



Teacher self-disclosure and academic resilience among Korean EFL high school students: The role of psychological safety

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Kim, Chaedam and Jee Hyun Ma. 2026. Teacher self-disclosure and academic resilience among Korean EFL high school students: The role of psychological safety. *Linguistic Research* 43(Special Edition): 259-280. This study investigates the relative contributions of teacher self-disclosure (TSD) dimensions—Amount, Relevance, and Negativity—to the psychological safety (PS) and academic resilience (AR) of Korean high school English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. Recognizing TSD as a multidimensional construct, this mixed-methods study (N = 345) utilized repeated-measures ANOVA, multiple linear regression, and bootstrap mediation analyses, triangulated with students' qualitative freewriting responses. Results indicated that the global TSD score exhibited no significant relationship with PS or AR due to a canceling-out effect between positive (Relevance) and negative (Negativity) disclosures. However, dimensional analyses revealed that Relevance positively predicted PS, whereas Negativity was a strong negative predictor. Notably, the sheer amount of disclosure lost statistical significance when controlled, suggesting that volume alone is not a primary driver of these outcomes. Furthermore, PS fully mediated the relationship between TSD sub-dimensions and AR. Qualitative data corroborated that irrelevant or negative disclosures actively harmed the learning atmosphere, regardless of the volume of disclosure itself. These findings challenge the assumption that “more disclosure is better.” To foster learners' academic resilience, EFL instructors should prioritize instructional relevance and mitigate negativity to establish a foundational layer of psychological safety. (Chonnam National University)

Keywords teacher self-disclosure, psychological safety, academic resilience, EFL learners, mediation analysis, instructional communication

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1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, research in second language acquisition (SLA) has broadened its analytical horizon by attending to the significance of affective and relational variables. Within this trajectory, the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom has come to be understood not merely as a site of knowledge transmission but as a psychosocial space in which the quality of teacher-student relationships is closely linked to learning outcomes (Henry and Thorsen 2021). Korean high school EFL learners, in particular, are situated in an environment where the pressures of high-stakes assessment converge with the developmental transitions of mid-to-late adolescence, rendering them more susceptible to language anxiety and academic setbacks.

In this context, teacher self-disclosure (TSD)—the intentional sharing of a teacher's beliefs, experiences, and emotions with students—has been discussed as a pivotal communicative act that can reduce psychological distance and foster trust within the classroom (Song et al. 2016; Liu and Zhu 2021). Prior studies have suggested positive associations between TSD and proximal, short-term engagement variables such as immediate motivation, willingness to communicate (WTC), and speech production (e.g., Henry and Thorsen 2021; Taheri et al. 2024).

Despite these recognized benefits, early research frequently operationalized TSD as a unidimensional construct, focusing primarily on the mere amount or frequency of disclosure (Cayanus and Martin 2004). However, scholars have increasingly cautioned that more disclosure is not necessarily better disclosure (Cayanus and Martin 2008). Disclosures lacking relevance or containing excessive negativity can evoke student discomfort and disengagement, potentially undermining the learning environment (Cayanus and Martin 2008; Taheri et al. 2024). This suggests a critical methodological and conceptual gap: evaluating TSD as a global score may mask the opposing forces of its positive (e.g., Relevance) and negative (e.g., Negativity) sub-dimensions, creating a canceling-out effect that might obscure how individual dimensions of TSD relate to learner outcomes.

In high-stakes EFL environments marked by evaluative anxiety and frequent linguistic setbacks, academic resilience (AR)—conceptualized as a learner's capacity to sustain effort and adaptively overcome academic adversity (Ye et al. 2021)—operates as a vital socio-affective protective factor. Furthermore, the structural mechanisms

through which TSD influences higher-order cognitive-behavioral capacities, such as academic resilience (AR), remain underexplored. Drawing on the prosocial classroom model (Jennings and Greenberg 2009), a teacher's relational and emotional behaviors do not directly trigger complex student developmental outcomes; instead, they are thought to establish a foundational, emotionally supportive classroom climate. In this light, psychological safety (PS)—the shared belief that the environment is safe for interpersonal risk-taking—could serve as an important precursor. Therefore, it is posited that TSD dimensions may influence AR indirectly by first cultivating an atmosphere of PS, suggesting a possible mediation mechanism that warrants empirical investigation.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the relationships between the three dimensions of student-perceived TSD—Amount, Relevance, and Negativity (Cayanus and Martin 2008)—and learners' PS and AR. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the scholarly understanding of the role of TSD in shaping affective and developmental outcomes within the Korean secondary EFL context. Specifically, this study examines whether the individual sub-dimensions of TSD uniquely contribute to PS and AR when controlling for one another, addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the relative contributions of teacher self-disclosure dimensions (Amount, Relevance, and Negativity) to Korean high school English learners' psychological safety?
2. What are the relative contributions of teacher self-disclosure dimensions (Amount, Relevance, and Negativity) to Korean high school English learners' academic resilience?
3. Does psychological safety mediate the relationship between teacher self-disclosure dimensions and Korean high school English learners' academic resilience?

2. Literature review

2.1 Conceptualizing teacher self-disclosure

Jourard and Lasakow (1958) defined self-disclosure as the process of making the self known to others. Aligned with this foundational definition, teacher self-disclosure (TSD) in educational contexts is broadly understood as the intentional sharing of personal information, experiences, and attitudes by teachers with their students. Research on TSD has been most extensively documented within Western higher education settings. Early instructional communication research often treated TSD as a unitary construct, focusing primarily on the frequency of disclosures to predict positive educational outcomes. For instance, Cayanus and Martin (2004) developed the 18-item Instructor Self-Disclosure Scale, which conceptualized TSD as a unidimensional measure focused exclusively on the amount of instructor disclosure. Their initial studies demonstrated that the sheer volume of disclosure was positively associated with various student outcomes, such as relational motives and out-of-class communication.

As the field of instructional communication progressed, scholars began to explore the qualitative characteristics of teacher disclosures alongside their frequency. Reflecting this theoretical shift, Cayanus and Martin (2008) expanded their earlier unidimensional construct into a multidimensional framework, identifying three distinct dimensions: Amount, Relevance, and Negativity. In their validation of the revised Teacher Self-Disclosure Scale, they demonstrated that TSD entails significantly more than mere quantity. Their findings revealed that these three dimensions are uniquely related to critical educational variables, including course affect, affect toward the instructor, student motivation, teacher clarity, and student interest.

Recent research demonstrates that TSD significantly enhances L2-specific outcomes and facilitates students' emotional and behavioral engagement. For instance, Taheri et al. (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study involving 64 upper-intermediate EFL learners in Iran to examine the instructional effects of TSD. Their findings revealed that teachers' self-disclosure had a robust positive impact on learners' willingness to communicate in a second language and their comprehension of idiomatic expressions. By sharing personal experiences, teachers successfully fostered positive teacher-student relationships, which created a supportive environment

conducive to language learning.

However, while these pedagogical benefits are evident, other recent studies suggest that the effects of TSD are not uniformly positive and depend heavily on its qualitative characteristics. To illustrate, Bouhafa et al. (2023) employed structural equation modeling to examine 208 undergraduate students enrolled in a STEM research immersion program. Their findings revealed a critical caveat: while qualitative aspects of TSD generally promoted classroom engagement, an excessive amount of teacher disclosure was paradoxically linked to negative psychological responses, specifically emotional engagement anxiety.

Furthermore, nuanced findings indicate that “negative” self-disclosure—characterized by the exposure of inappropriate or excessively personal issues—may fail to improve learning outcomes and can even trigger the stigmatization of the instructor (Erickson et al. 2024). Classroom communication research (e.g., Hosek and Thompson 2009) also emphasizes that disclosures must be highly relevant to course content to avoid cognitive overload and student discomfort. Collectively, these findings underscore that evaluating TSD requires a multidimensional approach, as the negative impacts of inappropriate or excessive sharing can effectively cancel out the relational benefits of the disclosure amount.

2.2 Psychological safety as a relational mechanism

Although TSD has been linked to proximal engagement variables, investigations into the psychological pathways leading to developmental outcomes remain limited within the second language acquisition (SLA) context. To understand this mechanism, it is essential to examine psychological safety (PS). Originally conceptualized by Edmondson (1999) in organizational contexts, PS refers to a shared conviction among individuals that their environment is secure enough for interpersonal risk-taking. In her seminal study, Edmondson demonstrated that PS plays a crucial role in promoting learning behaviors, which subsequently mediate the relationship between PS and overall performance. When individuals operate within a psychologically safe setting, they are more willing to engage in constructive risk-taking without the fear of embarrassment or punitive consequences, ultimately leading to enhanced learning outcomes.

Translating this organizational framework to an educational setting, the classroom operates much like a collaborative work team where learning inherently involves interpersonal vulnerabilities, such as the fear of making mistakes. Therefore, establishing psychological safety is a critical prerequisite for effective learning, and the teacher plays a central role in shaping this climate. Drawing on the prosocial classroom model (Jennings and Greenberg 2009), teachers' social and emotional behaviors do not directly drive student achievement. Instead, their social and emotional competence (SEC) and overall well-being serve as a foundational mechanism for developing supportive teacher-student relationships and maintaining effective classroom management. This model posits that these competencies synergistically cultivate a healthy and secure classroom climate, which in turn promotes students' positive developmental outcomes.

To further illustrate the specific mechanisms through which this secure classroom climate is constructed, recent scholarship offers valuable insights into the dynamics of PS across diverse learning environments. In any instructional setting, a lack of personal knowledge about the teacher can breed uncertainty and affective distance, which severely hinders the development of a safe learning space (Song et al. 2016). However, research demonstrates that when instructors engage in appropriate self-disclosure, they effectively mitigate this uncertainty by fostering a strong sense of social presence (Song et al. 2019). This process allows students to perceive their teacher as a relatable human being rather than a distant or unpredictable authority figure—a fundamental mechanism that remains equally vital in both physical and online classrooms.

Particularly within the context of SLA, Henry and Thorsen (2021) drew upon ethnographic observations of 258 English lessons in Swedish secondary schools to examine the relational dynamics of teacher identity-work. They observed that teachers who share personal narratives effectively humanize the classroom environment and significantly reduce the hierarchical distance between themselves and their learners. Consequently, students perceive the classroom as an emotionally safe space where language anxiety is minimized, suggesting that PS serves as a vital mediating bridge between relational teacher behaviors and higher-order student outcomes.

2.3 Academic resilience through teacher modeling

Given the relational foundation established by PS, it is instructive to situate TSD within broader educational frameworks, specifically the personalization principle (Mayer 2009) and teacher modeling (Bandura 1977). When teachers share personal narratives or adopt a conversational style, they provide social cues that enhance social presence and serve as emotional and behavioral models for students to emulate (Pakirathan et al. 2023; Taheri et al. 2024). Crucially, the theoretical premise is that when teachers model the process of navigating their own challenges, they provide students with a cognitive and emotional blueprint to overcome difficulties (Bandura 1977). This modeling effectively fosters students' academic resilience (AR).

In educational contexts, AR fundamentally refers to a learner's capacity to overcome disadvantaged backgrounds, academic adversity, and persistent stress to achieve high levels of performance (Ye et al. 2021). Rather than being a fixed personality trait, it is understood as a dynamic competency through which students successfully adapt and sustain their academic perseverance even in threatening or challenging environments. Specifically, academically resilient students tend to exhibit positive psychological and behavioral characteristics, such as robust self-efficacy, systematic planning, a strong sense of control, low anxiety, and a steadfast commitment to their goals. These competencies ultimately lead to greater enjoyment of school, active class participation, and enhanced overall self-esteem (Martin and Marsh 2006).

In EFL classrooms, which are frequently characterized by constant evaluative pressure and language anxiety, AR serves as a crucial psychological mechanism that enables learners to persist in their language acquisition process rather than withdrawing from it. Yang and Wang (2022) examined how AR and motivational intensity operate to enhance EFL learners' academic achievement. Their study emphasizes that to successfully navigate adverse conditions, students require sustained motivational intensity—a consistent, goal-oriented effort to persist in language learning. The authors highlight that the combination of AR and this motivational intensity significantly increases learners' capability to adapt and compete even in highly demanding educational contexts.

Crucially, a learner's capacity to maintain such resilience is not generated in isolation; rather, it is heavily influenced by socio-affective factors, most notably

teachers' attention and kindness, along with internal variables like self-efficacy. Despite the clear theoretical importance of such relational support, empirical inquiries explicitly examining TSD within South Korea remain sparse, though Kam (2019) demonstrated that personalized teacher behaviors elicit positive achievement emotions. Against the backdrop of persistent domestic concerns regarding declining academic motivation among Korean adolescents, exploring how TSD operates as a form of deliberate instructional scaffolding to build PS and AR constitutes a critical scholarly gap that this study seeks to address.

3. Methodology

This study employed a survey design combining a quantitative cross-sectional approach with qualitative open-ended freewriting to investigate the relationships among TSD, PS, and AR in the Korean EFL high school context.

3.1 Participants

A total of 350 students from a private general academic high school in South Korea were initially recruited for this study. After excluding five invalid responses (e.g., straight-lining or logical inconsistencies), the final sample comprised 345 participants (160 males, 46.4%; 185 females, 53.6%). The participants included 185 first-year students (10th grade) and 160 second-year students (11th grade), ranging in age from 16 to 17 years ($M = 16.5$, $SD = 0.50$). Prior to data collection, all participants received an explanation of the study's purpose and provided informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary, with guaranteed anonymity and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty, in accordance with ethical guidelines in L2 research.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants (N = 345)

Category	Classification	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	160	46.4
	Female	185	53.6
Grade	10th Grade(1st year)	185	53.6
	11th Grade(2nd year)	160	46.4
Total		345	100.0

3.2 Instruments

To collect the required data, a structured questionnaire was administered in Korean. To ensure cross-cultural equivalence and linguistic clarity, all items were translated by the primary researcher and subsequently underwent an expert review process with an experienced EFL scholar to fit the Korean secondary EFL context.

The quantitative section comprised three main instruments: (a) the 14-item TSD Scale (Cayanus and Martin 2008), (b) an adapted 7-item PS Scale (Edmondson 1999), and (c) a 6-item AR Scale (Martin and Marsh 2006). All quantitative items were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher aggregate scores indicating higher levels of the respective constructs. Selected items for each instrument are provided in the Appendix. Furthermore, to enable methodological triangulation and capture authentic learners' voices, the questionnaire also included open-ended freewriting questions appended to the scales. These qualitative items prompted students to describe specific instances of TSD and their subsequent emotional and academic responses. Detailed internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's α) and descriptive statistics for each quantitative scale, alongside the qualitative insights, are reported in the Results section.

3.2.1 Teacher self-disclosure (TSD)

Perceived TSD was measured using the 14-item TSD Scale (Cayanus and Martin 2008), which was adapted for the Korean secondary EFL context. The instrument consists of 14 items categorized into three sub-dimensions: (a) Amount (4 items; e.g., "My English teacher often shares his/her dislikes and likes."), (b) Relevance (5 items; e.g., "My English teacher uses personal examples to show the importance of a concept."), and (c) Negativity (5 items; e.g., "My English teacher reveals undesirable things about him/herself.").

3.2.2 Psychological safety (PS)

PS was assessed using an adapted version of Edmondson's (1999) 7-item PS Scale. The scale was modified for the secondary EFL classroom context by substituting the original term "team" with "class" (e.g., "It is safe to take a risk in this English class.").

Unlike multidimensional measures, this instrument was used as a unidimensional construct to capture students' overall belief that the learning environment is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. Notably, items 1, 3, and 5 were reverse-coded prior to statistical analysis, as they were negatively phrased.

3.2.3 Academic resilience (AR)

AR was measured using the AR Scale developed by Martin and Marsh (2006). Adapted for Korean EFL learners, this instrument comprises 6 items conceptualized as a single, unidimensional factor assessing students' capacity to deal with academic setbacks, stress, and study pressure in the English learning domain (e.g., "I'm good at bouncing back from a poor mark in my English assignment or exam.").

3.3 Procedure

Data collection was conducted toward the end of the academic semester through the cooperation of English language instructors at the participating high school. To minimize potential researcher bias and ensure participant comfort, questionnaires were administered digitally via an online survey platform.

Prior to commencing the survey, an introductory page outlined the study's background, research objectives, and the strictly voluntary nature of participation. To mitigate social desirability bias and enhance response authenticity, students were explicitly assured that their responses would remain entirely anonymous and confidential, and that their participation or individual answers would have no bearing on their academic grades or course evaluations. Participants indicated their digital informed consent by checking an agreement box before gaining access to the survey items.

The online questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete and comprised four sequential sections: (a) demographic background information (e.g., gender, grade), (b) the TSD Scale, (c) the PS Scale, and (d) the AR Scale. At the conclusion of the closed-ended Likert-scale items, open-ended freewriting sections were provided, inviting participants to elaborate in their own words on their perceptions of TSD, PS, and their AR in learning English.

3.4 Data analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using R (version 4.5.1). First, descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were calculated to examine the distributional properties of the major constructs—TSD, PS, and AR—and internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients.

Second, a repeated-measures ANOVA (RM-ANOVA) with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was performed to compare the mean differences among the three TSD sub-dimensions (Amount, Relevance, and Negativity), followed by Bonferroni-corrected post-hoc pairwise comparisons. Third, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analyses were executed to evaluate the predictive relationships of the TSD sub-dimensions with PS and AR, with standard assumptions for regression (e.g., multicollinearity) appropriately verified. Fourth, to test the mediating role of PS in the relationship between TSD sub-dimensions and AR, a mediation analysis was conducted using the psych package in R. This analysis utilized 5,000 bootstrap resamples to derive 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs). Finally, the open-ended responses were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to qualitatively triangulate the quantitative findings and capture authentic learners' voices.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Descriptive statistics and reliability of the variables

Descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliabilities for the main constructs (global TSD, PS, and AR) were computed and are presented in Table 2. All main variables demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > .80$).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and reliability of main variables (N = 345)

Variable	Items (<i>k</i>)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α
TSD	14	2.54	0.56	.824
PS	7	4.18	0.59	.808
AR	6	3.34	0.92	.891

To verify the internal consistency of the TSD sub-dimensions, Cronbach's α coefficients were calculated. All three sub-dimensions demonstrated acceptable to high reliability: Amount ($\alpha = .714$, 4 items), Relevance ($\alpha = .852$, 5 items), and Negativity ($\alpha = .715$, 5 items).

A repeated-measures ANOVA (RM-ANOVA) with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction revealed a statistically significant difference among the mean scores of the TSD sub-dimensions, $F(1.76, 607.04) = 769.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_g^2 = .498$. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction indicated that students perceived the highest level of Relevance ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.84$), followed by Amount ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 0.82$) and Negativity ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 0.58$), with all pairwise differences being statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and RM-ANOVA of TSD sub-dimensions

Sub-dimension	Items (k)	M	SD	Cronbach's α	RM-ANOVA(F)
Amount	4	2.39	0.82	.714	769.75***
Relevance	5	3.50	0.84	.852	
Negativity	5	1.68	0.58	.715	

Note. RM-ANOVA $F(1.76, 607.04) = 769.75$, $p < .001$. All pairwise post-hoc comparisons (Bonferroni) were statistically significant at $p < .001$. *** $p < .001$

4.2 Correlations among variables

As presented in Table 4, *Pearson* correlation analysis was conducted to examine the preliminary relationships among the variables. Notably, the global score of TSD showed no statistically significant correlation with PS ($r = -.065$, $p = .229$) or AR ($r = -.001$, $p = .993$).

However, distinct patterns emerged when examining individual sub-dimensions. PS was positively correlated with Relevance ($r = .236$, $p < .001$), but negatively correlated with Negativity ($r = -.335$, $p < .001$) and Amount ($r = -.157$, $p = .003$). A strong positive correlation was also found between Amount and Negativity ($r = .558$, $p < .001$). None of the TSD sub-dimensions were significantly correlated with AR ($p > .05$).

Table 4. Inter-correlations among the variables (N = 345)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. TSD	-	.822***	.737***	.682***	-.065	-.001
2. Amount		-	.352***	.558***	-.157**	-.017
3. Relevance			-	.135*	.236***	.026
4. Negativity				-	-.335***	-.020
5. PS					-	.242***
6. AR						-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

4.3 Predicting PS and AR: Quantitative and qualitative findings

To address RQ1 and RQ2, multiple linear regression analyses were performed. Prior to evaluating the regression models, multicollinearity diagnostics were conducted. All Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged between 1.15 and 1.64 (with tolerance values ranging from .61 to .87), which are substantially below the conservative threshold of 5.0. These results confirm that multicollinearity poses no threat to the validity of the regression analysis.

For RQ1 (PS), the overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 341) = 27.77$, $p < .001$, accounting for 19.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .196$, Adj. $R^2 = .189$). Specifically, Negativity was the strongest negative predictor ($\beta = -.337$, $t = -5.638$, $p < .001$), while Relevance was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .284$, $t = 5.935$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, Amount lost its statistical significance in the presence of other sub-dimensions ($\beta = -.066$, $t = -1.311$, $p = .191$).

Table 5. Multiple regression predicting psychological safety

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.124	0.141	-	29.210	< .001
Amount	-0.058	0.045	-.066	-1.311	.191
Relevance	0.219	0.037	.284	5.935	< .001
Negativity	-0.337	0.060	-.337	-5.638	< .001

Note. $R^2 = .196$, Adjusted $R^2 = .189$, $F(3,341) = 27.77$, $p < .001$, *B* = Unstandardized coefficient; *SE* = standard error; β = standardized coefficient, *** $p < .001$

For RQ2 (AR), the regression model was not statistically significant, $F(3, 341) = 0.18$, $p = .910$, $R^2 = .002$, indicating that TSD sub-dimensions do not directly

contribute to students' academic resilience.

The quantitative finding that the sheer volume of TSD does not inherently yield positive learning outcomes is corroborated by the qualitative data. When teachers shared personal anecdotes merely for entertainment or without pedagogical relevance, it often failed to cultivate a supportive environment. As one student noted, "honest experiences or thoughts were mostly just funny stories told when classmates were sleepy, [so] I did not feel comfortable or safe because of them" (Participant A).

Even more critically, inappropriate or excessive disclosures appeared to actively disrupt the learning atmosphere. For instance, another student described a teacher's highly personal and instructionally irrelevant remark—such as advising students to "prioritize dating individuals from prestigious professional programs once they reach college"—as "shocking and completely unhelpful for the English class" (Participant B). Similarly, when a teacher shared an anecdote about their college extracurricular activities while inadvertently minimizing the importance of English, it failed to foster a supportive pedagogical environment. The student reported that such disclosures did not create an atmosphere where it felt "okay to make mistakes" (Participant C).

Furthermore, the qualitative data vividly illustrated that highly relevant disclosures serve as powerful cognitive scaffolds, enhancing students' comprehension and retention of instructional material. When teachers shared personal experiences strictly aligned with the reading texts, it effectively lowered the cognitive load for learners. For instance, Participant D recalled reading an English passage about the effects of travel direction and distance on jet lag. When the teacher shared their own travel experiences directly related to this topic, the student noted that it allowed them to "understand the content more easily." Similarly, when a teacher's personal anecdote mirrored the thematic content of a reading passage (e.g., facing disadvantages after following a senior's advice), it functioned as a powerful cognitive anchor. The student reported that this pedagogical alignment not only "helped in understanding the content" but also made the lesson highly "memorable" (Participant E).

These qualitative accounts demonstrate that when disclosures are pedagogically relevant, they act not merely as affective support, but as explicit instructional tools that foster deeper academic understanding. Conversely, it is the irrelevance or negativity of the disclosure—rather than the amount—that hinders PS, explaining the negative correlation observed in the quantitative analysis.

4.4 Mediating role of psychological safety

To test RQ3, mediation analyses using 5,000 bootstrap resamples were conducted. Although TSD sub-dimensions had no direct effect on AR (RQ2), PS fully mediated the indirect pathways from TSD sub-dimensions to AR.

For the Relevance pathway, the direct effect of Relevance on AR was non-significant ($c' = -0.06$, $p = .457$). However, the indirect effect through PS was statistically significant ($ab = 0.10$, 95% Bootstrap CI [0.05, 0.16]). Similarly, for the Negativity pathway, the direct effect of Negativity on AR was non-significant ($c' = 0.13$, $p = .193$). The indirect effect through PS was significantly negative ($ab = -0.15$, 95% Bootstrap CI [-0.24, -0.08]). These results confirm a full mediation mechanism: TSD sub-dimensions may not directly alter AR; rather, they related to students' PS, which in turn relates to their AR.

Table 6. Summary of bootstrap mediation analysis via PS

Pathway ($X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$)	Path a	Path b	Direct(c')	Indirect(ab) [95% CI]	Result
Relevance $\rightarrow$ PS $\rightarrow$ AR	0.22***	0.44***	-0.06(<i>ns</i>)	0.10 [0.05,0.16]	Full mediation
Negativity $\rightarrow$ PS $\rightarrow$ AR	-0.34***	0.44***	0.13(<i>ns</i>)	-0.15 [-0.24,-0.08]	Full mediation

Note. CI = Confidence Interval based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples; *ns* = Not significant ($p > .05$), *** $p < .001$

The quantitative mediation model indicates that PS fully mediates the relationship between relevant TSD and AR. The learners' voices provide insights into this sequential mechanism, particularly regarding the lowering of the affective filter. When teachers shared relevant vulnerabilities—such as their own past pronunciation mistakes—students reported a profound shift in their emotional response to failure. Participant F recounted that hearing about a teacher's embarrassing pronunciation mistake helped them “accept mistakes naturally,” which subsequently provided the resilience to “continue trying without giving up” when facing academic setbacks.

Furthermore, relevant disclosure seemed to build a shared sense of security. Participant G highlighted that realizing “teachers and seniors also ruined exams or failed to adapt” made students feel comforted that they were “not failing alone,” ultimately providing crucial encouragement after difficult exams. These authentic

accounts substantiate the statistical conclusion: relevant, non-negative disclosures function as a supportive precursor to academic resilience by establishing a foundation of psychological safety.

4.5 Discussion

The primary objective of the current study was to examine how the sub-dimensions of TSD—Amount, Relevance, and Negativity—influence Korean high school English learners' PS and AR, and to explore the underlying mediation mechanisms connecting these constructs.

A central finding of this investigation is that relying on a global, aggregate TSD score can obscure its specific psychological impact on students. While the aggregate TSD score exhibited no significant correlation with PS ($r = -.065$, $p = .229$), sub-dimensional analysis revealed that Relevance is positively associated with PS, whereas Negativity exerts a substantial negative influence. This finding aligns with communication privacy management theory (McBride and Wahl 2005; e.g., Hosek and Thompson 2009) and instructional communication theories (Sorensen 1989; e.g., Cayanus and Martin 2008), which suggest that student responses to TSD are highly sensitive to qualitative characteristics rather than its mere presence. When positive (i.e., Relevance) and negative (i.e., Negativity) dimensions operate simultaneously, they appear to create a canceling-out effect, producing a false impression that TSD is relationally inert.

In the highly competitive context of Korean high schools, where classroom time is strictly managed for college entrance preparation, this distinction is particularly crucial. Students may perceive irrelevant or negative disclosures as a distraction, whereas relevant disclosures—such as a teacher sharing their own English-learning struggles—are welcomed as valuable instructional support. Therefore, these results highlight that TSD should be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, suggesting that researchers in language instruction should move beyond unidimensional measures.

Another critical empirical contribution is the clarification of the role played by the Amount dimension. Bivariate correlation initially suggested a negative link between Amount and PS ($r = -.157$, $p = .003$), which may lead to the hasty conclusion that

teachers should simply speak less about themselves. However, after controlling for Relevance and Negativity in the multiple regression model, the relationship between disclosure amount and PS became statistically non-significant ($\beta = -.066$, $p = .191$). This statistical discrepancy indicates that the negative bivariate association was likely a spurious artifact. As shown by the strong positive correlation between Amount and Negativity ($r = .558$), an increased frequency of teacher talk may elevate the likelihood of introducing negative or inappropriate self-disclosures, such as personal complaints or frustrations (Cayanus and Martin 2008). When such negative content is statistically controlled, the volume of disclosure itself does not appear to undermine students' PS.

In essence, students are not uncomfortable with how much teachers share, but rather with what they share (Sorensen 1989). This is an encouraging finding for Korean EFL teachers, who may worry that sharing personal stories could undermine their classroom authority or decorum. As long as the shared content is instructionally relevant and emotionally constructive, teachers do not need to strictly limit their self-disclosures. This encapsulates the pedagogical principle that "more disclosure is not better disclosure"; rather, the quality and situational fit of the shared information are paramount for maintaining a relationally safe classroom environment.

Finally, the bootstrapping mediation analysis revealed a crucial structural pathway: PS fully mediates the relationship between TSD dimensions and AR. The sub-dimensions of TSD demonstrated no direct effect on students' AR, but exerted significant indirect effects through PS. This full mediation mechanism carries important theoretical and practical weight. AR—a student's ability to overcome learning difficulties and persist in language tasks—is a higher-order cognitive-behavioral capacity that is unlikely to be elicited directly by simple teacher disclosures. Instead, when teachers share highly relevant information and minimize negative disclosures, they establish an emotionally safe classroom environment. In this context, where fear of negative evaluation and saving face often prevent students from speaking up or taking risks, a teacher's supportive disclosure serves as a powerful buffer.

Once students feel psychologically safe and free from emotional threat, this internal stability functions as a foundational resource that fosters AR, allowing them to bounce back from academic setbacks. This finding is consistent with Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, which posits that positive and secure emotional states

broaden learners' thought-action repertoires and build enduring psychological resources like resilience. Ultimately, teacher self-disclosure does not directly build resilience; rather, it cultivates the classroom safety that makes student resilience possible.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the multidimensional impacts of teacher self-disclosure (TSD)—Amount, Relevance, and Negativity—on the psychological safety (PS) and academic resilience (AR) of Korean EFL high school learners ($N = 345$). Using a mixed-methods design, the study revealed that an aggregate TSD score obscures the distinct effects of its sub-dimensions due to a canceling-out effect. While instructional Relevance significantly fostered PS, Negativity acted as a strong inhibitor. Notably, the Amount of disclosure was not a significant predictor once quality was controlled, suggesting that the substance of what is shared matters more than how often it is shared.

Crucially, mediation analyses confirmed that TSD sub-dimensions do not directly build AR; instead, they function through PS. Relevant disclosures enhance resilience by establishing an emotionally secure foundation, whereas negative disclosures indirectly diminish it. These findings, corroborated by qualitative data, highlight that inappropriate or irrelevant sharing harms the classroom climate regardless of the frequency of teacher talk.

From a practical perspective, several pedagogical guidelines emerge for L2/FL instructors, particularly in high-pressure secondary systems: 1) Prioritize strategic relevance: Teachers should deliberately align personal anecdotes with lesson topics or learning strategies. In the Korean EFL context, sharing past struggles with English or test anxiety can humanize the instructor and encourage student risk-taking; 2) Filter out negativity: Instructors must exercise caution to avoid venting professional or administrative frustrations. Such negativity can destabilize the classroom's emotional safety and hinder student resilience; 3) Focus on quality over quantity: Teachers need not overly restrict the amount of personal sharing, provided the content remains instructionally relevant and emotionally constructive.

Despite these insights, this study has limitations that suggest avenues for future inquiry. First, the cross-sectional design prevents definitive causal claims; future

longitudinal research could track how the benefits of relevant TSD unfold over time. Second, relying on self-reported data may introduce response bias; incorporating classroom observations or teacher self-assessments would provide a more comprehensive view. Third, exploring individual learner differences, such as English proficiency and grade level, would offer a more nuanced understanding of how different students process TSD. Finally, as this study was conducted within the specific socio-cultural environment of South Korea, comparative research across different educational or cultural settings would enhance the generalizability of these findings.

Ultimately, this study reframes teacher self-disclosure not as casual chatter, but as a strategic pedagogical tool. By prioritizing relevance and filtering out negativity, teachers provide more than just language instruction; they construct a psychologically safe haven that serves as the essential affective scaffolding for cultivating learners' academic resilience.

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Appendix. Selected questionnaire items

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

1. Teacher self-disclosure (TSD) scale

No.	Statement	Scale				
1	My English teacher often gives his/her opinions about current events.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My English teacher often gives his/her opinion about events in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My English teacher provides personal explanations that make the content relevant.	1	2	3	4	5
8	My English teacher provides personal examples that help me understand the importance of the content.	1	2	3	4	5
10	My English teacher's disclosures, on the whole, are more negative than positive.	1	2	3	4	5
13	My English teacher usually discloses negative things about him/herself.	1	2	3	4	5

Note. Items 1, 4 (Amount); Items 7, 8 (Relevance); Items 10, 13 (Negativity)

2. Psychological safety (PS) scale

No.	Statement	Scale				
2	In our English class, we can freely bring up problems and tough issues at any time.	1	2	3	4	5
5	It is difficult to ask other students in our English class for help.	1	2	3	4	5
7	When studying with classmates in English class, my unique skills and abilities are valued and utilized.	1	2	3	4	5

Note. Item 5 was reverse-coded.

3. Academic resilience (AR) scale

No.	Statement	Scale				
1	I believe I am mentally tough when it comes to English exams.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I don't let the stress of studying English get on top of me.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I'm good at dealing with setbacks in English class (e.g., bad marks, negative feedback on my work).	1	2	3	4	5

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