

Impact of Teacher-Learner Rapport on L2 Learning: A Study of Public Sector Universities, Sindh Pakistan

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Received: January 9, 2020 Accepted: March 5, 2020 Published: March 8, 2020

doi:10.5296/elr.v6i1.16627

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/elr.v6i1.16627>

Abstract

Nowadays English language plays a crucial role in every field of educational institutes in Pakistan. It is considered as the base of education because the entire scientific studies are in English. The topic of this research paper is impact of teacher-Learner rapport on L2 learning. In today's civilization having positive teacher-student rapport is more vital than ever before. The purpose of my research paper is to know learners' point of view about impact of teacher-learner rapport on second language learning. Total 209 participants were selected through random sampling. There are three main public sector universities in Jamshoro, Sindh and among those universities I have selected UoSJ and MUET. The data was conducted quantitatively thus

Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient a nonparametric test was applied to measure the correlation between impact of teacher-learner rapport on second language learning proficiency. The study findings clearly depict that there is strong positive relationship between rapport and second language learning. Undoubtedly for successful learning and teaching outcomes, it is very essential to create rapport for positive classroom environment which provides the enormous opportunities and appropriate conditions to enhance and improve students' classroom performance in L2 learning. Therefore, at higher/ tertiary level education, teaching and learning environment requires more attention on teacher-learner rapport because at this level learners are more aware and mature enough to understand the ways teacher behaves that directly impacts on learner's psychological nurturing and willful leaning.

Keywords: Impact, Teacher-learner rapport, Perceived, Second language learning, Correlation and proficiency

1. Introduction

The present study investigates the “Perceptions of students about impact of teacher-learner rapport on L2 (English) Learning at Public Sector Universities of Sindh where English is taught as second language to their graduate students. English plays an essential role in educational and professional settings. At present time to get good grades in educational settings and to have a better job-related career, it is extremely required to have good and proficient English. Learning English language is well thought-out as one of the means of achievement for learners and professionals. Currently at a large scale English is spoken all around the world and it has a status of international or global and economical language. In Pakistan, English is an official language and spoken as a second language in the country. Presently, learning English is considered to be one of the crucial issues especially the in developing countries like Pakistan have put particular emphasis on English learning. L2 learning refers to entire challenges faced by learners due to various problems regarding emotional development, self esteem, enthusiasm and self-efficacy and rapport is considered to be one of the solutions to enhance these crucial elements which are indispensable in L2 learning. Therefore, learners' performance is an important issue which seems very essential to discover various aspects affecting it.

Drastically teachers have a long-term impact on their students because they directly affect how, what and how much students learn, and the ways they work together with one another and the world around them. In any type of learning, it is necessary to develop rapport with a teacher and the learners. The persona, the moralistic qualities, teaching style and positive attitude is essential for good classroom environment. The cooperation among learner-learner and teacher-learner can enhance learning in L2 classrooms and help to achieve successful learning outcomes. Implicitly the achievement or failure of learning a foreign language depends on some essential aspects like the learner's social and cultural background, personality, the learning procedure and environment.

Many studies on teacher-learner rapport are conducted and huge efforts also taken to know how it impacts on learner's performance. Many scholars Dwyer et al. (2004) argue that the emphasis should not only be on teachers, but student-student contacts should be examined for their contribution to learning outcomes. It is obvious that the classroom is made up of multiple

interpersonal relationships which contribute to the successful learning outcomes and the development of a unique civilization. It is assumed that student-teacher and student-student rapport is crucial and important to improve and enhance learners' performance to achieve positive and successful learning outcomes.

Teachers should encourage learners to set high aims for learning and according to Payne (2003) teachers need to help students to be familiar with the costs of the choices they make. The classroom is based on various interpersonal relationships which are important for learner's creativity. For successful learning and teaching outcomes it is very essential to create positive classroom environment which provides the enormous opportunities and appropriate conditions to enhance and improve students' performance and learning.

To sum up it is obvious that English language plays a key role in education, business, media and government. In order to achieve better competence in second language, the teachers, researchers and higher education authorities in Pakistan incorporate strategies to bring awareness regarding the importance of rapport in education which is highly ideal not only for second language teaching, learning and also other educational disciplines.

1.1 Aims & Objectives

The present study aims to explore Impact of Teacher-Learner Rapport on L2 (English) Learning. In order to achieve the aforementioned aim, the following are my research objectives:

1.2 Objectives

- 1) To find learners' perception about their English Language Proficiency
- 2) To investigate the impact of teacher-student rapport on learners' perceived English Language Proficiency.

1.3 Research Questions

On the basis of the research objectives, the following research questions were designed:

- 1) What are learners' perceptions about their English language learning and proficiency?
- 2) How far teacher-Learner rapport impacts Learning English as a second language?

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is observed during the course of study that there is need to conduct a study in Pakistani context on impact of rapport in English language learning. This study would make a noteworthy contribution in the field of research particularly in English language learning in Sindh province; it is momentous in the sense that it provides varieties of ideas and awareness about rapport in L2 learning. The study will be valuable and beneficial for learners, educators, researchers and helpful in the pedagogical domains of applied linguistics.

1.5 Problem Statement

At present time learning English is considered to be as one of the central issues especially in the

developed and developing countries like Pakistan put particular emphasis on English learning. The present study is aimed to know the impact of teacher-learner rapport on L2 learning at university (higher) level. Through profound study of literature review the researcher explored that this crucial topic is being neglected and ignored specially in our educational context; Sindh, Pakistan. In the light of literature review and personal teaching-learning experience it is assumed that there is strong need to conduct study on impact of teacher-learner rapport on L2 learning.

1.6 Motivation for the Study

My motivation for this area became stronger when I started teaching English at University and realized need and importance of teacher-learner rapport for positive learning outcomes. I also found that no researcher in this context has worked purely on the impact of teacher-learner rapport on L2 learning. Unfortunately our education system seems to be less concerned regarding this crucial issue; such an impactful attribute of educational institutes which has proved to be influential in essential areas of L2 learning.

2. Literature Review

Teacher is the one who can make students believe themselves and their success. Teachers are the main source to influence learners to achieve successful outcomes in second language learning. Payne (2003) stated that students should be guided by teachers to understand the value of personal interest. According to the current analysis achievement or failure in learning a foreign language is not independent of some significant areas like the learner's personality, learner's ethical background, the learning criteria and its surroundings. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) conducted a survey which discloses that the behavior of teachers is considered to be the most important motivational feature and it also reveals that teachers' rapport with students is one of the most motivational resources in their classroom practice.

Brandi N. Frisby and Matthew M. Martin (2010) conducted a study to find out role of rapport in building positive relationships and an overall positive classroom environment. It examined instructor rapport with students and rapport between students. Students Results indicate that perceived Instructor rapport, student rapport, and classroom connectedness enhanced students' participation. It further suggests that only instructor rapport consistently predicted participation, affective learning, and cognitive learning.

Despite the fact that the various factors influence the students' learning the teacher is considered as most important to influence learners' performance. Teachers have a significant enduring-influence which affects the ways learners behave, the way they learn and what they learn.

William and Burden, (1997) supposed that while estimating the level of teacher's influence it is clear that teachers are the main source to promote positive outcome on students' life in terms of positive attitudes towards learning, curiosity in learning and enviable outcomes.

Dobransky and Frymier, 2004, Houser, 2000; Nussbaum and Scott, (1980) stated that the teacher-student rapport is interpersonal one where both (teacher and students) enter the

classroom with relational aims. Worley et al. (2007) described that an instructor's ability to convey interpersonal messages is considered as one dimension of instructional communication competence and may serve to achieve relational goals. Jorgenson (1992) said that the teaching is a rapport-intensive field and rapport is in fact a relationship-centered term which helps to create mutual understanding and interpersonal relationship. Therefore, rapport may enhance perceptions of an interpersonal relationship in the classroom. Gremler and Gwinner (2000) argued that rapport has two main aspects like a personal connection and enjoyable interaction.

Scholars (Dwyer et al., 2004; Frymier, 2007) investigated at the university level for further study about the role of rapport between teacher-students, and student-students to comprehend the impact of rapport or positive relational process and how it influences on learners' performance. Various researchers have discussed about building rapport, many researchers have enlighten this crucial matter and according to one of the famous researchers, Coupland (2003), building rapport positively affects on environment of classroom and it encourages learners to perform confidently in any social interaction.

2.1 Definition of Teacher-Learner Rapport

There would be one definition for rapport in the dictionary although various scholars and educators have found their own ways to explain the concept of rapport. Stephen Brookfield (1990) in his book, *The Skilful Teacher*, defines rapport as "the affective glue that binds education relationships together" (p. 163). Richard Tiberius (1993) is similarly effusive, conceiving of rapport as the context in which teaching and learning takes place. Both authors have expressed the idea that rapport can encourage participation and forms the ways to get desirable learning outcomes. Brookfield (1990) argued that sense of feeling protected or secure would encourage students to take more risks to take part in the difficult tasks of learning.

Various definitions and metaphors for rapport exist; it can be a slippery concept. It is clearly based on relationship, but what is the nature of that relationship? Buskist and Saville (2001) present the idea that rapport emerges as the result of many little things done on a regular basis. To paraphrase Aristotle, rapport is a habit and not an act.

Ayaz (2013) conducted a survey at Secondary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to investigate impact of teacher-learner rapport on students' academic achievements. Teacher and students both participated in this study. In the findings of his study the moderate significant differences were found between teacher and students views.

Walsh and Maffei (1994) argued that student-teacher rapport is distinct in various conditions for example, the instructor is charged with classroom management, gives grades, and is ultimately responsible for guidance and feedback. This balance between relationship and responsibility can be a fine line, and it is worth examining a few gray areas that relate to rapport.

M.T., Claridge and T. Lewis (2005) stated that teacher-learners rapport is essential to the successful teaching outcomes because an excellent mutual association of teacher with students will make the classroom environment more pleasant and helps to enhance performance of learners.

Kathy Paterson. (2005) has expressed that rapport is the magnificent connection which allows both the teacher and students to participate and learn mutually. This mutual relationship can be maintained and created by the most influential teachers at the beginning of the course. Mutual understanding and good rapport between students and teachers motivate learners towards learning and make the classroom more interesting, enjoyable.

Resham Acharya (2018) has conducted a research on rapport building in classroom to identify what students want, to make favorable environment in class and role of rapport building for learners' performance. The findings of the study disclose that the students had great desire about their teachers to have a sense of harmony and expect their teachers to help them to enhance their performances.

Recently a quantitative study is conducted by Deeksha Thakur (2019) to investigate impact of Faculty-student rapport on Classroom Environment in higher education. In this study Professor-Student Rapport Scale and The College and University Classroom Environment Inventory questionnaire was used. The impact of rapport measured through Pearson Correlation and the result confirmed that there exists a positive correlation between Faculty-student rapport and Classroom environment.

Jones, Suxian and Thao (2004) conducted a significant study which demonstrates that the quality of the teacher-students rapport significantly influences the learners' performance, behaviour and their educational accomplishments. They further stated that students must be treated well by teachers and they should be appreciated and valued as human beings. As human being teacher must be aware of students' feelings and try to let them feel valued to get the successful learning outcomes. Undoubtedly rapport helps learners to freely convey their feelings and views, to set up the individual personality and to participate in various activities in the classroom.

According to Hamre and Pianta (2006) Student-teacher rapport gives distinctive approach to educators to improve the learning and socio-cultural milieu in the classrooms. Kerman et al (1980) stated that care for students by teacher is one of the great behaviors to build rapport with students positively. The polite and caring expressions and language by teacher greatly help learners to perform well and learn enthusiastically. Sibii (2010) described the way and behavior of the teacher should be friendly and caring but not as friend. Furthermore, Holmes et al. (1999) discussed that too close or informal behavior could be risky for university teachers and students in terms of their age, emotions and human nature.

In the light of literature review it can be concluded that teacher-students rapport is very essential in order to form supportive and healthy environment in the classroom. In effective teaching and learning process the teachers can play a crucial role and serve as motivators to improve students 'performance for academic success. Establishing rapport alone is not enough because positive relationships are the base to build a strong discipline system. It is also not easy to explicitly explain limits of expected attitudes, to assess actions, and practice consequences with varying conditions. Specifically in higher education teacher-student rapport should be considered as one of the crucial issues of learning second language and it must be highlighted not only because it develops mutual understanding between teacher and students but it also

plays a leading role to enhance learners' performance. As a teacher and researcher, I felt there is a strong need to put light on the issues about teacher-learner rapport in the context of University of Sindh Jamshoro & Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, and other Public sector universities of Pakistan. All the international and local (Pakistani) research studies provide a valuable literature in the area of Teacher-Learner & Learner-Learner rapport and its impact on L2 learning and also give a path for further research in various academic contexts. Thus this study aims to fill the gap in the research about impact of rapport on (English) second language learning and therefore this study focuses particularly on perceptions of learners on language learning at UOSJ & MUET Jamshoro, Sindh Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

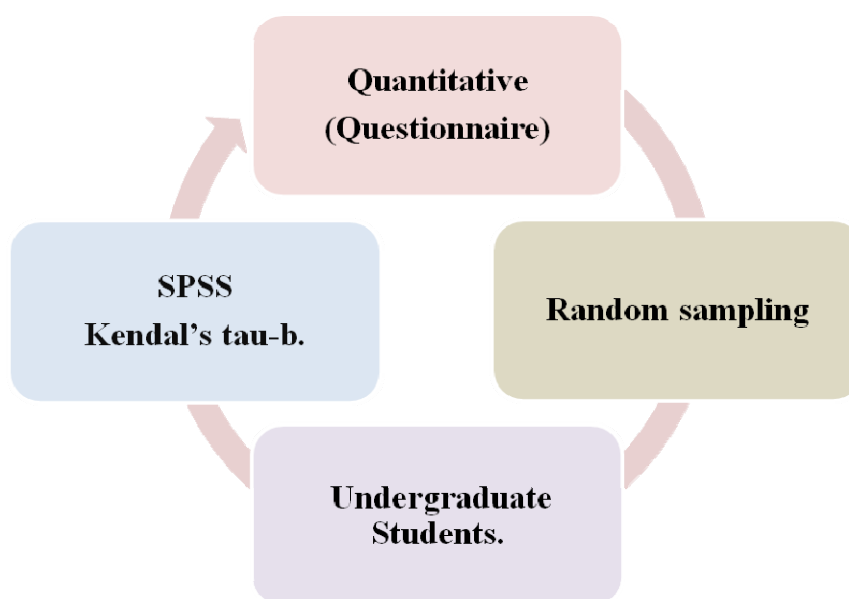


Figure 1. Research design

The present study aims to know teachers and learners perception about impact of teacher-learner rapport on L2 learning. Quantitative approach is adopted for this study so the researcher has used questionnaire as tool for data collection. Creswell (1994) has defined the quantitative research as the phenomena of analyzing the collected arithmetical data through statistical or mathematical applications. Quantitative method is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. It generalizes results from a larger sample population. Research design, describes the specific procedure that is involved in the research process that includes: data collection, data analysis, presenting findings and concluding the final study (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Questionnaire is used as a tool for this study. Bulmer (2004) explained that in the social science research the questionnaire is considered to be as a well organized instrument for getting information about social characteristics, present and past behaviors, standards, attitudes, beliefs and reasons of participants about the related research.

3.1 Research Instruments

Questionnaires are usually made to collect large amount of data which can be comparatively simple to process. According to Litosseliti,(2010) questionnaire is like a blessing because constructing and administrating a questionnaire is not an easy task. In short it must be “perfect” before we distribute it among our participants Total 43 Questionnaire items 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Choices are also given for each item as: (1)=(strongly disagree) (2)=(disagree) (3)=(neither agree nor disagree), (4)=(agree) or (5)=(strongly agree) were used in this study which are adapted from two researchers.

The perception about teacher-learner rapport was measured previously, Frisby and Myers (2008) successful adaptation of Gremler and Gwinner’s (2000) 11-item scale, was used The scale measures 6 items for enjoyable interaction and 5 items for personal connection . Internal reliability for this study was checked, (.96).

And learners’ perceived level of English proficiency was measured by Bakhtawar Mughal (2017) successful adaptation of Makewa et al. (2013) 32-item scale was used. 8 items for speaking skills, 8 items for reading skills, 8 items for listening skills and 8 items for writing skills. Overall reliability of this study was (.804).

3.2 Participants

To select a representative sample total 209 undergraduate students were selected from both MUET and UoSJ. Students are learning English along with other subjects related to their particular field. Both female and male students got equal chance to participate, as it is not gender biased.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

Random sampling technique is applied .The participants were given questionnaire in each selected discipline, after that the participants were instructed to fill the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. The data of 209 students was analyzed through frequency and percentage ratings, and Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient a nonparametric was applied through SPSS (version 20th) software.

4.1 Ethical Consideration

According to Cohen (2007), research ethics circle around confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. In the present study, the most important ethical issue is informed with consent and confidentiality of the participants. For this study permission was granted from high authorities of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology & Sindh University Jamshoro. Before collecting the data, consent of the participants was assured that their bio data and name will be kept anonymous. A valid and reliable tool is used for data collection. Validity and reliability tools were checked by SPSS. Participants were given adequate time for filling the questionnaire.

5. Results

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the results. The descriptive statistics shows the mean

and standard deviation of participant's responses so that results can be understood clearly.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of overall perceived second language proficiency

		Descriptive Statistics						
		N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Speaking Skills Proficiency	209	2.00	2.00	5.00	775.863	3.7122	.55690	
Perceived Reading Skills Proficiency	209	2.00	2.38	5.00	826.003	3.9522	.43865	
Perceived Listening Skills Proficiency	209	2.00	2.29	5.00	796.143	3.8093	.50861	
Perceived Writing Skills Proficiency	209	2.00	2.13	4.75	731.883	3.5018	.47448	
Overall Perceived Language Proficiency	209	2.00	2.54	4.72	783.443	3.7485	.42467	
Valid N (listwise)	209					3.7485		

The above table is given to provide overall learners perceived second language proficiency in all four skills of language. The overall proficiency is 3.7439 that indicated a good level of overall proficiency in L2. According to Table: 1 participants of reading proficiency is at first stage that is 3.9522, as it shows high level of proficiency while on the other hand perceived listening proficiency is at second high level that is 3.8093. When it comes to the third high proficient skill, according to the data, it is speaking skill that shows 3.7122 mean that is at stable and good level of proficiency. Lastly, writing skill proficiency that is at stable and moderate level as compared to other above skills which is 3.5018. So the result clearly shows the learners proficiency is at high level.

For second question a Kendall's tau-b correlation was run to find out the Impact of teacher-Learner Rapport on learners' perceived proficiency in English as a second language.

Table 2. Correlations between teacher-learner rapport and perceived language proficiency

		Teacher Rapport	Overall Language Proficiency	Perceived Language Proficiency
Kendall's tau_b	Teacher Rapport	1.000	.293**	
Overall Language Proficiency	Perceived Language Proficiency	.293**	1.000	
		N	209	209

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The Table 2 shows that there is strong positive relationship between teacher-learner rapport and L2 learning which was statistically significant ($\tau_b=.293$, $P=1.000$). The result shows strong positive rapport between teacher and learners so overall result shows high level of proficiency in perceived L2 learning outcomes and strong positive rapport between teacher and learners which clearly depicts that teacher-learner rapport has strong positive impact on L2 learning. The more positive rapport is created the more positive learning outcomes will be achieved. So rapport impacts strongly and positively on L2 learning.

6. Implications

This study has some implications for teachers as well as learners. This study is beneficial for learners in the way by knowing some new and reliable ways to create rapport so teachers will develop and apply various strategies in L2 learning classroom. For future implications this study can be considered very helpful for the field of educational research and second language (English) teaching and learning. This study can be expanded further as it only focuses on just 6 disciplines of UOSJ and MUET so new researchers can work on the other disciplines, faculties and universities of Sindh, Pakistan. This study will help learners to develop their linguistic performance in second language learning and create positive classroom environment to achieve educational goals successfully. This research will bring a great change in a challenging environment and help to create better learning environment for the L2 learners.

6.1 Academic Implications

Teachers are suggested to remove gap between them and students by creating rapport which certainly help students feel free to share their difficulties with teachers in the classroom. Teachers should also design thought provoking and interesting activities according to learners' level and interest. Give students a lot of choices and control over what they want to do so, it will increase student's participation excitement for learning. Learning language is based on

integrative skills therefore teachers should create a good rapport and friendly environment in the classroom that can help learners to learn second language proficiently. Teacher should devise rule that every student deserves respect, so that students may not feel to be negatively evaluated by their class fellows or peers. In addition to teachers the study brings awareness for researchers too. It is one step forward for a deep understanding in impact of teacher-learner rapport concept.

7. Recommendations

This study suggests to both teachers as well as learners to create and maintain good rapport to enhance second language learning.

Teachers must identify learners' needs, interests, and lacks to help learners learn confidently.

As a teacher, through rapport you can easily get to know your students well, and your instructions well received. Learners are most likely to respect, listen and obey teachers if teachers engage, connect well and form a good rapport in the classroom.

Teacher-learner rapport can help the educators to provide learners with an appropriate and healthy environment to practice and enhance L2 learning more proficiently.

8. Conclusion

The study brings the conclusion about students of both Universities MUET and UoSJ highly agreed that there is strong relationship between impact of teacher-learner rapport on L2 second language learning. The finding of results clearly depicts good level of rapport between teacher and learner and high level of second language proficiency that all shows positive impact of teacher-learner rapport on L2 learning. Undoubtedly English language plays a key role in education, business, media and government. In order to achieve better competence in second language, the teachers, researchers and higher education authorities in Pakistan incorporate strategies to bring awareness regarding the importance of rapport in education which is highly ideal not only for second language teaching, learning and also other educational disciplines.

Unfortunately our education system seems to be less concerned regarding rapport that is such an impactful attribute of schooling which has proved to be influencing in essential portions of learning. Teacher-student rapport is not technique to learn effectively and achieve good grades, but it governs the routes that result in meeting with growing learning and good grades by bringing a teacher close to constructive teaching passing through a scenario of relating to his all students socially, psychologically and intellectually; keeping in mind the diversities of these levels in a classroom. And for sure, a successful establishment of rapport looks forward for the equal cooperation from both sides. As it is observed that though powerful, the correlation between rapport and learning apparently seems to be indirect, we face a lot of troubles in learning and teaching a second language, due to the negligence towards building teacher-student rapport. Instead more focus is shared on delivering information and expecting it to be transmitted well without more allowance to questioning and creative thoughts, on the other hand students who need a comfortable environment feel nervous hesitated to speak up due to the realization of weak bonding with their teacher and seem to care more about their

good grades than their good learning.

Finally study confirms the consequences of earlier researches conducted in diverse contexts but less in our educational areas of Sindh, Pakistan. At higher/ tertiary level education, teaching and learning environment requires more attention on teacher-learner rapport because at this level learners are more aware and mature enough to understand the ways teacher reacts or behaves consequently it impacts on learner's psychological nurturing and wilful leaning. So this research can contribute in researches and other further studies to provide a greater amount of awareness on different concepts regarding teacher-learner rapport and its impact on L2 learning at university level.

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Appendix

List of Abbreviations

1. TLR	Teacher-Learner Rapport
2. LLR	Learner-Learner Rapport
3. L2	Second Language
4. PLP	Perceived Language Proficiency
5. SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
6. MUET	Mehran University of Engineering & technology
7. UOSJ	University of Sindh Jamshoro
8. HEC	Higher Education Commission
9. Std	Standard Deviation

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