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The Role of Teacher-Student Rapport in EFL Preparatory School Students' Learning

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Abstract

The current study aims to explore the role of teacher-student rapport in EFL preparatory school students' learning in English language. The sample of this study includes fifteen EFL Preparatory school students, for boys and for girls, in which they are 1720 students in the selected schools during the academic year 2024-2025 in the city of Kirkuk.

A questionnaire has been conducted and applied to the selected sample. The required data are collected and analyzed statistically. This study is a descriptive one that reach's to results such as that the most crucial factors that affect students' learning with teacher- student rapport are teacher non-verbal immediacy, sharing concern or interest in students, communication, and having a warm classroom with structure.

Key Words: EFL Learning, Preparatory School, Teacher-Student Rapport, Enhancing, Gender

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دور وئام الأساتذة والطلبة في تعلم طلبة المدارس الإعدادية

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المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف دور العلاقة بين المعلم والطالب في تعزيز تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية بين طلاب المدارس الإعدادية الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية. تتكون عينة الدراسة من طلاب الصف الخامس الإعدادي، ذكوراً وإناثاً، حيث يبلغ عددهم 1720 طالباً وطالبة في المدارس المختارة خلال العام الدراسي 2024-2025 في مدينة كركوك. تم إعداد استبيان وتطبيقه على العينة المختارة. تم جمع البيانات المطلوبة وتحليلها إحصائياً. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى نتائج منها أن أهم العوامل التي تؤثر على تعلم الطلاب من خلال العلاقة بين المعلم والطالب هي: التواصل غير اللفظي الفعّال من قبل المعلم، مشاركة الاهتمامات أو الاهتمام بالطلاب، التواصل الفعّال، وتوفير بيئة صفية دافئة ومنظمة.

الكلمات الدالة: تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية، المدارس الإعدادية، العلاقة بين المعلم والطالب، التعزيز، الجنس.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of English as a foreign Language (EFL) learning and teaching, preparatory school students often face significant challenges in acquiring language proficiency due to various factors such as limited exposure to the language , lack of motivation , and ineffective teaching methods . One critical yet underexplored factor that can influence students' learning outcomes is the quality of the teacher-student rapport. A positive rapport between teachers and students has been shown to enhance classroom engagement, motivation, and overall academic performance (Frisby and Martin, 2010). Therefore, in numerous EFL preparatory school environments, the significance of fostering meaningful teacher-student communication is frequently neglected , resulting in disengaged students and less effective language learning outcomes.

Studies shows that learners who view their teachers as encouraging and accessible tend to engage more actively in classroom activities , feel more comfortable experimenting with the target language , and demonstrate greater resilience when facing new challenges (Dornyei , 2001). Equally , a absence of rapport can effect in worry , disengagement , and poor performance , particularly in language learning contexts where communication and interaction are vital (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope , 1986).Despite the growing

body of evidence highlighting the significance of teacher-student rapport, there is a paucity of research specifically addressing its role in EFL preparatory schools, particularly in culturally and linguistically varied backgrounds.

The current study seeks to address this gap by investigating how teacher-student rapport can improve EFL preparatory school students' learning outcomes. By exploring the strategies teachers can employ to build stronger relationships with their students and examining the impact of these relationships on students' motivation, engagement, and language proficiency, this study aims to provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers. Ultimately, the findings could contribute to the development of more effective EFL teaching practices that prioritize the emotional and social dimensions of learning.

This study aims to explore the role of teacher-student rapport in learning English language among EFL preparatory school students. In order to achieve the aim of the study, it is hypothesized that there is no statistically significant effect of teacher-student rapport on EFL preparatory school students' learning.

The value of the current study could be itemized as follows:

1. Teachers' Guidance:

This study shows practical insights for EFL teachers on how to build and maintain positive rapport with their students. This includes strategies such as using non-verbal immediacy (e.g., eye contact, smiling, and open body language) and providing a supportive classroom environment.

2. Enlightening Classroom Dynamics

By highlighting the status of teacher-student rapport, this study boosts teachers to create a more engaging and motivating learning atmosphere, which can prime to better student performance and participation.

3. Boosted Learning Experience:

Students' assistance from a positive and supportive relationship with their teachers, which can increase their motivation, confidence, and overall satisfaction of learning English.

4. Curriculum Development:

Educational policymakers and curriculum designers can use the findings of this study to incorporate rapport-building activities and training into teachers' development programmes.

This study is limited to EFL preparatory school students' "fifth grade". The population of this study is limited to preparatory school students' in the city of Kirkuk. This study is conducted during the academic year 2024-2025.

2. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Concept of Student-Teacher Rapport

According to study, motivation have a tendency to decrease as students age and move on to higher grades and levels of study, presumptuous a core role in their education and academic success. The shift from primary to secondary school is a mainly important time (Murphy and Alexander ,2000 ;Yeung et al., 2011). Thoughtful the differences and long-term changes in learners' motivation is vital to capturing the role played in the classroom social climate (Opdenakker et al., 2012 and Musheer , 2023). According to Corpus et al. (2009), teachers who show inspiring performance can have a good influence on students' motivation and dedication. Teachers are also important persons who influence students' education, particularly through interactions with their classes (Pianta et al., 2012). For instance, academics have looked at learners' motivation as a trait-like and a state-like section. According to Christophel (1990), state motivation is a situational notion that refers to the effort made at a given moment toward a particular assignment domain. According to (as stated in Goldman et al., 2017), trait motivation is a fairly stable paradigm that refers to students' innate desire to learn and receive an education. Numerous researchers often choose state motivation due to its strong correlation with effective teaching strategies such as humor, affirmation, affinity seeking, clarity, nonverbal promptness, and affirmation (Comadena et al., 2007; Goodboy and Myers, 2008; Kerssen-Griep andWitt, 2012).

Despite the fact that language acquisition primarily takes place in classrooms, few people are aware of how motivation arises there or how students and teachers often interact (Ushioda, 2013). Since SL motivation study has typically engrossed on learning procedures at an overall level, a study that conducts narrower experimental attention is needed in order to shed light on motivation as it emerges in particular exercises and organized linkages (Ushioda, 2016 , Kadhim and Omar ,2024). According to Velayutham and Aldridge (2013), the classroom environment enhances students' enthusiasm and dedication to learning while also fostering their scholarly performance. The teacher-student interaction has been shown to be crucial to students' education as part of the classroom environment (Hughes et al., 2012). In fact, the main focus of all instructional frameworks is on students and teachers who establish a learning connection in a learning environment to achieve the intended learning outcomes ("Pishghadam et al., 2019; Khalaf ,2021; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Additionally, strong teacher-student relationships contribute to dynamic learning practices by acting as an external source of motivated change (Ma et al., 2017). As some may have experienced, the performance of the teacher and the cooperative activities of the students can have a significant impact on one's motivation and success in a course (Passini et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2015). Social motivation theorists contend that students who receive social support from teachers will have strong motivational beliefs that promote dynamic learning commitment and excellent performance (Furrer and Skinner, 2003). In fact, a consistent teacher-student relationship can even partially offset the observed decline in students' self-governing motivation over time (Lapointe et al., 2005).Interpersonal

psychology, which views an individual's behaviour in terms of conditional causality and reciprocal impacts, is the source of the assumption that the nature of instructor-student rapport plays a central role in boosting motivation and extending learning (Strack and Horowitz, 2012).

2.2 The Role of Students-Teacher Rapport on Students' Learning

According to Delos Reyes and Torio (2020), rapport is a friendly educator-student connection characterized by enjoyment, association, regard, and shared trust. It is a relational tie throughout the educational cycle and is heavily relationship-based (Frisby and Housley Gaffney, 2015). According to Frisby et al. (2016), rapport is less studied than other educational correspondence elements. Nonetheless, rapport is arguably the most crucial element of educational communication since it is an essential component of instruction and because learning begins with it. By encouraging free speech, respecting students' mindsets, offering constructive criticism, using humor, demonstrating an interest in students' education, and being sensitive and enthusiastic, teachers can establish rapport with their students (Weimer, 2010).

2.2.1 Communication in the Classroom

Student actions are influenced by communication, which in turn affects their academic performance. According to Goodboy and Myers (2008), there are five reasons why students communicate with their teachers: sycophancy, relational, functional, participative, and excuse-making. Learning objectives, difficult behaviors, and class involvement are all correlated with communication. According to Goodboy and Myers' (2008) hypothesis, students who believe that their instructor is confirming are more likely to communicate with them, participate in class, use challenge behaviors, and have higher levels of cognitive learning, state motivation, and satisfaction.

Over the course of four weeks, Goodboy and Myers (2008) studied two groups of students. 403 students from an introductory communication course made up the second group, while 108 students (50 percent male) were enrolled in three sessions of a sophomore-level communication course. While the instructional materials stayed the same, the researchers altered the teacher confirmation. Three categories were used to classify the confirmation: not confirming (which only included the lecture material), somewhat confirming (which included one aspect of teacher confirmation), and confirming (which included answering questions, showing interest, and having a positive teaching style). The five-point Teacher Confirmation Scale was handed to the students at the end of the four-week training. Students in the confirming category gave their teachers more positive comments, according to Goodboy and Myers' (2008) study.

2.2.2 Gender

Men and women think and communicate differently, according to a number of beliefs. Leraas, Kippen, and Larson (2018) investigated the link between gender and sex, the gender of the teacher, classroom connection (students' and professors' rapport), and whether or not these factors modify the associations between gender and participation. With 243 undergraduate students, they employed the

Connected Classroom Climate Inventory (CCCI) and the Bem Sex Role Inventory-Short Form (BSRI-S). During class, students filled out a self-report while being watched. They discovered that more masculine and male students engaged in class more than more feminine and female students . Nonetheless, students who were more feminine and female spoke to one another outside of the classroom more often than students who were more masculine or male. Students who actively participated in class had a sense of belonging and a good rapport with their teachers. The more feminine students may suffer as a result. Teachers need to be conscious of this and foster an environment in the classroom where all children are encouraged to participate and engage, even the more feminine ones.

In addition to fostering relationships and academic progress, a welcoming classroom environment makes kids feel comfortable. Spilts, Hughes, Wu, and Kwok (2012) investigated race, chronic conflict, classroom warmth, and the impact on academic achievement. They conducted research on 657 pupils from 35 different schools who were considered academically at-risk. Chronic conflict was significantly linked to underachievement, early behavioral academic hazards, and social risks in the sample group of students. To find out how warmth impacts academic achievement, the researchers employed a variety of tools, including the Teacher-Student Relationship Quality (TSRQ) survey, the Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, IQ testing, and their socioeconomic status (SES).

3. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 Population and Sampling

The population of the study includes the total number of EFL fifth-grade students of the preparatory schools in the center city of Kirkuk for the academic year 2024-2025. According to the list of the schools location of General Director of Education in Kirkuk ,there are thirty-nine Preparatory include 6500 students as shown in Table (1).

The sample of this study embraces fifteen preparatory schools eight for boys and seven for girls ,which have selected randomly from the original population of those schools. The total number of the EFL fifth year students , after excluding the repeaters , is (1720) in the center of the city of Kirkuk , as shown in Table (1).The involved sample of those students who are 1720 represents 26.6% of its original population .

Table (1) Population and Sampling

Population of Students	Sample of Stude	Percentage
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6500	1720	26.6%

3.2 Construction of the Questionnaire

The instrument of this study is a questionnaire which consists of fifteen items that includes five multiple – choice statements of five – point scale . The chosen students are asked to indicate their perspectives concerning the given items by tapping a (✓) tick in the suitable place ahead of each item (See appendix A).

3.3 Validity of the Questionnaire

The degree to which an instrument for study measures what it is important to measure is known as the questionnaire's validity (Borg and Gall, 1983). The amount to which qualitative data precisely assess what we are endeavouring to measure is identified as validity (Mills and Gay ,2019).

To verify the face validity of the questionnaire, it has been presented to the jury of the university teaching staff memberships. Each juror is demanded to draw attention her/her comments and suggestions about the appropriateness of the questionnaire items.

3.4 Reliability of the Questionnaire

A questionnaire's reliability can be resolute by administering it to a small subsample and equating the results with the initial sample. By comparing answers from a diverse form with the original form, reliability can also be determined (Best and Kahn ,2006).

The consistency with which the instrument shows to be an active instrument for collecting data all over time is known as reliability. According to Kerlinger (1986), an instrument is considered dependable if the scorers obtained with it are steady. Using the split-half method, the Persons Correlation Coefficient formula is utilized to determine the questionnaire's reliability. This approach is used by splitting the questionnaire's items into two groups,(odd and even). Reliability's computed Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.78. Brown Spearman The split-half method's Pearson Correlation has been corrected to 0.87 using the coefficient (Carroll and Hall ,1985).

The Pilot Administration of the questionnaire

The following are some of the numerous goals that are intended to be achieved by using the pilot administration:

Determining the questionnaire's dependability.

Verifying the items on the questionnaire are clear.

To accomplish these goals, a pilot administration of the questionnaire is important to determine whether the questionnaire is appropriate for the sample of students involved, to determine the estimated average time needed to answer the questionnaire's items, to identify items that are unclear or inappropriate, to control the level of difficulty of the items, and to ensure that the items are simple. The questionnaire has been administered empirically to sixty EFL Preparatory school students and they have not been included in the selected sample of students.

The pilot administration of the has shown that the given items are clear and the average time required for responding ranges from (35-45) minutes .

3.6 Final Administration of the Questionnaire

The result of the pilot administration of the questionnaire indicates that it is valid and reliable . The final questionnaire administration to the study sample has been carried out from 1st October ,2024 to 20th October 2024.The designed questionnaire which consists of fifteen items is written on a sheet of paper and administrated individually to the selected sample of the students . Each student is requested to respond to the designed questionnaire sheet and return it back to the researcher immediately .

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 The Role of Teacher-Student Rapport on EFL Preparatory School Students' Learning

In order to find whether there is any statistically significant effect of teacher-student rapport on enhancing EFL preparatory school students' learning , Pearson correlation and t-test formula for the significance of correlation is applied .

Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation is used as it is one of the most well-known relationship measures whose statistical value ranges from 0.20 to 1.00 and it expresses this relationship quantitatively , as shown in Table (2).

Table (2) Coefficient and Correlation of Teacher-Students Rapport

Coefficient	Correlation
0.90 – 1.00	Very High
0.70 – 0.90	High
0.40 – 0.70	Moderate
0.20 – 0.40	Low
less than 0.20	Very Low

The obtained results of the present study reveal that the Pearson correlation value is 0.83 , the computed value is 5.45 , which is higher than the critical t-value is 1.96 at (0.05) level of significance and under (1718) degree of freedom , as shown in Table (3)

Table (3) Pearson Correlation Coefficient among Teacher-Students Rapport

No. of sample	Pearson Correlation	Mean	SD	t-Value		Level of Significance (0.05)
				Computed	Critical	
1720	0.81	85.76	14.53	5.45	1.96	significant

This means that there is a positive relationship between teacher and students , at (0.05) level of significance and (1718) degree of freedom. Thus, the first null hypothesis is rejected .

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The obtained results of the administered instrument are discussed , as follows :

Results shows that EFL preparatory school students plays a crucial role in students' learning outcomes in English language .

Results shows that EFL preparatory school students have a good level of in four skills (listening , speaking , reading and writing) , that due to students' positive relationship with their teachers .

participation in EFL classroom encourages the students to familiarize themselves with the presented skills and interaction , collaboratively, since there is a statistical significant difference between the mean scores of T-S-R and their mean at (0.05) level of significance and (1718) degree of freedom.

EFL classroom presents an immediate feedback for the students when their teacher encourages the peer evaluation within the lesson discussion.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The finding of this study shows that positive teacher – student rapport plays a major role in EFL preparatory school students leaning in English language. The most crucial factors that affect students' learning with teacher- student rapport is teacher non-verbal immediacy, sharing concern or interest in students, communication, and having a warm classroom with structure. When a teacher shows their

students these things, their students worked harder, were more motivated and had fewer disruptive behaviours in the classroom allowing for more learning and participation.

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APPENDIX (1)

Teacher-Student Rapport Questionnaire	Strongly Disagree	Rarely	Strongly Agree	Agree
1. My teacher provides support for all students.				
2. My teacher presents the information in a way that is easy to understand.				
3. My teacher uses various cultural activities in the lessons, like experimentation , case studies ,live examples etc.				
4. My teacher uses examples of student background experiences beliefs, and knowledge.				
5. My teacher provides high and clear expectations for academic performance.				
6. My teacher consistently engages students in meaningful classroom activities that are connected to real-world experiences				
7. My teacher uses various strategies to promote unity, order, satisfaction, and less conflict in the classroom.				
8. My teacher is patient with students when directing them to learn appropriate behaviors.				
9. My teacher makes positive comments about the student's abilities to learn.				
10. My teacher's classroom is structured with routines and				

procedures.					
11. I view my teacher as a good person and I feel that my teacher is a coach, mentor, or partner.					
12. I enjoy coming to my teacher's classroom.					
13. My teacher is accepting to all student's cultures.					
14. My teacher expects me to succeed.					
15. My teacher takes the time to assist individual students that need help.					