self-disclosure.



T: Sometimes learners learn that through books.
 S2: I think that there are values like risk taking that we learn from Americans because we like them.
 T: That's another American value.

In Extract 3, the professor was covering issues related to the concept of deep culture and second language learning. She used her personal experience with Valentine's Day to give an example of deep culture, which quickly elicited S1's opinion. T then commented on S1's opinions before S2 communicated his personal point of view about another example of deep culture (i.e., "I think that there are values like risk taking..."). After that, T responded to S2 and quickly moved to another point in the course content. This incident presents a sequence where both the instructor and learners were involved in classroom communication in the learning process.

Further, the instructor's use of a friend to explain the course content helped elicit students' comments as Extract 4 from Pragmatics reveals:

T: There was a teacher studying at Buffalo University doing her Master's, and I visited her. It was vacation. We did not go to bed ... until, hmm, around 5:00 in the morning we were still awake. One of the students was passing by and said, 'Oh! You are still awake,' and this Moroccan student, my friend, said, "We need to make coffee now. It's almost the morning." And this Moroccan student was communicating according to the Moroccan norms of interaction, and the other student did not understand and said, "That would be lovely." She understood it as an offer for coffee.

Ss: (laughter)

S1: She meant one thing but conveyed another thing.

S2: She translated her norms of interaction in an inappropriate context.

T: Yes, she was communicating according to her native norms of interaction, and there was a clash.

In Extract 4, the professor was discussing the inappropriate use of language in the foreign culture.

The T shared a story that happened to her friend to explain the course content when she was in the U.S.A. Her personal disclosure (i.e., using a friend) generated laughter on the part of learners. Right after that, S1 and S2 showed signs of understanding the topic of discussion by taking the initiative to give comments on the T's disclosure, which helped clarify the course material in an amusing way.

The Reciprocity of Personal Information

The findings also indicated that teachers' use of personal disclosures motivated students to reciprocate their personal information in return. For instance, Extract 5 from Guided Reading and Extract 6 from Public Speaking and Debate respectively suggest that the teachers' use of personal opinions helped elicit students' opinions on the spot.

- T: "For me, revenge is against the noble values of humanity."
 S1: "I think revenge makes situations worse."
 T: "Yes, revenge is not a solution."

In Extract 5, the professor was discussing the theme of "revenge" in a play written by Shakespeare. She used her opinion (i.e., for me, revenge is against...), which encouraged S1 to self-select a turn to reciprocate his viewpoint before the teacher finished the discussion by approving the learners' opinion. According to this incident, though the T's self-disclosure (i.e., her opinion) begot S1's self-disclosure (i.e., his opinion), it did not create turns among students since only one S got involved in interaction with the T.

- T: I believe it is not easy to develop effective time management competence skill. This takes time and you need to train yourself...
 S1: You should also be a good manager to organize your time and...that's my point of view.
 T: Yeah, and you need awareness and consciousness. When you are aware about time management, this enriches (interruption).
 S2: Time is precious ... We need to organize it.
 T: Yes, so to develop awareness about time is very important. I'll give you an example; sometimes you just use your mobile phone excessively, and you are not aware of the consequences, and you start feeling...Oh my God (yawning), I need to go to bed, and you become addicted to that at the expense of important priorities.

In Extract 6 the professor was discussing the concept of time management in his class. He employed his opinion about the topic, which motivated S1 to use language to express his viewpoint (i.e., you should also

be a good manager to organize your time...). Then T interfered to interact with S1 by giving further information to clarify his opinion (i.e., yeah, and you need awareness and consciousness...) before S2 self-selected his turn by interrupting the discussion to make a comment on the topic of discussion (time management). This incident presents a sequence where both the instructor and learners contributed to class discussion in the learning process.

Further, teachers' use of personal likes propelled students to reciprocate their personal likes in the interaction process as Extract 7 from Introduction to Media Studies shows:

- T: I always listen to the radio while driving, and Hit Radio is my favorite station.
 Ss: (laughter)
 S1: I listen to Hit Radio when taking a taxi to the university, and my favorite program is Le Morning de Momo.
 S2: I like to listen to Hit Radio because it plays the latest songs.
 T: That's why I listen to Hit Radio: because I like their playlists.
 Ss:(laughter)

In Extract 7, the professor dedicated part of the session to discussing issues related to the radio. She introduced the course content by using her personal experience and preference for the topic of discussion. This incident of self-disclosure generated humor in class in that some Ss started laughing. Immediately, S1 self-selected her turn to disclose her favorite radio station. This also encouraged S2 to share her admiration for listening to the radio station: "I like to listen to Hit Radio." Following that, T responded to S2 by reciprocating her personal preference for listening to Hit Radio (i.e., "That's why I listen to Hit Radio..."), which again created humor in class.

Laughter

Unexpectedly, the teachers' use of examples of their personal disclosures created occasional laughter in the learning process. For instance, when the instructors shared their personal friends (see Extract 4) and likes (see Extract 7), students not only contributed to classroom participation, but also engaged in laughter. Interestingly, the teacher's employment of personal experiences as shown in Extract 8 from Applied Linguistics generated humor only in the teaching process:

- T: Toward the end of the eighties, we tried to switch to this form of addressing your teacher by using first names. We told our students, you don't have

to call us “professor” after you know us for an acceptable period of time; you can switch to first names. And students started to, you know, use it inappropriately. One student [the teacher waving with her hand] in the parking lot called her professor: “Hey, Fatima!” (a fake name).

Ss:(laughter)...

T: This showed disrespect, and then we decided to switch to the normal way of addressing teachers. There are things which are appropriate in one context and not in another one.

In Extract 8, the professor devoted part of the session to introducing norms of appropriate and inappropriate ways of greeting. She explained the course content by incorporating her professional experience, which led to laughter on the part of learners, suggesting that they were paying attention and showed a sign for understanding the example. But the self-disclosure did not encourage Ss to engage in participation to comment on the topic. Therefore, she continued discussing the topic before moving to another point in the course material.

Discussion

Results showed that the types of teacher self-disclosure identified in the data were personal experiences, opinions, likes, and a friend, which elicited students’ questions, comments, self-disclosures, and unexpected laughter. In short, the findings indicated that teacher self-disclosure encouraged students to communicate with teachers and reciprocate their personal information while engaging in occasional laughter.

As for teacher self-disclosure in relation to teacher-students communication, the instructor’s personal experiences encouraged students to engage in the course material by asking questions (Extract 1), making comments (Extract 2), and sharing their personal opinions (Extract 3). The teacher’s use of her friend also made students contribute to class communication by providing comments (Extract 4). Extract 1 from Spoken English suggests that the T’s self-disclosure (i.e., his personal experience in the U.S.A.) motivated the learner to show willingness to engage in an advanced level of class participation by giving an oral presentation (see Fritschner, 2000), which would allow her to communicate for an extended period of time (see, Cohen, 1991) in the subsequent session. The fact that S2 had to do research to give an oral presentation about community service reveals that she engaged in functional motives to communicate with her teacher since she liked to learn more about the course material (see Martin et al., 1999). An interesting observation is that whenever teachers used their personal experiences (see Extracts 1, 2, and 3), learners, although they

participated, never reciprocated their own personal experiences, as evidenced in the first three Extracts. An adequate explanation is that students may not have been exposed to similar experiences yet. If they have already studied abroad and experienced culture shock in a foreign culture as the teachers of Spoken English and Pragmatics, they could have gotten involved in a beneficial interaction with their teachers by sharing similar personal experiences.

On the contrary, teachers’ employment of personal opinions (Extracts 5 and 6) and likes (Extract 7) encouraged students to reciprocate their personal information. Jourard (1971) found a strong relationship between self-disclosure and liking, meaning that if person X discloses personal information to person Y, the latter feels liked and trusted. Interestingly, the social exchange model posits that the rewarding value of an instructor’s self-disclosure requires the student to respond in kind (Archer, 1979). Additionally, Tardy and Dindia (2006) agreed that self-disclosure predicts liking in that when individuals like each other, they become eager to know deeper information, such as attitudes, feelings and personal experiences. This explains why teacher self-disclosure may help develop a positive teacher-student relationship and various aspects of student motivation (Jebbour, 2018), including affective learning (i.e., affect for teacher and course) (Sorensen, 1989), student interest (Cayanus & Martin, 2008), and attitudes toward language learning (Farani & Fatemi, 2014). Hence, the amount and relevance of teacher self-disclosure are a way to humanize the learning environment (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; Jebbour, 2018) in which students may feel comfortable to get involved in active classroom participation.

Unexpectedly, the instructors’ employment of a personal friend (Extract 4), likes (Extract 7), and experiences (Extract 8) encouraged students to contribute to class discussions while engaging in occasional laughter. This suggests that the teachers’ use of these different types of personal disclosures did not only elicit students’ oral contribution and attract their attention, but also made the course content comprehensible for learners since laughter evidenced that understanding had taken place. Previous studies indicated that relevant teacher self-disclosure is an effective instructional technique in increasing the clarity of the course material presented for students (Cayanus & Martin, 2008; Wambach & Brothen, 1997). This may show that students enjoyed listening and contributing to class discussions.

As a final comment, Extracts 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7 suggest that teacher self-disclosure encouraged more than one student to engage in in-class participation. However, in Extracts 2 and 5 teacher self-disclosure and student participation took the form of teacher-student interaction. It is no surprise, then, to stress that “self-disclosure is a

rich personal source of student-faculty communication” (Fusani, 1994, p. 249) inside the classroom. Focus in those conversations was on discussing ideas and concepts to enrich the course content, indicating that relevant teacher self-disclosure helped generate an atmosphere conducive to learning and foster meaningful classroom communication between teachers and students. Importantly, relevant teacher self-disclosure helped bring an authentic atmosphere inside the classroom where students had an essential opportunity to use English to satisfy their real communicative goals. This suggests that teachers could connect their personal matters to classroom teaching, which may hopefully help students recognize the value of what they are learning in class.

The research question asked whether teachers’ use of self-disclosure to explain the course content encourages student participation in the English language classroom. Based on current results, this study suggests that teachers’ use of self-disclosures to explain the course material served as an effective instructional practice, without using questioning techniques or cold-calling, to motivate the learners to self-select turns to interact with their teacher and reciprocate their personal information while engaging in occasional laughter. There are four reasons to support our conclusion. First, student participation is not graded in the context where this study took place. Hence, this practice is likely to discourage students to participate since they may not see the value of their contribution to class discussions. Smith (1992) previously found that student participation depends on how much their involvement counts toward their final grade. Second, first- and second-year courses had larger class sizes. Nunn (1996) found that classes with over 35 students provide fewer participatory opportunities. Third, homework is not mandatory in the Fez Department of English, and thus teachers rarely give students assignments before they meet in each session. Thus, students usually come to class unprepared and have no idea about the course content of subsequent sessions. “If students know that there is a chance they will be asked to participate during class meetings, they may be more inclined to prepare themselves to do so” (O’Connor, 2013, p. 340). Fourth, students’ immediate reactions to teacher self-disclosure should be understood as an initiative to participate on behalf of their classmates. Accordingly, the degree of student participation, albeit lasting a few seconds, to respond to teacher self-disclosure is undoubtedly deemed optimal in such situations.

Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

This study offered essential implications by exploring whether teachers’ use of self-disclosure to explain the course content encourages student participation in the university English language

classroom. First, this manuscript introduced the types of teacher self-disclosure in relation to the observed forms of student participation and other incidents, mainly laughter, and argued that teacher self-disclosure might be included in different subject matters at the university level. For instance, teachers could use their disclosures when working out themes from literary works, such as short stories, novels, and plays. Such genres often reflect issues concerned with everyday life stories where teachers’ opinions, experiences, etc. may add value to the course material and hence achieve desirable effects. Teachers can also incorporate their self-disclosures in courses of linguistics including sociolinguistics and applied linguistics since issues that emerge in such courses often deal with the use of complex language to achieve a certain purpose. In this context, teachers can share their personal experiences as learners of English and interesting incidents which happened when they were communicating in English and interacting with native speakers.

Second, the Moroccan students, without preparing for class and having prior knowledge of the course material, have immensely increased teacher talk time in class. To overcome this problem, teachers need to employ self-disclosure when it is relevant to the course content so that students, as Cayanus et al. (2009) noted, feel motivated to play an active role in the learning process. Third, the degree of students’ absolute dependence on their teachers as the only source of knowledge to learn about the course material tends to hamper students’ contribution to class discussions. Therefore, the use of relevant self-disclosure, especially opinions and likes by teachers, might automatically invite learners to voice their opinions and likes, thereby leading to an effective teacher-student interaction. Fourth, the relevance of teachers’ disclosures may be a way to generate an interpersonal atmosphere in the learning environment in which students feel encouraged to contribute to class discussions. Fifth, given teacher self-disclosure—particularly of likes, friends, and experiences—could help generate laughter in class, and instructors are encouraged to use such information to capture students’ attention in the educational process. Sixth, the awareness of including self-disclosure as a teaching practice to illustrate the course material while designing lesson plans may better inform teachers whether the desirable pedagogic objectives have been met at the end of each course. Lastly, the fact that instructors commonly misuse self-disclosure as a teaching strategy (Goodboy et al., 2014) justifies the need for including self-disclosure training in teacher education programs.

The findings further understanding of teacher self-disclosure and student participation in the classroom context. But like any piece of research, this study had limitations. First, this study observed only

undergraduate courses in the Department of English Studies. If the researchers had observed master's courses, where students' language proficiency is advanced, they could have collected richer data and hence developed new themes and categories. Second, this study did not examine whether the impact of teacher self-disclosure on student participation was mediated by other extraneous variables (e.g., teachers' gender, experience, and age). Third, this study did not test the impact of newly emerged dimensions of teacher self-disclosure, particularly appropriateness which may be linked to the outcome variable.

Given these limitations, several future directions should be considered. To triangulate the research further, it would be useful to explore the views of students about which types of teacher self-disclosure they would respond to in class. This would help to find out whether the types of self-disclosures identified in the data are more beneficial to foster student participation and are common to those that students think they may respond to. Further research needs to examine other language classes, such as Spanish and Arabic, and hard disciplines like mathematics and physics to observe if the content of teacher self-disclosure generated from this study is similar or different to other discipline areas. Further, it would be useful to examine the effects of teacher self-disclosure on student participation from a gender perspective. In this regard, a comparative method on self-disclosures by male teachers and female teachers in relation to the outcome variable in class may yield interesting results. Exploring the effects of teacher self-disclosure on humor may further add interesting issues to the literature. Lastly, if another study expands observations to postgraduate courses, which are characterized by small class sizes, it may provide a stronger relationship to student participation.

Previous research, using teacher-self-disclosure as an independent variable, assessed student participation quantitatively (Cayanus et al., 2003; Cayanus & Martin, 2004a; Cayanus & Martin, 2004b; Cayanus & Martin, 2008; Cayanus et al., 2008; Cayanus & Martin, 2008; Cayanus et al., 2009; Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; & Wambash & Brothen, 1997). However, this manuscript filled this methodological gap by studying student participation through a qualitative analysis approach, which "presents more of a measurement challenge" (Rocca, 2010, p.187) and provided the basis for research on teacher self-disclosure in the Moroccan context in general and the language classroom in particular.

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MOHSINE JEBBOUR holds a Ph.D. in English language and literature from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, Morocco and is currently an independent researcher. Jebbour has been teaching English and Arabic in different higher education institutions in Morocco and abroad, particularly at Leiden University in The Netherlands and Saint Olaf College in the U.S. His research interests include critical thinking, English language teaching, and teaching and learning in higher education, with a focus on self-disclosure in relation to learning outcomes.

FATIMA MOUAID is a Professor of English and linguistics at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, Morocco. She holds a Master's in

TESL from the University of Illinois at Urbana in the U.S.A. and a Ph.D. in sociolinguistics from the University of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah in Fez and Essex University in the U.K. She teaches and supervises on a range of courses for undergraduate and graduate students. Her research interests include sociolinguistics, ELT, gender studies and cultural studies. She is a Member of Moroccan Association of Teachers of English and the Moroccan Cultural Studies Center.

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Appendix A
Classroom Observation Sheet

Section One: Background Information

Course title:

Date:

Time:

Level of students:

Section Two: Teacher Self-Disclosure

	Observed	Not Observed
Teacher uses his/her personal information to explain the course material		
Examples:		

Section Three: Students' Reactions

	Observed	Not Observed
Student asks questions when responding to teacher self-disclosure		
Examples:		

	Observed	Not Observed
Student gives comments when responding to teacher self-disclosure		
Examples:		

	Observed	Not Observed
Student reciprocates personal disclosures when responding to teacher self-disclosure		
Examples:		

Section Four: Unexpected Phenomena

	Observed	Not Observed
Student reacts with different behavior to teacher self-disclosure		
Examples:		