

RAPPORT: ESSENTIAL HARMONIOUS FACTOR IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This article discusses on how teachers build and establish the harmonious environment between them and their students. This term is called as rapport. The writer has collected some theories from some experts about how to establish rapport in the language classroom. In the line with the experts opinions, it is very important for teachers to maintain the rapport in their classroom. Understanding rapport in more depth, it can be said that it has to do with appreciating where other people are coming from, understanding their point of view and seeking to develop and maintain a connection with them. It is suggested that teachers can apply the strategies given in this articles because by doing so teachers can take benefit of establishing rapport from their class room. The strategies to establish rapport in language classroom are: getting to know the students both inside and outside of the classroom, learning student names as quickly as possible, considering non-verbal factors such as body language, developing a relationship built on trust, having a sense of humor and having fun with students

Key words: rapport, harmonious factor, language classroom

A. INTRODUCTION

Ways to lose your students before you even get started

Plunging right in:

“The topic for today lesson is selecting the subject and purpose of speech”

Sounding clueless:

“Anyone knows about what the topic of this morning lesson is?”

Delivering the kiss of death

“Please turn to page 12 of your textbook...”

It is known that the importance of making good impression at the first meeting is a crucial thing that every teacher has to do. But most of the teachers waste the first opportunity by doing unvaluable activities and even ignore how to get in touch with the students by directly coming to lesson and killing the enthusiasm of the students. So, how to get the students to

tune in rather than to get the teacher to tune out is by creating good atmosphere between teacher and students. The next experience will show the situation where teachers think that they have maintained everything – including the lesson, and the instruction well.

Like most of teacher, the writer takes her teaching seriously. She looks forward to being in the classroom, although if truth be told, some days are better than others. She prepares well-organized lectures; experiments with new in-class activities; poses challenging questions on her exams; worries about her students' intellectual growth; and reads various reading materials, trying to stay atop her courses. She seems to go all out in her attempt to be an effective teacher.

Nonetheless, she feels uncomfortable in class. Sometimes she senses a gap

between herself and her students. Her students respect her, but they are ambivalent about whether they would take another course from her. Many don't feel comfortable expressing their ideas in class and others feel disconnected from her and her subject matter.

Of course, this situation commonly happens to reflect those of us who, despite our best efforts to become more effective teachers, come up short. The writer represents of those qualities reflective of effective teaching, but which alone don't make our teaching truly outstanding. Such qualities may be necessary for effective teaching, but not sufficient. So, what is missing from her teaching?

Her teaching seems to lack **rapport**, which the Random House Dictionary (1987:1601) defines as "an especially harmonious or sympathetic connection" . Spanning the chasm between the writer and her students-or between any teacher and set of students-requires rapport-building: creating emotional connections between teacher and student and between student and subject matter.

Building a rapport with students can make the difference when teaching, especially in a second language. Developing rapport- including building trust, using humor and getting to know the students outside of the classroom- can not only help to better understand the background of students but can also help with classroom management and instruction. In the case studies many of teachers mention the fact that getting to know the students is important. At the same time however, some of these teachers also express some challenges in building rapport, especially when using the target language. In this section the writer will discuss the the nature of rapport, benefit of building rapport with students and some strategies that can be used to do so in the language classroom.

B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. The Nature of Rapport

There are many definitions addressed to explain what rapport is. In that line, experts try to explain rapport as several terms in both psychological and educational point of views. According to Stevic. (1980), author of a number of inspirational books promoting humanistic approaches to language teaching, identified rapport as a statement: "Success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistics analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between people in the classroom". The statement means that the importance of what goes on inside and between people in classroom is more important than the technicalities of teaching.

It is also supported by Lowland (1995) in his book *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching* ". . .that rapport can be divided into several definitions. They are:

a. Rapport as an emergent property

Establishing "an harmonious or sympathetic connection" with students is not likely the result of any single act. Rather, rapport is more likely the result of many things done consistently right. In this sense, rapport may be thought of as an emergent property of teaching, or, for that matter, any kind of social relationship. In general, we must do two things for rapport to develop. First, teachers must extend students a warm and friendly invitation to join the "community of learning" that they attempt to establish in our classrooms on the first day of class. Second, they must adopt this demeanor every day afterwards, in or out of class, and irrespective of the myriad problems that may develop over the course of the term.

Toward this end, Lowland (1995) argued that teachers must minimize the extent to which students experience negative emotions, such as anxiety and anger, and must attempt to create positive emotions in students such as self-efficacy and positive self-worth. This approach will

help students feel that their teacher cares about them, encourage them to become motivated to do their best work, and think of their teacher in highly positive ways. The positive effects of rapport do not stop with students—they affect teachers as well. So students can enjoy classes more when they have good personal relationships with their students, and this satisfaction has a beneficial effect on the quality of their instruction

b. Rapport as an alliance based on trust

Another way of conceptualizing rapport between teachers and students is to think of it in the same way many therapists view the "therapeutic alliance" between themselves and their clients. This alliance is marked by four elements: (i) the extent to which client and therapist agree on the goals of therapy, (ii) the client's ability to work toward those goals, (iii) the therapist's empathy toward the client and the therapist's involvement in the therapeutic process, and (iv) the emotional connection between client and therapist and the client's commitment to therapy (Gaston, 1990).

Mapping this model onto the teacher-student relationship, it might be viewed rapport as follows: (i) the extent to which students accept or "buy into" the goals the teacher has spelled out to the class, (ii) the student's ability to work toward these goals, (iii) the teacher's ability to care genuinely for students and to nurture their learning, and (iv) the student and teacher "connecting" emotionally and students' motivation to participate actively in their education. As such, rapport is both process and outcome. It is a process because it involves a series of steps a teacher takes that must occur for rapport to develop. It is an outcome because it emerges only when the appropriate components are present in teaching situations, leading to more effective teaching.

Central to this alliance between student and teacher is trust. Consider the point that Brookfield (1990) said trust

between teachers and students is the affective glue that binds educational relationships together. Not trusting teachers has several consequences for students. They are unwilling to submit themselves to the uncertainties of new learning. They avoid risk. They keep their most deeply felt concerns private. They view with cynical reserve the exhortations and instructions of teachers. Clearly, trust is present in the alliance that forms between clients and effective therapists and between students and effective teachers. Whether in therapy or in teaching, such trust contributes to building rapport, enhancing motivation, and stimulating learning. If we wish students to join us as members of the community of learning, we must demonstrate to our students that we can be trusted.

c. Rapport as connectedness

Good teachers strive to forge connections between themselves and their subject matter and between themselves and their students. Such connections are the result of the individual "identity and integrity" of the teacher as it is expressed through whatever medium the teacher uses to teach. In Palmer's words (1998:10):

. . . in every class I teach, my ability to connect with students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood—and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning.

Thus, teaching reveals humanity, how teachers choose to define themselves in their work, and the manner in which they relate to their subject matter, to their students, and to the larger world around them. If one wishes to "connect" with students—to establish rapport with them—one must expose at least part of one's self to one's students. To the extent that teachers are successful in this endeavor, they create an environment conducive to effective

teaching, and by implication, effective learning.

d. Rapport unvield

Rapport is a positive emotional connection among students, teacher, and subject matter that emerges from the manner in which the teacher constructs the learning environment. Much of the framework is provided by the teacher's disposition toward students, the subject matter, the educational process, and, in general, life. To the extent that student and teacher unite to achieve course goals, the learning environment favors increased student receptivity to the teacher and subject matter. Central to the development of such an alliance is the teacher's sense of self, as reflected in such characteristics as trust and respect, and a willingness to involve students in the learning process.

2. Rapport in Language Teaching Classroom

a. What teachers say about rapport

The fact that rapport is very important in building a good relation between teachers and students, it is necessary to reveal what teachers say about rapport. Based on the writer's finding from her own experience a long with teachers in her local area, they experience rapport as supported by Senior (2006): "establishing a relationship with my class is foundational to my teaching. It's my primary goal – when I walk into class – to establish rapport with individuals and with the class". The teachers do not say that teaching is secondary aspect in their class, but that they feel it is essential to get their students "on-side" at the start of every lesson.

Other teacher of adult language learners points out the importance of expressing concern for every all the students in her class by saying: "It does'nt matter what you do as long as they feel that they are valuable and that you care about them individually...The students are like children – they sense straight away if you care"

Then, Senior (2007) talks about "establishing intimacy" and "connecting authentically" with her students, saying:

I think that teacher is the critical factor in the language classroom...The most important thing is to establish intimacy, which you do through connecting authentically... People accept anything if you are real, and don't pretend to be what you are not...You've got to be really your self, with no pretentiousness

By showing themselves to be the real person, the teachers do not mean that they have to be over friendly with their students. Rather, it means that teachers want to demonstrate their humanity by showing the real personality they have. To become a good teacher is not an easy job to do. Moving into a relatively qualified teacher is late in life if the teacher has not had excellent subject-knowledge and is determined to teach as well as possible.

b. What students say about rapport

Students are quick to recognize which teachers wish to establish rapport with their classes – and which do not. Rubin (1985:141) explains that learners are remarkably good at judging the personality of teacher whether their compassion, interest in teaching, fondness for students and basic human warmth – in other words, their desire to establish rapport. Rubin's research also shows that children are quick to form a definite impression of whether or not they are liked by their teachers. Many students feel that their teachers have become their enemies and believe their teachers expect the worst of them, take plesure in giving them low marks and satisfy from punishing them.

What a sad phenomena is! With this picture, the battle line between teachers and students are drawn. As a result, students prefer to study and desire to do everything by themselfe. They avoid getting to know and soialize with their

teachers. To follow this situation, it should be reasons why teachers do not seek to establish rapport with their classes.

According to Senior (2007), teachers do not seek to establish rapport with their classes for variety of reasons including:

- Not appreciating the importance of establishing rapport
- Not knowing how to go about developing rapport, even if they would like to do so.
- Not feeling confident enough to take the plunge and behave differently in class
- Worrying that seeking to establish rapport might be construed by their superiors as frivolous and time-wasting
- Worrying about losing valuable teaching time by attempting to develop rapport with their classes
- Worrying that their students may take advantage of their more friendly and open approach by not studying so hard in lessons.

Perhaps the strongest reason why teachers are nervous about attempting to establish rapport with their classes is that in classes in which teachers and students have developed rapport students do not behave unruly, uncontrollable ways. On the contrary, because they like and trust their teachers, students in such classes wish to please their teachers and are more likely to do the best.

On the other hand, to gain a bit of insight into this matter, the writer freely interviewed several students who take different courses and asked them to tell her three things: (i) the extent to which they have experienced rapport in their classes; (ii) the things that teachers do to develop rapport with them; and (iii) how rapport affects their academic behavior.

Only slightly more than half of the students reported that they had experienced rapport with a professor (lecturer). These students told her that the most common teacher behaviors contributing to the development of rapport were, in order: showing a sense of humor; availability before, after, or outside of class;

encouraging class discussion; showing interest in them, knowing students' names; sharing personal insights and experiences with the class; relating course material in everyday terms and examples; and understanding that students occasionally have problems arise that inadvertently hinder their progress in their courses. Finally, the students also told that the most common positive effects of rapport on their academic behavior were, in order: to increase their enjoyment of the teacher and subject matter; to motivate them to come to class more often, and to pay more attention in class. Thus, rapport seems to facilitate both student motivation for learning and their enjoyment of the course, and enhances student receptivity to what is being taught.

3. Strategies to establish rapport in language classroom

How might teachers build rapport with their students? Buskist and Bryan K. Saville (2001) in their article *Creating Positive Emotional Context for Enhancing Teaching and Learning*, suggest these following ways to build rapport in class:

- Learn to call your students by name.
- Learn something about your students' interests, hobbies, and aspirations.
- Create and use personally relevant class examples.
- Arrive to class early and stay late - and chat with your students.
- Explain your course policies - and why they are what they are.
- Post and keep office hours.
- Get on line - use e-mail to increase accessibility to your students.
- Interact more, lecture less - emphasize active learning.
- Reward student comments and questions with verbal praise.
- Be enthusiastic about teaching and passionate about your subject matter.
- Lighten up - crack a joke now and then.
- Be humble and, when appropriate, self-deprecating.
- Make eye contact with each student - without staring, glaring, or flaring.

- Be respectful.
- When all else fails, smile a lot - students will think you like them and your job.

Building rapport is not only established by teachers inside the class but outside the class. The activities can be various, start from greeting them gently, knowing their names, and having warm conversation about any topics with the students. Bilash (2009) promotes several strategies to build rapport in language classroom.

- Get to know the students both inside and outside of the classroom
- Learn student names as quickly as possible
- Consider non-verbal factors such as body language
- Develop a relationship built on trust
- Have a sense of humor and have fun with students

1) Ice breaker activities

- Used at the beginning of the course to create a positive atmosphere in the class and between students and teacher.
- Can also be used to facilitate students (and teacher) getting to know each other.

2) Activities to help learn student names

Learning student names is an important part of building student rapport. Why do you think this is so? What are some strategies that you have experienced or used for learning student names?

- Passport – students are given time to create a passport about themselves, including relevant information and at least one piece of memorable information that will stick in the minds of others.
- Student teams - putting the students in teams creates a pattern in your mind of where they sit. It is similar to a seating

plan but letting the student compete with their groups makes it seem more like an activity.

- Unforgettable Neighbors – have the students work in pairs or with partners and share a memorable fact about each other. They can then share these facts with the class so there is an additional fact to help make each student's name easier to remember.
- Adjective Name Game – similar to the unforgettable neighbor activity, students work in pairs but have to come up with an interesting adjective that starts with the same letter as their first name, i.e.: Meticulous Miranda, Artsy Anna.
- Seating Chart – creating a seating chart allows the teacher to quiz himself about which student sits where and forces the teacher to make the mental connection.

3) Body language factors of which to be aware

- Smile! Show the students you are happy to be there and to see them.
- Move around the classroom – as students get used to your presence, they will feel less intimidated by you and will be more likely to interact with you voluntarily
- Make eye contact – this shows a sense openness, honesty and caring
- Gestures – using lively and animated gestures demonstrates friendliness and that the teacher is involved in the material. It also helps keep the students alert and shows that the teacher isn't afraid to make fun of his or herself from time to time.
- Be aware of student discomfort – certain students will feel really uncomfortable with teacher proximity or excessive eye contact. Get to know who these students are so they can be given the space they require in order to feel safe and respected.

4) Developing Trust

- Discuss trust with your students, its limits and its benefits. Having this discussion shows that the students are valued and respected enough to make their own decisions.
- Laugh at your own mistakes! This shows that students can do the same that you trust they will keep this within reason; this then allows for further amusing situations to happen later on, that students don't feel so self-conscious that no fun can be had.
- Give the students responsibility. This shows you trust them and value them as young, responsible adults.
- Talk about your own interests, showing the students that you are a person and want to share who you are with them.
- Discuss with the students *why* they are receiving certain assignments. Let them be part of their educational direction and show them that all assignments have a purpose; they can then learn to trust you as a teacher, that you aren't assigning information randomly

5) Using humour in the classroom

- Jokes and amusing behaviors are great as long as they are within reason. Keep in mind what tone of voice is used so as not to give a mixed message to the students.
- Use of sarcasm should depend on the classroom and what relationship the teacher has with the class; the teacher should know whether the students are going to understand it or whether it will cause resentments and problems later on down the line.

As teachers, the thing to be focused on that any one of these actions alone is unlikely to build rapport. Instead,

combinations of these behaviors implemented consistently over time produce the synergistic effects necessary for rapport to emerge in your teaching. How will you know when rapport is established? Probably the most reliable metric is the behavior of your students toward you. If they approach you with questions, comments, and personal remarks; smile or laugh during class; seek you out during your office hours, ask your advice about something; tell you that they liked a demonstration or lecture or that they are enjoying class, you can bet that you have developed some degree of rapport with your students.

4. Benefit of establishing rapport in language classroom

Once teachers have established rapport with their classes, the following benefits will occur:

- Classes start to function in a more unified way, with the class as a whole responding more readily and more willingly to the teacher's instructions, questions, and exhortations
- Individuals will become more willingly to participate in the activities of the class as a whole (rather than functioning within their individual peer groups)
- Individuals will become more willingly to put themselves forward and be helpful to the teacher
- Classes will become easier and more rewarding to teach
- Teaching will seem easier and less of an effort
- Teachers will find themselves behaving in more dynamic way of teaching
- Teachers will feel more relaxed and will derive more satisfaction from their teaching
- Teachers will find themselves teaching in more creative and innovative ways
- Students will become more motivated because the classroom

learning experience will be more vital and interesting for them

C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

All classes are composed of a unique combination of individuals, including those who may have particular social or behavioral problems. Sometimes the composition of the class, combined with the range of external factors, may make it difficult for the majority of the teachers to establish rapport.

This article has shown the readers the importance of rapport to bridge between the teachers and their students. Moreover, rapport is the crucial ingredients which teachers should try to implement. To obtain harmony between teachers and students in their language class, the writer also proposes the strategies which can be used to build rapport in the language classroom.

Building rapport in language class is also one of humanity factors since having to know the students means establishing positive relationship and having mutual respect. Teachers and students need to form mutual communities in which there is mutual respect. Teachers can imagine when once, they have captured the soul of the class everything else will follow. Students can easily appreciate and respect their teachers in or outside the class room activity.

To conclude, rapport is the term of invisible link between teachers and their students. It is little pieces of thread that somehow binds teachers and their students together. When as many links as possible are in place, language classes start to function in more unified ways, with everyone being motivated to move, not only collaboratively but also individually, towards the achievement of learning goals. As soon as teachers have felt what it is like to teach a class with whom they have developed rapport, they will never look back.

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