THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE RELEVANT AND IRRELEVANT TEACHER'S SELF-DISCLOSURE: STUDENTS' AND THEIR TEACHERS' ATTITUDES

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Abstract

Teacher self-disclosure (TSD) is called to be one of the most important elements of teacher-student communication in the classroom which has an impact on students learning, motivation and classroom atmosphere. Yet, it is still little known what kind of teacher's disclosure is appropriate in the classroom. According to this, the aim of this study was to analyse the teachers' and students' attitudes on the appropriateness of the relevance of TSD. Study design – experiment in which 226 (124 female and 102 male) 10th-11th grade students and 51 (41 female and 10 male) teachers have participated. The results of the study have shown that, according to students and teachers, relevant TSD is more appropriate than irrelevant; teacher's gender isn't related to the appropriateness of his or her disclosure; male students who experience teacher's disclosure more often, rate it as more appropriate; more disclosing teachers rate TSD as more appropriate than less disclosing teachers.

Keywords: Teacher Self-disclosure, Relevance, Relation, Gender

Introduction

The main activity in the process of teaching and learning is a communication between teachers and their students. As Punyanunt-Carter (2006) has stated, this interaction is an essential part in the education. As teachers and students have perfect abilities to share personal information (Goodboy et al., 2014) it is possible to say that self-disclosure takes an important place in teacher-student relation. Cayanus (2004) and Hill, Ah Yun, Lindsey (2008) proved that by stating that teacher's self-disclosure (TSD) is a significant part of interpersonal relations, which may be used as a tool to create and maintain student-teacher relationship.

Teacher-student relation is an important factor in one's life during all stages of age; however, at the adolescence students pay a lot of attention to the role of the teacher. At this age, students see a teacher as a significant adult, who can help them to reach academic success (Hamer, Pianta, 2006) or as a person who can help them to make important decisions (Wentzel, 2012). Thus, it is important to analyse how TSD affects this relation.

It is also important to note that sometimes teachers are afraid to self-disclose because they don't know how the class is going to react to what the teacher says or does (Harper, 2005). Moreover, there are teachers who probably aren't even conscious about the influence of their disclosure on the students. According to Cakmak and Arap (2013), due to the fact that self-disclosure can be both conscious and unconscious it affects the relevance of this process. In the other words, Cayanus (2004) points out that TSD can be relevant or irrelevant to the classroom. Due to the statement of Cayanus, it is meaningful to mention that there is a level of a risk when teacher's disclosure may have a negative impact on the students (Zhang et al., 2009). Thus, it is important to pay attention to the boundaries of teacher self-disclosure and to analyse the appropriateness of teacher disclosure in the educational process (Zhang et al., 2007).

It's valuable to consider that both students and teachers may have a different attitude on the relevance of TSD. However, the studies which were possible to find, focus only on students' or teachers' attitudes, not taking them both into account (e.g. Zhang et al., 2009). So, our contribution is aimed at evaluating both teachers and their students attitudes to the appropriateness of TSD, taking into account some important factors related to the attitudes of TSD, e.g., gender, frequency of TSD or teaching experience.

We first present an overview of the TSD in the educational process and then introduce an experimental study carried out in two Lithuanian schools.

TSD in Educational Process

TSD, defined as a verbal or non-verbal teacher's willingness (Cayanus, Martin, 2008; Cayanus, Martin, Goodboy, 2009) to share his or her personal and/or professional information (Goldstain, Benassi, 1994) with students or colleagues, is one of the most significant tools in educational process. It is important to note that teacher's disclosure is shifting from one level to another (for example, from low intimacy to high intimacy). According to this, Tolsted and Stokes (1983) have stated that self-disclosure can vary in its depth and breadth. Later Chaudoir and Fisher (2010) noted that self-disclosure may also vary in time perspective which refers to the frequency of disclosure. Thus, it is possible to say that the deeper, more

breadth and frequent disclosure may create a more positive interpersonal relationship (Chaudoir, Fisher, 2010; Laurenceau, Barrett, Pietromonaco, 1998) between teachers and their students (Harper, Harper, 2006).

Nevertheless, TSD in educational process has its own advantages and disadvantages (Cayanus, 2004; Eckhart, 2011; Goldstein, Benassi, 1994). The main advantage of teacher disclosure is that it helps to create informal environment in the class (Allen, Court, 2009; Antaki, 2005) what is a part of developing and maintaining positive classroom atmosphere (Cayanus, 2004; Cayanus, Martin, 2008; Goldstein, Benassi, 1994). Moreover, a self-disclosing teacher helps students to understand course content by giving examples or organizing the discussion in the class (Downs, Javidi, Nussbaum, 1988; Eckhart, 2011; Tucker, 2012). However, self-disclosure in the educational process shouldn't be used to reach personal goals (Ejsing, 2007).

Not to forget that teacher-student relation differs from the one in the other context (e.g. friendship, romantic relation), it is meaningful to understand that TSD mostly depends on the decision making process (Greene, Derlega, Mathews, 2006). In this process, teacher has to decide whether his or hers self-disclosure is needed. As Goldstain and Benassi (1994) have noted, during the lessons teachers may disclose themselves in the discussions, presenting learning content or answering to the students' questions. This suggests that generally teachers have to make a decision of the themes they want or can discuss with a class, to be sure that their disclosure will be understood correctly (Zhang et. al., 2009). This decision to disclose or not James (2009) called as *disclosure dilemma*. The dilemma indicates that self-disclosure has boundaries which helps (or should help) to control the disclosure in the educational process.

The Dilemma of TSD

As it was already mentioned, teachers may use self-disclosure as an effective tool, to reach their teaching and learning goals in the classroom. However, Hill and colleagues (2008) note that sometimes for the teachers it is hard to decide whether their disclosure is relevant to the class or not and called it as dilemma of TSD. Therefor it can be analysed by the dimensions discussed above. Analysing the dilemma of teacher's disclosure may help us better understand the relevance of it which is important in this study.

It is said that it's not relevant to disclose personal information very frequently, because it may seem impolite or may even cause negative emotions towards the other person (Hund, Olsen, Markley, 1986). According to this, Sorensen (1989) has stated that good teachers disclose less than bad ones. Baker and colleagues (2012) conducted the research which has shown that in the classrooms, where teachers used to disclose more, students had

been more impolite than in classrooms where teachers disclosed less. Moreover, the problem of the huge *amount* of teacher's disclosure is that it may become more and more personal what may cause a negative reaction of students (Nunziata, 2007; Sorensen, 1989).

It is important to mention that the *relevance* of TSD is the most significant dimension which has to be considered before disclosing to the classroom (Hill, Ah Yun, Lindsey, 2008; Zhang, 2009). Generally it describes themes by which teachers can disclose themselves to the class. It is said that it is irrelevant for the teacher to disclose about his or her personal/intimate life (Nunziata, 2007; Zhang, 2009). On the one hand, according to Hill and others (2008), sometimes personal TSD is needed because there is no other way to help students understand the content of the lesson (for example, teaching about interpersonal relations). On the other hand, if the teacher of biology or mathematics starts explaining to students about personal relationships it would be irrelevant and students may get lost in understanding the subject. To sum up this, it is possible to say that teacher's disclosure dilemma is closely related to the subject because not all subjects taught let the teachers to self-disclose (Cayanus & Martin, 2004). Despite this, the most important factor, which makes teacher's disclosure relevant, is it being purposeful.

The *negativity* of teacher disclosure explains by itself that negative disclosure shouldn't take place in the classroom and there are no doubts for it to be needed. It is possible to find a lot of suggestions or rules how self-disclosure should be used in the classroom for it to be relevant and welcomed by the students (e.g. Eckhart, 2011; Ejsing, 2007; Hosek, Thompson, 2009; Kompf, 1993). According to Chelune (1977), the ability to adequately use self-disclosure in various situations can be called as the flexibility of disclosure. So, while making a decision to disclose or not, it is important for the teachers to consider the students cultural experience, gender, grade level, emotional state (Zhang et al., 2009) and be flexible in every situation the self-disclosure may occur (Rasmussen, Mishna, 2008). It refers to our study that relevant or irrelevant TSD depends not only on the amount of given information, but also on the purpose of disclosure.

Thus, it is possible to say that the relevance of TSD can be rated not only by its amount or frequency, but also by its goals – weather it's useful for students or for teachers.

The Appropriateness of TSD

As it was already mentioned, self-disclosing teachers generally face to the dilemma of disclosure: what and when to disclose. After making a decision, the other important aspect becomes if that disclosed information is appropriate to the students (Chaikin, Derlega, 1974; Hill, Ah Yun, Lindsey,

2008; Woolfolk, 1979). Chaikin and Derlega (1974) noted that disclosing intimate or personal information about oneself in the inappropriate place, time or people may cause negative effect. On the other hand, keeping very important information, which may be disclosed and is appropriate in a current situation, may also have negative consequences (Caltabiano, Smithson, 1983). Thus, it is possible to say that a 'good' teacher is the one who tends to disclose positive information from time to time (DiVerniero, Hosek, 2011).

The appropriateness of TSD is related to (a) teacher's capacity to disclose; (b) a purpose or main idea of the disclosure; and (c) students' and teachers' characteristics, which may be important in considering whether the teacher should disclose or not (Zhang et al., 2009). Caltabiano and Smithson (1983) stated that positive TSD is more appropriate than a negative one. On the basis of Nunziata (2007) research, students accept teachers' personal information about their family relations, learning environment and experiences, daily conversations in and out of the classroom. However, the study of Nunziata have also shown that teachers' sharing information about their personal problems, related to financial and interpersonal difficulties, alcohol drinking and opinions about political and religious aspects aren't appropriate for students. In our research relevant disclosure is understood as teacher's willingness to share positive personal experience which is related to the content of the subject; irrelevant disclosure - sharing negative personal information which is too intimate and not related to the subject. We predict that both students and teachers will see relevant TSD as more appropriate than irrelevant.

The purposes of TSD also should be considered because they may also be appropriate or inappropriate, says Downs and colleagues (1988). Authors note that generally teachers use self-disclosure to explain the content of the subject or to start the discussion in the class. Gregory (2005) (cited in Zhang et. al., 2009) also states that teachers use self-disclosure to make the learning material more understandable for the students, to give examples, to make lessons more interesting and to maintain relations with students. McCroskey, Richmond and Bennett (2006) say that the most important thing, what teacher's self-disclosure can give, is clarity which is needed in every educational process.

Interestingly, it is thought that teacher self-disclosure is related to (a) better achievements (Goldstain, Benassi, 1994) and (b) differs by gender (Caltabiano, Smithson, 1983; Woolfolk, 1979). Gottfried and others (2001) note that students who have lower grades, don't pay much attention to the learning and teaching process. Moreover, their relation with teachers isn't as good as high achievers (Split, Koomen, Jak, 2012). According to this, we

predict that highly achieving students will see teachers' disclosure as more appropriate than low achievers.

Although recently TSD is studied by the researchers in a wide range of subjects, very rare researchers pay attention to the gender differences in teachers' disclosure. In 1979 Woolfolk conducted the research to analyse male and female teachers' disclosure impact on male and female students. The results of the research had shown that female students saw teachers' disclosure more appropriate than male students. The study of Caltabiano and Smithson (1983) had also shown that female see self-disclosure as more acceptable than male. This may be explained by the socially accepted norms when it is predicted that women, being more emotional than men, will see self-disclosure as more relevant than irrelevant (Gaia, 2013). We assume that both teachers and students will see female's teacher's disclosure as more appropriate than male's; and female participants (both teachers and students) will see TSD as more appropriate than male participants.

Methods
Participants

226 students from10[th]-11th grade and 51 teacher participated in this study. A participation rate of students was 91.5% and of teachers – 96.2%. From 226 students 124 (54.9%) were female and 102 male (45.1%). Their age were from 16 to 18 years, with a mean of 16.45 years (SD=.58). Their last semester grades varied from 4 to 10 points, with a mean of 7.97 (SD=1.24).

From 51 teachers, 41 of them were female and 10 male. Their age ranged from 36 to 67 years with a mean of 49.88 (SD=6.89) years. The mean of teachers working years was 24.41 (SD=9.37) and the mean of working hours per week – 20.20 (SD=8.48).

The sample was taken from the two schools of Lithuania representing both industrial and rural areas. Students were selected by the class - if they are in 10th or 11th grades. Teachers were also selected by the classes they are teaching – they had to teach 10th or 11th grade students. The sample was homogenous in terms of ethnic background (absolute majority of participants were Lithuanians).

Procedure

The research has been organized in two Lithuanian schools which differ in the area of its place (village and city) before getting the agreements from the schools' councils to conduct the research.

The questionnaires to the students were given during the lessons, by visiting the classrooms. According to having 4 variants of the questionnaires (relevant TSD scenario and male teacher; relevant TSD scenario and female

teacher, irrelevant TSD scenario and male teacher, irrelevant TSD scenario and female teacher), it was controlled that girls and boys would get the same variants by giving the questionnaires first for the girls and then for the boys.

The questionnaires for the teachers were put into the envelopes with written names on them. As students, teachers were also controlled to get different variants of questionnaires. The envelopes with questionnaires were put in the box and brought to the teachers' room. There was a letter on the box, explaining the research and giving the instructions for the teachers.

Measures

Study design – experiment where later discussed scenarios were used. The manipulated independent variables were the relevance of teacher self-disclosure (relevant or irrelevant) and the gender of disclosing teacher (male or female). As dependent variables students' and teachers' views on the appropriateness (appropriate or inappropriate) of teacher self-disclosure were chosen. The groups of participants (teachers and students) were controlled by giving them the questionnaires by their gender in a row.

Scenarios

The main method, used in this study, was teacher self-disclosure scenarios. Scenarios were designed by the authors of the study. They were created by relevant and irrelevant teacher self-disclosure definitions and by the previously conducted focus groups which had shown that teachers' disclosure also differs in its intimacy.

The difference between created scenarios was the level of intimacy (high or low) of the information disclosed by the teacher (learning experience or family problems) and gender (female or male) of the disclosing teacher. In this way, 4 different scenarios were created. The relevant teacher self-disclosure, when disclosing teacher is female, looked like this:

During the lesson teacher Aldona (Lithuanian woman's name) announces to the students that next week they are going to have a test. For this test students need to read 10 pages of the book. After hearing this information students start to fear that it is going to be very hard to learn all these pages. Then teacher tells to the students that she understands that it is really a hard task. She tells to the students that generally she marks with coloured pen the most important parts of the text. So, when reading next time, she can remember the information easier.

The same scenario was given with a changed gender (male) of a teacher (Algimantas). Irrelevant teacher self-disclosure scenario looked like this:

During the lesson teacher Algimantas (Lithuanian man's name) announces to the students that next week they are going to have a test. Students for the test need to read 10 pages of the book. After hearing this information students start to fear that it is going to be very hard to learn all these pages. Then teacher tells to the students that there are more difficult things in life. He has some serious problems in the family right now, because his wife wants a divorce. The teacher tells to the students that reading a book is nothing having in mind his situation at home.

The same scenario was given with a changed gender (female) of a teacher (named Aldona).

The appropriateness of TSD

The appropriateness of the teacher disclosure was measured asking the participants to rate the behaviour of the teachers in given scenario on the scale from 1 to 10, where 1=very inappropriate; 10=very appropriate.

To measure the appropriateness of the purposes of teacher disclosure, 'The Appropriateness of Teacher Self-Disclosure Scale' purposes subscale, suggested by Zhang and colleagues (2009) was used. This subscale includes 9 items: *teachers use TSD to entertain their students; teachers use TSD to offer real-world, practical examples; teachers use TSD to attract students' attention; teachers use TSD to create positive teacher–student relationships; teachers use TSD to set social role models; teachers use TSD to create a class environment comfortable to students; teachers use TSD to enhance students' learning interests; teachers use TSD to please themselves; teachers use TSD to clarify teaching content*. These items were modified according to the aims of the study. The modification was made by adding some additional information to the items, for example: *this TSD entertains students*. The participant there asked to rate how appropriate these purposes are in given scenario on the scale from 1(totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.83.

Similarities of teacher's behaviour to the behaviour in given scenario

Teachers were asked how often they act in the class as the teacher described in the scenario. Students were also asked how often their teachers act as the one in the given scenario and how many of them behave like that. Participants had to rate this in the scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*very often*).

Demographic questions

The participants also had to answer some demographical questions. Students were asked to indicate their gender, age, class and the mean of the grades from the last semester. Teachers there also asked about their gender, age, working years, and working hours per week.

Results

Teachers and students attitudes on the appropriateness of the relevant and irrelevant TSD

Literature review has shown that relevant TSD is more appropriate than irrelevant. To check this on the data collected for our study, the regression analysis with enter method were used. The appropriateness of relevant and irrelevant TSD and the appropriateness of TSD purposes were chosen as depended variables. As the independent variables were chosen the relevance of teacher disclosure (1=relevant, 2=irrelevant), disclosing teacher's gender (1=female, 2=male), group of participants (1=students, 2=teachers), gender of participants (1=female, 2=male).

Table 1 shows that created model of regression is statistically significant (R^2=.28, F (4, 272)=26.19, p<.001). However, only variables' of the relevance of teacher self-disclosure and the group of participants regression coefficients differ from 0 statistically significant (p<.001).

Table 1. Predictions of the teachers' and students' attitudes on the appropriateness of TSD by the relevance of TSD, group of participants, and gender of both participants and self-disclosing teacher (N=277)

Variable	Appropriateness of TSD		
	B	*SE B*	*β*
Relevance of TSD	-2.46	.26	-.48*
Group of Participants	-1.33	.35	-.20*
Self-disclosing teacher's gender	.05	.26	.01
Gender of Participants	.35	.27	.07
R^2			.28
F			26.19*

*p < .001.

By the given results (Table 1) it is possible to say that TSD is more acceptable when it is relevant (β=-.48, p<.001). Furthermore, relevant or irrelevant teacher disclosure is more appropriate for students than teachers (β=-.20, p<.001).

The regression analysis of the appropriateness of the purposes of teacher disclosure (R^2=.26, F(4, 272)=23.69, p<.001) in Table 2 has shown that only TSD relevance regression coefficients differ from zero statistically significant. On this basis, we can state that teachers and students relevant TSD view as more appropriate than irrelevant disclosure (β=-.50, p<.001).

Table 2. Predictions of the teachers' and students' attitudes on the purposes of TSD by the relevance of TSD, group of participants, and gender of both participants and self-disclosing teacher (N=277)

Variable	Purposes of TSD		
	B	*SE B*	*β*
Relevance of TSD	-7.92	0.83	-.50*
Group of Participants	-1.24	1.09	-.06
Self-disclosing teacher's gender	.22	.83	.01

Gender of Participants	.95	.86	.05
R^2		.26	
F		23.69*	

*$p < .001$.

Teachers' and students' attitudes on the appropriateness of the self-disclosing female and male teacher

It was predicted that both teachers and students will rate female teacher's disclosure as more appropriate than male teacher's disclosure. Moreover, we have also predicted that this rating doesn't depend on the participant's gender. In order to verify these predictions, the binary logistic regression was made, where the dependent variable was gender of disclosing teacher (0=female, 1=male) and the covariates – the appropriateness of TSD and its purposes.

As it is shown in the Table 3, according to the students and their teachers, disclosing teacher's gender doesn't have significant difference to the rated appropriateness of teacher disclosure.

Table 3. Students' and teachers' attitudes towards the appropriateness of self-disclosure of female and male teacher (N=277)

	Gender		
Predictor	B	SE B	e^B
Gender			
Appropriateness of TSD	.09	.06	1.09
Appropriateness of the Purposes of TSD	.01	.02	1.00
Constant	-1.08		
χ^2		10.77	
Df		8	

The relation between assessed TSD and students' achievement, their gender and frequency of disclosing teachers

In the part of the literature review it was mentioned that the appropriateness off TSD may depend on a variety of aspects related to the students' attitudes. As the essential ones were distinguished students achievement, their gender and the frequency of disclosure. To analyse the relation between assessed TSD and these factors, the regression analysis was made (R^2=.19, F(4, 221)=12.91, p<.001).

As it can be seen in the Table 4, the appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure may be related to the frequency of hearing disclosing teacher (β=.30, p<.001), to the number of disclosing teachers (β=.16, p=.029) and to the students gender (β=.17, p=.007). According to these results, we can say that the more teachers self-disclose, the more students see their disclosure as appropriate. Moreover, male students rate TSD as more appropriate than females.

Table 4. Prediction of students' attitudes on the appropriateness of TSD by the number of disclosing teachers, frequency of TSD, students' achievements and their gender (N=226)

Variable	Appropriateness of TSD		
	B	$SE\ B$	β
Number of disclosing Teachers	.21	.10	.16**
Frequency of TSD	.44	.11	.30*
Students' Achievement	.18	.12	.10
Gender of Students	.81	.30	.17**
R^2		.19	
F		12.91*	

*$p < .001$. **$p < .05$.

The Prediction of the appropriateness of TSD to teachers' working years, hours, age, frequency of disclosure and gender

In order to find out if teachers' attitudes of the appropriateness of teacher disclosure are related to their working years and hours, age, gender, and frequency of disclosure, regression analysis were made (R²=.66, F(5, 45)=17.07, p<.001).

Table 5. Prediction of teachers' attitudes on the appropriateness of TSD by the frequency of TSD, teacher's age, gender, working years and hours per week (N=51)

Variable	Appropriateness of TSD		
	B	$SE\ B$	β
Frequency of TSD	1.29	.10	.81*
Working Years	.03	.11	.08
Age	.03	.12	.07
Working Hours	-.01	.30	-.03
Gender of Participants	-.20		-.03
R^2		.66	
F		17.07*	

*$p < .001$.

As it can be seen in the Table 5, teachers' attitudes of the appropriateness of TSD may be related to the frequency of teachers' disclosure of themselves in the classroom (β=.81, p<.001). Having this in mind, it is possible to say that if teachers self-disclose in the class more often, they will rate teacher disclosure as more appropriate than rare disclosing teachers.

Conclusion

Although TSD influence in educational process is widely studied by today's researchers (e.g., Cayanus, 2004; Zhang, 2009; Zhang et al., 2007), but rarely both parts – TSD giver and recipient - of this process is studied. Our research was aimed to disclose differences and similarities of teachers' and students' perspectives of the appropriateness of TSD.

So, the results of the study have shown that, according to both teachers' and students' attitudes, relevant teacher's disclosure is more

appropriate than irrelevant. In the other words, personal and related with family relationships self-disclosure is less appropriate than the one including the content of the teaching material. Nunziata (2007) and Gregory (2005) (cited in Zhang et. al., 2009) got similar results: disclosing personal problems which are related to the interpersonal relations to the class is inappropriate, while disclosure by which teacher is willing to help to the students is appropriate. This may be explained by the main role of the teacher (to teach students the material of the subject) and the student (to learn the material) (Evans et. al., 2009) where teacher-student relation isn't based on sharing personal information.

As it was already mentioned, teacher's disclosure must be purposeful (Cayanus, 2004). This study has also shown that the purposes of the relevant teacher's self-disclosure are more appropriate than the purposes of irrelevant disclosure. These findings go ahead with the results of the studies by Cakmak, Arap (2013), Downs and others (1988) and Zhang with colleagues (2009): mostly teachers use self-disclosure to make course content more understandable, to create discussion in the class or to start relation with students.

Differently from other authors (e.g., Woolfolk, 1979), our study has shown that teacher's gender doesn't have influence on the teachers' and students' attitudes of the appropriateness of teacher self-disclosure. It would be possible to agree with Goldstain's and Benassi's (1994; 1997) idea that the influence of TSD on the classroom as a whole doesn't depend on the teacher's gender. This may lead to the thinking that the participants of the study don't follow widely spread stereotype that males' disclosure is less appropriate than females' disclosure (Gaia, 2013). According to Schrodt (2013), gender differences in this case may be not found because self-disclosure to one person is different from the disclosure to the group. Moreover, the main teacher's role in the class is to teach students, but not to get well known by the students (Evans et. al., 2009). Thus, students may also pay more attention to the teacher's profession than to his gender while rating the appropriateness of TSD.

So, it is possible to say that teachers and students (consciously or unconsciously) understand and estimate the importance of TSD in the processes of teaching and learning (Zhang et. al., 2009) and, while rating the appropriateness of teacher's disclosure, they pay more attention to the content of disclosure than to the gender of the one who discloses.

In this study we have also analysed the factors which may be related to the TSD. Our study, like the one of Mazer and colleagues (2007) has shown that the more teachers self-disclose, the more their disclosure is seen as appropriate. However, this doesn't concur with the results of McCarthy, Schmeck (1982) and Lannuttie, Strauman (2006) studies. Schrodt (2013)

notes that the frequency of teacher's disclosure becomes important when we analyse the appropriateness of TSD because even irrelevant teacher's disclosure students may rate as more acceptable because they become tolerant to it if they hear it often. Our study have also shown that male students more than female ones were likely to rate TSD as more appropriate. This may be explained by the gender roles where females see disclosure as private and intimate aspect while males are more open-mined (Gaia, 2013). So, female students in general could think that disclosing in educational context to the whole class is less appropriate than in face-to-face disclosure.

In the teachers group it was also found that the appropriateness of teachers' disclosure is related to the frequency of self-disclosure. It means that such kind of disclosure, which they hear and use more often, is rated as more appropriate than inappropriate (Caltabiano, Smithson, 1983). It is possible to say that the behaviour which we repeat and see more often seems to be more acceptable than unusual or rarely occurring behaviour.

The fact that there was no gender difference of TSD found in this study may lead us to the conclusion that the participants didn't go ahead by wide spread stereotype (Gaia, 2013) that females' disclosure is more acceptable than males'.

We assume that the findings of this study draw some important practical implications which may be useful in the educational settings. First of all, it is clear that teachers often self-disclose to their students during the lessons. So, it would be useful if teachers could use more relevant than irrelevant disclosure in the classroom. Secondly, results deny the wide spread stereotype of thinking that self-disclosure is common and appropriate mostly for females, what means that both male and female teachers shouldn't be afraid to disclose to the class.

Despite the useful results discussed above, our study has some limitations. Firstly, this experiment gave us an ability to get the essential results on the attitudes of TSD by both teachers and their students views. However, used scenarios may not always represent the real experience of the participants what may limit the generalization of our research (Coltabiano, Smithson, 1983). Furthermore, it is also possible that while rating given scenarios students could imagine the real teacher who seems to be like the one in the scenario and teachers could imagine themselves or their colleagues (Renold, 2002).

This study has also been conducted by paying attention to both teachers and their students' opinions. Despite that, only the minority of teachers have participated into it. It is also important to mention that the majority of the people, working in educational settings, are female, what explains the huge difference of teachers' gender in this study. However, it would be beneficial to try to include more male teachers into the research.

Future directions

According to this study, students who have higher grades are tending to rate teacher's disclosure as more appropriate. Even though this result wasn't statistically significant, other authors in this field (e.g., Zhang et. al., 2009) have found out that students learning achievements have influence on their attitudes on TSD. Still it is not clear if appropriate teacher's disclosure fosters students to learn better or students having better grades rate teacher's self-disclosure as more appropriate (McCarthy, Schmeck, 1982). For the future research, it would be beneficial to broaden the knowledge of TSD by including the role of students' achievements in the research.

It is thought that educators, teaching social sciences or arts, tend to disclose more often than the ones in the field of natural sciences (Zhang et. al., 2007). This leads to the idea that the disclosure of social sciences educators would be rated as more appropriate than of natural sciences teachers. It would be also meaningful to discover how the attitudes on the appropriateness of TSD differ in various subjects of teaching.

Moreover, having in mind that self-disclosure is a dynamic process, it would be also useful and scientifically interesting to find out if there are any differences or similarities of the relevant and irrelevant teacher's disclosure in a wide range of students' age.

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