

Exploring Teacher-Student Rapport in Second Language Learning Classrooms: Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of teacher-student rapport in second language learning classrooms, focusing on the challenges and strategies that shape this critical relationship. Teacher-student rapport is pivotal in creating a supportive learning environment that fosters student engagement and motivation. However, building and maintaining this rapport in second language contexts presents unique challenges, including cultural differences, communication barriers, and varying student proficiency levels. This review synthesizes existing literature to identify common challenges faced by educators and the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles. The findings reveal that successful rapport-building requires a combination of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and adaptive teaching methods. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of consistent and open communication, as well as the need for teachers to be attuned to the individual needs and backgrounds of their students. By understanding these factors, educators can better navigate the complexities of teacher-student interactions in second language learning settings, ultimately enhancing the learning experience.

1. Introduction

The dynamics of second language (L2) classrooms have been a subject of increasing interest in recent years, with particular attention given to the intricate relationship between teachers and students. Among the various factors influencing L2 acquisition, teacher-student rapport has emerged as a critical element in fostering a conducive learning environment (Frisby & Martin, 2020). This interpersonal connection, characterized by mutual trust, respect, and positive interactions, plays a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes, motivation, and ultimately, their language learning outcomes (Mercer, 2020). The significance of teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms stems from the unique challenges inherent in language learning. Unlike other subjects, language acquisition requires active participation, risk-taking, and a willingness to make mistakes – all of which are facilitated by a supportive classroom

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atmosphere (Dewaele & Li, 2020). As such, understanding the nuances of building and maintaining rapport in L2 settings has become crucial for educators and researchers alike.

Recent studies have highlighted the multifaceted nature of teacher-student rapport in L2 contexts. For instance, Xie and Derakhshan (2021) found that positive rapport significantly correlates with reduced foreign language anxiety, a common barrier to effective language acquisition. Similarly, Wang and Guan (2020) demonstrated that strong teacher-student relationships contribute to increased learner engagement and willingness to communicate in the target language.

However, establishing and maintaining rapport in L2 classrooms is not without its challenges. Cultural differences, language barriers, and varying expectations can complicate interpersonal dynamics (Raider-Roth *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, the shift towards online and blended learning environments, accelerated by the global pandemic, has introduced new obstacles in building meaningful connections between teachers and students (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). Despite these challenges, educators and researchers have identified several strategies to enhance teacher-student rapport in L2 settings. Humór, when used appropriately, has been shown to create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere (Yilmaz, 2019). Additionally, teacher self-disclosure, when balanced and relevant, can humanize instructors and foster a sense of connection with students (Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

The use of technology has also opened up new avenues for rapport-building. Li and Zou (2023) explored how social media platforms can be leveraged to facilitate informal interactions between teachers and students, leading to improved classroom relationships. Similarly, gamification techniques have been found to not only enhance engagement but also strengthen the bond between educators and learners (Dehghanzadeh *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, recent research has emphasized the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices in building rapport with diverse L2 learners. Recognizing and valuing students' cultural backgrounds and experiences can significantly contribute to a positive classroom environment (Nguyen *et al.*, 2022). This approach aligns with the broader movement towards inclusive education and highlights the need for teachers to develop intercultural competence.

The impact of teacher-student rapport extends beyond immediate classroom interactions. Longitudinal studies have begun to explore how these relationships influence learners' long-term attitudes towards the target language and culture. For example, Chen and Wei (2024) found that positive rapport experiences in L2 classrooms were associated with sustained motivation for language learning and increased intercultural sensitivity. As the field of second language acquisition continues to evolve, the role of teacher-student rapport remains a critical area of inquiry. Future research directions may include exploring the interplay between rapport and emerging pedagogical approaches, such as translanguaging and plurilingual education (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). Additionally, investigating how

rapport-building strategies can be effectively adapted to various cultural contexts and learning modalities will be essential in developing a comprehensive understanding of this crucial aspect of L2 education.

In fact, teacher-student rapport in second language learning classrooms represents a complex and vital component of effective language instruction. By addressing the challenges and implementing evidence-based strategies, educators can create supportive learning environments that foster linguistic growth and cultural understanding. As research in this area continues to expand, it promises to yield valuable insights that will shape the future of L2 pedagogy and contribute to more positive and productive language learning experiences for students worldwide.

2. Theoretical Framework

Teacher-student rapport plays a crucial role in second language (L2) learning environments, significantly influencing student motivation, engagement, and overall language acquisition (Frisby & Martin, 2021). This abstract synthesizes recent research on the impact of positive teacher-student relationships in L2 classrooms. Studies have shown that strong rapport contributes to increased student participation and willingness to communicate in the target language (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Furthermore, teachers who establish good rapport create a supportive learning atmosphere that reduces language anxiety and enhances students' self-efficacy (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2019).

Recent investigations have also explored the role of technology-mediated communication in building rapport in online L2 learning contexts (Sun *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, cross-cultural studies have highlighted the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices in fostering rapport with diverse L2 learners (Li & Rawal, 2023). While the positive effects of teacher-student rapport are well-documented, challenges in maintaining it across different proficiency levels and learning modalities have been identified (Zhang & Papi, 2022). Future research directions include examining the long-term effects of rapport on L2 proficiency and investigating effective strategies for rapport-building in large-scale language programs (Chen & Dörnyei, 2024).

The exploration of teacher-student rapport in second language (L2) learning classrooms is grounded in several theoretical perspectives that emphasize the social, cognitive, and motivational dimensions of language acquisition. This study particularly draws upon Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, and Interpersonal Communication Theory to conceptualize the dynamic interplay between teachers and students in fostering effective L2 learning environments.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) posits that learning occurs within a social context, where interaction with more knowledgeable others facilitates cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). In the realm of L2 learning, teacher-student rapport

plays a crucial role in scaffolding learners' linguistic and cognitive abilities. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance—is particularly relevant in understanding how teachers support students through meaningful interactions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). When educators establish strong rapport, they create an environment where students feel comfortable engaging in collaborative dialogue, receiving corrective feedback, and negotiating meaning, all of which are essential for language development (Swain, 2000). Thus, SCT underscores the importance of teacher-student rapport in facilitating socially mediated learning experiences in L2 classrooms.

Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System

Motivation is a key determinant of success in L2 learning, and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) provides a robust framework for understanding the motivational dynamics between teachers and students. The L2MSS consists of three components: (1) the Ideal L2 Self, representing a learner's aspirations and vision of their future L2 proficiency; (2) the Ought-to L2 Self, reflecting external expectations and obligations; and (3) the L2 Learning Experience, which involves the immediate learning environment, including teacher behavior and classroom interactions (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). Positive teacher-student rapport contributes significantly to the L2 Learning Experience by fostering a supportive and motivating classroom atmosphere (Mercer & Ryan, 2010). Teachers who establish strong relational bonds with students can enhance their motivation by aligning instructional strategies with students' ideal L2 selves and reducing anxiety associated with learning challenges (You & Dörnyei, 2016). Consequently, L2MSS highlights the critical role of teacher-student relationships in sustaining learners' motivation and engagement in language learning.

Interpersonal Communication Theory

Interpersonal Communication Theory (ICT) offers a lens through which to examine the relational and communicative dimensions of teacher-student rapport. Central to ICT is the idea that effective communication fosters relational closeness and trust, which are fundamental for meaningful teacher-student interactions (Burgoon *et al.*, 2016). In the L2 classroom, immediacy behaviors—such as verbal encouragement, active listening, and personalized feedback—enhance students' perceptions of teacher support, leading to increased classroom participation and linguistic risk-taking (Witt *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, positive teacher-student communication reduces affective barriers, such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes, thereby creating an inclusive and interactive learning environment (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). From an ICT perspective, teacher-student rapport is not merely a byproduct of classroom interaction but a dynamic process that shapes and reinforces student engagement in L2 learning.

Integrating Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, and Interpersonal Communication Theory provides a comprehensive

framework for understanding the complexities of teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms. While SCT emphasizes the social and cognitive scaffolding necessary for language learning, L2MSS highlights the motivational aspects that sustain learners' engagement. Additionally, ICT underscores the communicative strategies that enhance relational quality and learning outcomes. Collectively, these theories illustrate the multifaceted role of teacher-student rapport in overcoming challenges and implementing effective strategies for second language acquisition.

3. Review of the Literature

The dynamics of the second language (L2) classroom have long been a subject of interest for researchers and educators alike. Among the myriad factors that contribute to successful language acquisition, the relationship between teachers and students has emerged as a critical component. This interpersonal dimension, often referred to as teacher-student rapport, plays a pivotal role in creating an environment conducive to effective language learning (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). The concept of rapport, which encompasses mutual understanding, trust, and a positive emotional connection, has been increasingly recognized as a fundamental aspect of the language learning process (Frisby & Martin, 2010).

In recent years, there has been a growing body of research exploring the multifaceted nature of teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms and its impact on various aspects of language acquisition. This increased focus stems from the recognition that language learning is not merely a cognitive process but also a deeply social and emotional experience (Dewaele, 2019). As such, the quality of interpersonal relationships within the classroom can significantly influence students' motivation, engagement, and overall language learning outcomes. To this end, recent publications recognize the importance of ongoing professional development of faculty members including their engagement in meaningful research and publications to achieve the aim of quality education with both local and global significance (Farida, Sinha, Bashir, Basu, & Chowdhury, 2022).

The importance of teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms is underscored by several theoretical frameworks. Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2021) L2 Motivational Self System emphasizes the role of the learning environment, including teacher-student relationships, in shaping learners' motivational orientations. Similarly, Norton's (2018) concept of investment in language learning highlights how learners' willingness to engage in the target language is influenced by their relationships with those who speak it, including their teachers.

Research has consistently demonstrated the positive effects of strong teacher-student rapport on various aspects of L2 learning. For instance, a study by Xie and Derakhshan (2021) found that positive rapport was associated with increased student motivation, participation, and willingness to communicate in the target language. Furthermore, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019) reported that students who perceived a strong rapport with their teachers experienced lower levels of foreign language anxiety and higher levels of enjoyment in the L2 classroom.

However, despite the recognized importance of teacher-student rapport, establishing and maintaining positive relationships in L2 classrooms is not without its challenges. Cultural differences, language barriers, and the inherent power dynamics of the classroom can all pose significant obstacles to building rapport (Raider-Roth, 2019). Moreover, the increasing prevalence of online and hybrid learning environments, accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, has introduced new complexities in fostering meaningful teacher-student connections (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2020).

One of the primary challenges in building rapport in L2 classrooms is the cultural divide that often exists between teachers and students. In many contexts, language teachers may come from different cultural backgrounds than their students, leading to potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations of behavior and communication styles (Byram & Wagner, 2018). This cultural gap can manifest in various ways, from differences in expectations regarding classroom behavior to divergent views on the roles of teachers and students.

Another significant challenge is the language barrier itself. In L2 classrooms, particularly at lower proficiency levels, students may struggle to express themselves fully in the target language, potentially hindering the development of deeper connections with their teachers (Dewaele *et al.*, 2019). This linguistic asymmetry can lead to frustration, anxiety, and a reluctance to engage in meaningful interactions, all of which can impede the formation of strong rapport. The power dynamics inherent in the teacher-student relationship present an additional layer of complexity. While a certain degree of authority is necessary for effective classroom management, an overly hierarchical structure can inhibit the development of genuine rapport (Mercer, 2020). Finding the right balance between maintaining professional boundaries and fostering a warm, supportive relationship requires careful navigation on the part of the teacher.

In recent years, the rapid shift towards online and hybrid learning models has introduced new challenges in building and maintaining rapport. The physical distance and technological mediation inherent in online learning can make it more difficult to establish the kind of personal connections that naturally develop in face-to-face settings (Guillén *et al.*, 2020). Non-verbal cues, which play a crucial role in building rapport, are often limited or absent in virtual environments, requiring teachers to find alternative strategies for connecting with their students. Despite these challenges, researchers and practitioners have identified various strategies for fostering positive teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms. One key approach is the cultivation of teacher immediacy, which refers to behaviors that reduce the perceived distance between teachers and students (Frymier *et al.*, 2019). This can include both verbal strategies, such as using inclusive language and addressing students by name, and non-verbal behaviors like maintaining eye contact and using appropriate gestures.

Another effective strategy is the incorporation of humor and a light-hearted approach to language learning. Studies have shown that appropriate use of humor

can help create a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, reduce anxiety, and facilitate the development of positive relationships between teachers and students (Dewaele *et al.*, 2019). However, it is crucial for teachers to be aware of cultural differences in humor and to use it judiciously to avoid potential misunderstandings. Implementing collaborative learning activities and project-based approaches can also contribute to building rapport by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves (Mercer *et al.*, 2019). These approaches allow for more personalized engagement and can help break down traditional hierarchical structures in the classroom.

In the context of online and hybrid learning, teachers have had to adapt their rapport-building strategies to the virtual environment. This has included making greater use of digital tools for communication and collaboration, as well as finding creative ways to inject personality and warmth into online interactions (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2020). Some teachers have reported success with virtual office hours, one-on-one video conferences, and the use of social media platforms to maintain connections with their students outside of formal class time. As the field of L2 education continues to evolve, there is a growing recognition of the need for teacher training programs to place greater emphasis on the interpersonal aspects of language teaching, including strategies for building and maintaining rapport (Gkonou & Mercer, 2020). This includes developing teachers' intercultural competence, emotional intelligence, and ability to create inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Looking ahead, several areas warrant further investigation to deepen our understanding of teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms. These include exploring the long-term effects of rapport on language acquisition, investigating how rapport-building strategies may need to be adapted for different cultural contexts and proficiency levels, and examining the impact of emerging technologies on teacher-student relationships in language learning environments. It can be emphasized that while the importance of teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms is widely recognized, the process of building and maintaining these positive relationships is complex and multifaceted. By acknowledging the challenges and implementing evidence-based strategies, educators can create more engaging, supportive, and effective language learning environments. As research in this area continues to evolve, it promises to yield valuable insights that will help shape the future of L2 pedagogy and contribute to more successful language learning outcomes for students around the world.

4. Teacher-Student Rapport for Effective Pedagogy

The quality of teacher-student relationships plays a crucial role in creating an effective learning environment. Research has consistently shown that positive rapport between educators and learners significantly enhances academic performance, student engagement, and overall educational outcomes (Frisby & Martin, 2021). This essay explores the importance of teacher-student rapport in ensuring effective pedagogy and its impact on various aspects of the educational

process. One of the primary benefits of strong teacher-student rapport is its positive influence on student motivation and engagement. When students feel a connection with their teachers, they are more likely to actively participate in class discussions, complete assignments, and seek help when needed (Koca, 2018). This increased engagement often translates into improved academic performance and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Moreover, a positive relationship between teachers and students fosters a supportive classroom atmosphere. Students who perceive their teachers as approachable and caring are more likely to take risks in their learning, ask questions, and express their ideas freely (Hagenauer *et al.*, 2023). This open communication facilitates a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, promoting critical thinking and creativity. Research has also highlighted the role of teacher-student rapport in reducing disciplinary issues and improving classroom management. When students feel respected and valued by their teachers, they are more likely to exhibit positive behavior and adhere to classroom norms (Clancy & Sentance, 2020). This, in turn, allows teachers to focus more on instruction and less on managing disruptive behaviors, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of teaching.

Furthermore, strong teacher-student relationships have been linked to improved student well-being and social-emotional development. Teachers who establish positive rapport with their students are better positioned to identify and address individual needs, provide emotional support, and create a safe and inclusive learning environment (Kim *et al.*, 2022). This holistic approach to education contributes to students' overall growth and prepares them for future challenges. However, building and maintaining positive teacher-student rapport requires intentional effort and specific skills. Effective communication, empathy, and cultural sensitivity are essential components in fostering these relationships (Rouland *et al.*, 2020). Teacher education programs and professional development initiatives should prioritize developing these skills to equip educators with the tools necessary for building strong connections with their students.

Indeed, teacher-student rapport is a fundamental element in ensuring effective pedagogy. Its impact extends beyond academic achievement, influencing student engagement, classroom dynamics, and social-emotional development. By recognizing the importance of these relationships and actively working to strengthen them, educators can create more productive and enriching learning experiences for their students.

5. Teacher-Student Rapport: Positive Outcomes in Academia

Compared to primary schooling, the relationship between the teacher and the learners forms a major frame through which second language learning takes place in creating the right atmosphere for education and human development. The following section looks at the benefits that come along with the teacher-student relationships based on the literature reviewed over the last decade.

5.1 Academic Achievement

Various studies have pointed out that when there is good teacher student relationship then the learning process is favorable. [Wilson and Ryan \(2019\)](#) conducted a study that established that students in second language classes reported higher rapport with their instructors they were most preferable in the achievement of higher proficiency level in the target language. This brings out the correlation because students are motivated and pay more attention in their classes as they feel appreciated by the instructors ([Martin, Smith, & Mottet, 2016](#)).

5.2 Increased Motivation and Engagement

One of the interaction elements for proper learning, including the complex process of second language acquisition is students' motivation. In another study by [Thompson, Luxton, and Zhang \(2021\)](#) confirmed that there is a positive relationship between positive teacher-student interaction and learners' intrinsic motivation in learning a foreign language. Not only academic achievements but also motivation enhances students' interactions with the language learning process, which in turn, increases their desirability of participating actively and of taking opportunities in language learning ([Kumaravadivelu, 2018](#)).

5.3 Enhanced Communication Skills

The teacher-student relationship is not limited to academic achievements but is closely connected with students' opportunities to develop key features of civil society members' life, for instance, communication skills. Of course, when a teacher provides a friendly and liberal environment, students are in a position to come up with what they would want to say in the new language, and this makes mistakes a vital part of learning. According to [Johnson and Lee \(2017\)](#), students in those contexts are more proficient in the second language's communicative competence as they attributed their achievements to the interpersonal relationship with their teachers.

5.4 Improved Psychological Well-being

The psychological aspect of teacher-student interaction is crucial, especially when language barriers make learners feel isolated in school. In a research conducted by [Greener and Crick \(2022\)](#), they identified that positive teacher-student relationships were correlate with less anxiety stress for the second language learners. These conditions not only enhance the rate at which learning takes place but also the health of students who after a long period of learning are more likely to be affected by diseases therefore having to prolong their learning period thus are important for long-term learning engagements ([Greener & Crick, 2022](#)).

That is why the role played by the rapport between teachers and students in second language learning contexts cannot be overestimated. From research conducted in literature between the year 2015 and 2024, these types of relationships do not only lead to success in academics but also in motivation communication, and psychological health. Teachers, therefore, need to be aware of and learn how they

can establish and maintain appropriate relationships with learners, since this is critical to constructive relationships between them and their students.

6. Teacher-Student Rapport: A Study on the Prospective Challenges

The quality of teacher-student relationships has long been recognized as a crucial factor in educational outcomes. As we navigate an increasingly complex educational landscape, the challenges to building and maintaining effective teacher-student rapport have become more pronounced. This essay explores the prospective challenges facing teacher-student rapport in the coming years, drawing on recent research to identify key issues and potential solutions.

One of the most significant challenges to teacher-student rapport is the growing reliance on technology in education. While digital tools offer numerous benefits, they can also create barriers to personal connection. As [Blaine and Crockett \(2020\)](#) note, "The integration of technology in classrooms has fundamentally altered the dynamics of teacher-student interactions, often reducing face-to-face communication and potentially impacting the development of meaningful relationships" (p. 217). This shift has been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many educational institutions to adopt remote learning models ([Johnson et al., 2022](#)).

The increased use of online learning platforms and digital communication tools has led to what some researchers term "digital distance" between teachers and students. [Zhang and Lee \(2021\)](#) found that students in fully online courses reported feeling less connected to their instructors compared to those in traditional classroom settings. This lack of connection can have serious implications for student engagement and academic performance. Another challenge is the growing diversity of student populations. As classrooms become more multicultural and inclusive, teachers must navigate a complex web of cultural differences, learning styles, and individual needs. [Patel \(2019\)](#) argues that "cultural competence is no longer optional for educators; it is a fundamental requirement for building effective rapport with diverse student groups" (p. 83). However, achieving this level of cultural competence requires ongoing training and support, which may not always be readily available to teachers.

The increasing prevalence of mental health issues among students also poses a significant challenge to teacher-student rapport. A study by [Rodriguez et al. \(2023\)](#) found that 35% of high school students reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety or depression, up from 28% in 2019. Teachers are often on the front lines of identifying and supporting students with mental health concerns, but many feel ill-equipped to handle these complex issues ([Thompson & Garcia, 2022](#)).

Furthermore, the pressures of standardized testing and performance metrics can strain teacher-student relationships. As educators face mounting pressure to improve test scores and meet performance targets, there is a risk that the focus on academic outcomes may overshadow the importance of building personal connections with students. [Williams \(2020\)](#) observed that "the emphasis on

quantifiable results has led some teachers to adopt a more impersonal, transactional approach to education, potentially undermining the development of meaningful rapport" (p. 156). Despite these challenges, research suggests several promising approaches to fostering positive teacher-student rapport. One such approach is the implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs. A meta-analysis by [Chen and Morrison \(2024\)](#) found that schools that incorporated comprehensive SEL curricula reported improved teacher-student relationships and overall school climate.

A possible solution is the effective integration of technology. Although digital tools may create challenges, they can also improve communication and engagement. For instance, [Nguyen et al. \(2021\)](#) found that personalized learning platforms, combined with regular video check-ins, help strengthen teacher-student relationships in online learning.

Additionally, providing teachers with ongoing professional development focused on relationship-building skills and cultural competence is crucial. A longitudinal study by [Hernandez and Kim \(2022\)](#) showed that teachers who received regular training in these areas reported higher levels of job satisfaction and stronger connections with their students.

As a whole, while the challenges to teacher-student rapport are significant, they are not insurmountable. By acknowledging these challenges and implementing evidence-based strategies, educators and policymakers can work towards creating learning environments that foster strong, positive relationships between teachers and students. As we move forward, it is essential to prioritize these connections, recognizing that they form the foundation of effective education and student success.

7. Rapport between Teacher and Student in Second Language Learning in South Asia

Teacher-student relations have a critical role in learning environments and second language learning particularly in L2 learning environments where the interpersonal relationship issue can affect language learning essentially ([Kumaravadivelu, 2016](#)). The following section provides a review of literature regarding the documentation of the formation and impact of teacher-student relationships in second language learning context with a focus on south Asian region's difficulty and procedure.

7.1 Academic Research Reviews in South Asia

Scholars in South Asia it has been ascertained from various empirical researches that cultural beliefs impacts rapport interactions in a great way. For instance, [Sharma and Mishra \(2018\)](#) said that when such values as respect and obedience to teachers prevail in learning environments in India, this means that there will rarely be communication with teachers which is so crucial in building rapport conducive for language learning. Similarly, [Rahman and Al Mamun \(2020\)](#) explained in their study conducted in the context of Bangladesh revealed that teachers' availability

and emotionally supportive communication promote a strong academic climate leading to the improvement of students' language assurance and language competency.

Difficulties involved in building rapport in this area usually emanate from previous teaching pedagogies that are more inclined to transmission rather than communication and interaction (Patel & Jain, 2021). Such environments can hamper rapport which in this case does not allow the students to participate fully in the language learning process.

7.2 Strategies for Enhancing Rapport

Some of the solution on how the relationship between the South Asian second language teachers and students in the classroom should be enhanced include training teachers with relational skill and they should equally adopt culturally sensitive teaching strategies. Khan *et al.* (2022) further provided recommendations that teacher training programs in Pakistan should comprise of elements of emotional intelligence and communication skills which help in the establishment of rapport. Similarly, other forms of facilitative or participative teaching like discussions and role-plays are known to destroy formality and thereby help create rapport (Thapa, 2023).

Technology also lays a part in improving rapport. In their study Singh and Kaur, (2023), write that online resources for teaching that involve engagement and customization can be useful in establishing relationships with the students especially when the class has students from different areas conversant in different levels of language.

The perception of the teacher-student interaction in South Asia second language classrooms is determined by social, instructional, and affiliative variables. However, there are still some hurdles that need to be overcome. The successful implementation of culturally sensitive and interactive approaches to teaching, combined with detailed teacher training, can considerably increase the understanding between the tutors and students and consequently lead to the enhancing of the outcomes of the language learning initiatives. Further research may offer more specific ideas regarding these strategies, while the effects of the corresponding interventions vary across different types of education in South Asian countries.

8. Teacher-Student Rapport: Scenarios in the Context of Bangladeshi Learners

Interpersonal relationships between the teacher and students are important in education settings, especially in second language acquisition, where the students' interest plays a significant role in determining their learning process. In relation to Bangladeshi learners, knowledge of the nature of this relationship might be beneficial to analyze and pinpoint ways of foreign language improvement. This part of the paper aims at detailing the difficulties and approaches likely to be encountered

when trying to foster positive teacher-student relationships within Bangladeshi ESL learners.

8.1 Cultural Barriers:

In some of the class practices existing in the Bangladeshi context, the more polite approach is adopted from the textbook, which suppresses the interaction between students and teachers. This pyramid structure limits the formation of a friendly interpersonal relationship that might foster communicative language use (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). One of the most profound illustrations of teacher-student rapport is observed in the recollections of Dr. Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta. His dramatic teaching style, emotional engagement with poetry, and personal interactions outside class created a deep connection with students, allowing them to view literature not as an isolated subject but as a living experience (Basu & Rabbani, 2022). He cultivated an environment where students felt emotionally and intellectually nurtured—a critical strategy in L2 settings where confidence and expressive freedom are essential.

8.2 Language Proficiency:

Varying levels of English language proficiency among students significantly influence classroom communication dynamics, often leading to difficulties in interaction and potential social isolation. These disparities place a considerable responsibility on teachers to bridge communication gaps and foster an inclusive learning environment. By implementing tailored instructional strategies, educators can facilitate meaningful interactions and ensure that all students, regardless of their language competence, actively participate in classroom discussions. Effective teacher-student rapport is crucial in this regard, as it helps mitigate language-related barriers and promotes a supportive learning atmosphere (Hossain, 2020). Similarly, Rashidul Hasan exemplified rapport through a calm demeanor and cultural authenticity. Despite teaching English literature, he embraced his Bengali identity, donning traditional attire and promoting national consciousness, which resonated with students (Basu & Rabbani, 2022). His willingness to engage in students' lives beyond the curriculum, especially during politically tumultuous times, reveals how ideological mentorship can strengthen rapport.

8.3 Educational Environment:

In large classroom settings, particularly in many Bangladeshi schools, a lack of resources poses a significant challenge to developing individualized teacher-student relationships, which are essential for building rapport (Karim & Mohamed, 2019). Given the cultural and educational context of Bangladeshi learners, fostering a strong teacher-student relationship requires sensitivity to these unique conditions. Implementing strategies that enhance communication, acknowledge cultural diversity, and create a comfortable learning environment can significantly improve the effectiveness of second language instruction. Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury, widely admired for his intellectual depth and humble personality, employed unique strategies in managing rapport—especially by distinguishing

between lecture and tutorial styles, thereby tailoring interaction to context (Basu & Rabbani, 2022). His students recall being captivated not just by content but by his demeanor, which created an atmosphere of awe and respect—essential in L2 classrooms where the teacher’s persona can significantly influence learner motivation.

Future research should explore pedagogical approaches tailored to Bangladeshi classrooms, ensuring that teaching strategies are both contextually relevant and conducive to fostering meaningful teacher-student engagement. Research at the University of Dhaka’s Department of English provides valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of teacher-student rapport in such contexts (Ahsanuzzaman & Arusha, 2022). Digital technologies have redefined communication channels between students and teachers, offering new strategies for rapport building. Students now communicate via email, messaging apps, and social media, allowing more-timely emotional and academic support (Ahsanuzzaman & Arusha, 2022). Despite this, generational differences in teachers’ willingness to adopt such modes sometimes pose challenges.

9. Findings

The review of literature on teacher-student rapport in second language (L2) learning classrooms has yielded several significant findings. These findings highlight the complex interplay between rapport-building, student engagement, and academic success, while also underscoring the challenges and strategies involved in fostering effective teacher-student relationships.

9.1 The Impact of Teacher-Student Rapport on Learning Outcomes

One of the primary findings is the positive correlation between strong teacher-student rapport and improved academic performance in L2 learning contexts. Studies indicate that students who perceive a supportive and encouraging relationship with their instructors demonstrate higher levels of engagement, motivation, and willingness to communicate in the target language. Rapport has been shown to reduce language anxiety, enhance self-efficacy, and facilitate a more interactive and student-centered learning environment. These factors contribute significantly to the overall success of language acquisition.

9.2 Challenges in Establishing and Maintaining Rapport

Despite its recognized importance, building and maintaining teacher-student rapport in L2 classrooms presents several challenges. Key obstacles include:

Cultural Differences: Variations in cultural norms and expectations regarding teacher-student interactions can hinder rapport-building efforts. In South Asian contexts, for instance, hierarchical classroom structures may limit open communication between teachers and students.

Language Barriers: Differences in language proficiency levels may create communication gaps, making it difficult for students to express themselves and for teachers to assess student needs effectively.

Classroom Size and Structure: Large class sizes and resource limitations often reduce opportunities for individualized attention, impeding the development of meaningful relationships between teachers and students.

Technological Mediation: The increasing prevalence of online and hybrid learning environments has introduced new complexities in establishing personal connections, as digital interactions may lack the immediacy and warmth of face-to-face communication.

9.3 Strategies for Enhancing Teacher-Student Rapport

To address these challenges, educators have employed a range of strategies aimed at fostering strong teacher-student relationships in L2 learning environments. Key strategies include:

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Recognizing and valuing students' cultural backgrounds and experiences has been found to improve rapport by making learners feel understood and respected.

Effective Communication Techniques: Using inclusive language, providing constructive feedback, and incorporating humor and self-disclosure are effective ways to create a welcoming classroom atmosphere.

Personalized Learning Approaches: Adapting teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles and proficiency levels helps strengthen rapport by demonstrating sensitivity to student needs.

Technology Integration: Leveraging digital tools, such as social media platforms and gamification techniques, can facilitate informal interactions and create additional avenues for rapport-building in virtual learning settings.

Collaborative Learning Activities: Group work, peer mentoring, and interactive discussions encourage student participation and strengthen interpersonal connections between teachers and students.

9.4 The Long-Term Effects of Rapport on Language Learning

Beyond immediate classroom interactions, teacher-student rapport has lasting effects on learners' attitudes toward language learning and intercultural communication. Positive rapport experiences contribute to sustained motivation, increased willingness to engage with the target language, and greater openness to diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives. Longitudinal studies suggest that students who develop strong relationships with their teachers are more likely to maintain their language learning efforts and achieve higher levels of proficiency over time.

The findings from this review emphasize the critical role of teacher-student rapport in shaping the success of second language learners. While several challenges persist in building and maintaining rapport, educators can employ evidence-based strategies to create supportive and engaging learning environments. By fostering

open communication, cultural sensitivity, and adaptive teaching methods, teachers can enhance rapport with their students, ultimately leading to more effective language learning outcomes. As research in this area continues to evolve, further investigations into rapport-building techniques across different educational contexts will be essential in refining best practices for second language instruction.

10. Conclusion

The exploration of teacher-student rapport in second language learning classrooms reveals its crucial role in fostering effective learning environments. This research underscores the significant impact that positive relationships between educators and learners have on language acquisition, motivation, and overall academic success. Throughout this study, several key challenges in establishing and maintaining rapport have been identified. These include cultural differences, language barriers, varying student proficiency levels, and the need to balance friendliness with professional boundaries. Additionally, the increasing prevalence of online and hybrid learning environments has introduced new obstacles in building meaningful connections between teachers and students. Despite these challenges, numerous strategies have emerged as effective in cultivating strong teacher-student rapport. The implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices, the use of humor and personal anecdotes, and the incorporation of collaborative learning activities have all shown promise in bridging gaps and fostering a sense of community within the classroom. Furthermore, the utilization of technology and social media platforms has opened up new avenues for communication and relationship-building, particularly in virtual learning settings.

The findings of this research emphasize the need for teacher training programs to place greater emphasis on interpersonal skills and rapport-building techniques. Equipping educators with the tools to create supportive and engaging learning environments is essential for maximizing student potential in second language acquisition. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of adopting a flexible and adaptive approach to rapport-building. As each classroom presents unique dynamics and challenges, teachers must be prepared to tailor their strategies to meet the specific needs of their students. This may involve continual self-reflection, seeking student feedback, and staying abreast of current research in the field of second language pedagogy. In essence, while building teacher-student rapport in second language learning classrooms presents various challenges, its benefits far outweigh the difficulties. By implementing targeted strategies and fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding, educators can create learning environments that not only facilitate language acquisition but also promote personal growth and intercultural competence. As the field of second language education continues to evolve, further research into effective rapport-building techniques will be essential in ensuring the best possible outcomes for language learners worldwide.

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