

Teacher–Student Rapport as a Classroom Management Tool in EFL Contexts: Perceptions From The University of Zawia

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ABSTRACT

Rapport-building between teachers and students has long been acknowledged as an essential element of effective classroom management and the creation of positive learning environments. Strong teacher–student relationships help establish trust, respect, and emotional support, which are necessary for successful teaching and learning processes. In EFL classrooms, where students may experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or low confidence in using a foreign language, rapport plays a particularly important role in encouraging participation and reducing stress. This paper examines teacher–student rapport as a classroom management strategy and explores its effects on the classroom environment, student behavior, and student motivation in EFL contexts. Rapport is viewed not only as a social interaction but also as a pedagogical tool that promotes student engagement and cooperation. By fostering mutual understanding and positive communication, teachers can create a classroom atmosphere that supports learning and minimizes distractions and behavioral problems.

The study adopted a descriptive quantitative design and was conducted at the University of Zawia, Libya. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 51 students (96.1% female) and 30 faculty members from the Faculty of Arts, the Medical College, and the Dentistry College.

The questionnaire items focused on teacher friendliness, fairness, approachability, and supportive behavior, all of which are key indicators of strong rapport. Results showed that students gave the highest ratings to teachers' use of real-life examples ($M = 4.35$), encouragement of open discussion ($M = 4.31$), and impartial treatment of students ($M = 4.25$), while individual conversations about academic progress received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.90$), pointing to a gap in one-to-one academic support. The study concludes that teacher–student rapport functions as a foundational element of effective classroom management in EFL settings and recommends that institutions support more individualized, relational teaching practices alongside existing instructional strengths.

Keywords: Student behavior, Quantitative research, Pedagogical strategies, Learning outcomes, EFL pedagogy.

العلاقة بين المعلم والطالب كأداة لإدارة الصف الدراسي في سياقات تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تصورات من جامعة الزاوية

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ملخص البحث

تُعد العلاقة الإيجابية (Rapport) بين المعلم والطالب عنصراً أساسياً في الإدارة الفعالة للفصل الدراسي وفي تهيئة بيئة تعليمية إيجابية. تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية العلاقة بين المعلم والطالب بوصفها أداة لإدارة الفصل في سياقات تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتستكشف أثرها على بيئة الفصل وسلوك الطلاب ودافعيتهم. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً وصفيًا كميًا، وأُجريت في جامعة الزاوية بليبيا، حيث جُمعت البيانات باستخدام استبيانات وُزعت على 51 طالبًا (96.1% منهم إناث) و30 عضو هيئة تدريس من كلية الآداب وكلية الطب وكلية طب الأسنان. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب أعطوا أعلى التقييمات لاستخدام المعلم أمثلة من الحياة اليومية (م = 4.35)، وتشجيعه للنقاش المفتوح (م = 4.31)، وحياده في معاملة الطلاب (م = 4.25)، في حين سجلت المحادثات الفردية حول التقدم الدراسي أدنى درجة (م = 2.90)، وهو ما يشير إلى وجود فجوة في الدعم الأكاديمي الفردي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن العلاقة بين المعلم والطالب تمثل ركيزة أساسية للإدارة الفعالة للفصل في سياقات تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتوصي بتعزيز الممارسات التعليمية الفردية والعلائقية إلى جانب نقاط القوة التدريسية القائمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سلوك الطلاب، البحث الكمي، الاستراتيجيات التربوية، مخرجات التعليم، تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية.

2 Investigate the relationship that exists between rapport building with students and the classroom environment.

3 Examine the impact of teacher–student rapport on students’ motivation and participation in EFL classrooms.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This study focuses on the importance of rapport-building as a classroom management technique in EFL contexts. The study targeted EFL instructors and their learners who were participants from different fields and part of the University of Zawia in an educational setting in which English is offered as an additional language. The study investigated rapport-building techniques used by the instructors and analyzed their learners' perceptions regarding the effects of those techniques in the class environment.

The scope of this particular research is limited to the use of the descriptive quantitative method with questionnaires as the tool for data gathering.

For this particular reason, this research does not attempt to determine the students’ performance levels in their studies or their language proficiency, but focuses more on the behavior pertinent to classroom management. In effect, this particular research’s results would remain true for the selected sample alone and would not be generalizable to other EFL contexts.

2.0 Literature Review

The conceptual foundations of teacher–student rapport emerge from the shift away from authoritarian classroom management models toward relational and communicative approaches that emphasize trust, emotional safety, and interpersonal connection.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 The Affective Filter Hypothesis and Emotional Safety

In EFL contexts, rapport extends beyond mere social interaction to function as a crucial cognitive and affective condition for effective language learning. It creates a psychologically safe environment in which learners feel comfortable taking risks, expressing themselves, and making mistakes without fear of negative evaluation. This is particularly important in foreign language classrooms, where students are often required to communicate using limited linguistic resources.

According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, negative emotional states such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence can obstruct language acquisition by preventing comprehensible input from being processed effectively (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). In contrast, when learners experience positive emotions, their affective filter is lowered, allowing input to be internalized more efficiently.

Furthermore, the presence of a supportive and empathetic teacher plays a central role in minimizing these psychological barriers. Teachers who build strong rapport with their students tend to foster trust, encouragement, and mutual respect, all of which contribute to a more relaxed and engaging classroom atmosphere. As a result, students become more willing to participate, interact, and experiment with the target language. Empirical research supports this theoretical claim. Positive teacher–student relationships have been shown to significantly reduce foreign language anxiety while increasing learners’ willingness to communicate in the target language (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2020, p. 850). Additionally, recent studies (e.g., Xie & Derakhshan, 2021) highlight that rapport not only enhances emotional well-being but also promotes sustained engagement and academic achievement in EFL settings.

The existing literature suggests that establishing rapport in EFL classrooms is not a secondary or optional teaching skill, but rather a fundamental pedagogical requirement. In contexts such as the University of Zawia, where students may experience limited exposure to English outside the classroom, the teacher's role becomes even more significant in shaping learners' attitudes and confidence. Building a positive teacher–student relationship can influence students' motivation, reduce their anxiety, and encourage active participation.

2.1.2 Immediacy Behaviors and Social Lubricants

Immediacy behaviors such as maintaining eye contact, smiling, adopting open and welcoming body language, and using humor appropriately play a central role in establishing rapport and minimizing the psychological distance between teachers and students.

These behaviors signal warmth, availability, and responsiveness, which in turn enhance teacher approachability and foster a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. In language learning contexts, where communication and interaction are essential, such nonverbal and verbal cues become especially significant in encouraging students to engage without hesitation.

Research indicates that teacher immediacy is strongly associated with increased student attention, higher levels of motivation, and improved perceptions of learning outcomes (Titsworth et al., 2020, p. 170). When teachers consistently display immediacy behaviors, students are more likely to feel valued and understood, which positively influences their overall classroom experience. In EFL classrooms, these behaviors are particularly valuable as they help reduce feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, and intimidation that often accompany speaking in a foreign language. As a result, learners become more willing to participate, ask questions, and practice the target language more frequently.

Moreover, immediacy behaviors can be viewed as “social lubricants” that facilitate smoother classroom interactions and strengthen interpersonal connections. By creating a relaxed and encouraging atmosphere, they enable students to take linguistic risks, especially during oral production tasks, without excessive fear of making mistakes. This contributes to the development of communicative competence and supports more effective language acquisition.

The evidence suggests that immediacy behaviors are a practical and highly effective tool for enhancing teacher–student rapport in EFL settings. In contexts such as the University of Zawia, where students may feel hesitant to use English due to limited exposure or fear of error, the teacher's nonverbal and verbal immediacy can significantly shape students' willingness to participate. The consistent use of such behaviors not only improves classroom interaction but also helps build students' confidence and reduces communication barriers. Therefore, EFL instructors should consciously incorporate immediacy strategies into their teaching practices to create a more engaging, supportive, and productive learning environment.

2.1.3 Verbal Immediacy and Linguistic Confidence

Verbal immediacy practices, including addressing students by name, offering encouragement, and providing constructive and positive feedback, play a crucial role in enhancing learners' linguistic confidence and reinforcing their sense of belonging within the classroom.

These practices reflect the teacher's attentiveness and personal engagement with students, which helps create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. When students feel recognized and valued as individuals, they are more likely to develop a positive emotional connection to the learning process.

Supportive verbal interaction also promotes active participation and fosters positive attitudes toward learning (Frisby & Martin, 2021, p. 8). Through consistent encouragement and affirmation, teachers can reduce students' fear of negative evaluation and help them overcome hesitation in using the target language. In EFL contexts, where learners often struggle with limited vocabulary and fear of making mistakes, such verbal support becomes especially important. It not only lowers anxiety but also facilitates more meaningful and sustained classroom dialogue, particularly among students with lower levels of language proficiency. Furthermore, by acknowledging students individually—such as calling them by their names or responding to their contributions thoughtfully—teachers strengthen students' sense of belonging and inclusion. This sense of belonging is a key factor in maintaining long-term motivation and engagement in foreign language learning. It encourages learners to take initiative, participate more actively, and persist despite linguistic challenges, ultimately contributing to more effective language acquisition.

These findings indicate that verbal immediacy represents a simple yet highly impactful strategy for improving student engagement in EFL classrooms. In contexts such as the University of Zawia, where students may lack confidence in their English abilities, consistent verbal encouragement and personalized interaction can significantly influence their willingness to communicate. These practices help create a safe and motivating environment that supports both emotional comfort and academic progress. Therefore, EFL instructors should deliberately incorporate verbal immediacy techniques into their teaching to enhance learners' confidence, participation, and overall learning experience.

2.1.4 Self-Determination Theory and Learner Motivation

Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that learner motivation is shaped by the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Among these, relatedness, defined as the sense of connection, belonging, and mutual respect within social relationships, is particularly influenced by the quality of teacher–student interactions. High-quality teacher–student relationships directly satisfy this need, thereby enhancing learners' intrinsic motivation and fostering a more meaningful engagement with the learning process.

When students perceive their teachers as supportive, caring, and responsive, they are more likely to feel emotionally connected to the classroom environment. This sense of connection encourages learners to participate more actively, express their ideas with greater confidence, and take ownership of their learning. Studies grounded in Self-Determination Theory reveal that students who experience strong relational connections with their teachers demonstrate higher levels of engagement, increased voluntary participation, and a stronger long-term commitment to learning (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2020, p. 104). These outcomes highlight the critical role of interpersonal relationships in sustaining motivation over time.

This dimension is especially significant in EFL contexts, where maintaining student motivation can be particularly challenging due to linguistic difficulties, limited exposure to the target language, and fear of making mistakes. When students feel a strong sense of relatedness to their teacher, they are more likely to internalize the value of learning English, viewing it not as an external obligation but as a personally meaningful goal. Theoretically, the concept of relatedness provides a strong foundation for understanding the importance of rapport in EFL classrooms. In contexts such as the University of Zawia, where students may struggle with motivation due to limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom, fostering strong teacher–student relationships become essential. By creating a supportive and respectful learning environment, teachers can significantly enhance students' intrinsic motivation, encourage sustained engagement, and promote persistence in language learning.

Therefore, building meaningful relational connections should be considered a central component of effective EFL teaching practices.

2.2 Previous Studies

Previous research has consistently emphasized the importance of teacher–student rapport in improving learners’ engagement, motivation, and language achievement in EFL contexts. Jean-Marc Dewaele and Peter D. MacIntyre (2020) found that positive teacher–student relationships significantly reduce foreign language anxiety and increase learners’ willingness to communicate in the target language. Their study highlights that emotional support in the classroom plays a key role in lowering psychological barriers and encouraging active participation.

In a similar line of research, Ali Derakhshan and Fangfang Xie (2021) investigated teacher interpersonal behaviors in EFL settings and reported that immediacy, care, and supportive interaction positively influence student engagement and academic performance.

The findings indicate that students are more motivated and participative when teachers create a friendly and encouraging classroom atmosphere.

Likewise, Bridgette Titsworth et al. (2020) examined the relationship between teacher immediacy behaviors and student learning outcomes. The results showed a strong positive correlation between immediacy (both verbal and nonverbal) and students’ attention, motivation, and perceived learning. The study concluded that teacher immediacy contributes to a more interactive and effective classroom environment.

Furthermore, Paige R. Frisby and Matthew M. Martin (2021) explored the impact of verbal immediacy and supportive communication. They found that behaviors such as encouragement, praise, and personalized feedback significantly enhance students’ sense of belonging and classroom participation.

Finally, research grounded in Self-Determination Theory by Kimiya Oga-Baldwin and colleagues (2020) demonstrated that fulfilling learners’ need for relatedness through positive teacher–student relationships lead to higher intrinsic motivation, increased engagement, and greater persistence in language learning.

3.0 Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to investigate the intersection of rapport-building and classroom dynamics. This design is appropriate for examining measurable relationships between variables, as it enables the researcher to collect, analyze, and interpret numerical data in a systematic and objective manner. By focusing on quantifiable patterns, the study aims to identify trends and correlations between teachers’ interpersonal strategies and students’ academic and behavioral outcomes within the EFL classroom context.

Furthermore, the descriptive quantitative approach allows for a clear representation of participants’ perceptions and experiences through statistical analysis. It provides the researcher with the ability to summarize data using frequencies, percentages, and other statistical measures, which helps in drawing reliable conclusions about the role of rapport-building in shaping classroom dynamics. This method is particularly useful in educational research where large groups of students are involved, as it ensures consistency, comparability, and generalizability of findings.

In addition, this research design supports the examination of relationships between variables without manipulating the learning environment. This makes it suitable for real classroom settings, where natural interactions between teachers and students are observed as they occur. Overall, the use of a descriptive quantitative design provides a structured and systematic basis

for describing participants' perceptions of rapport-building and its associations with classroom engagement in EFL contexts.

To ensure that the key constructs examined in this study are measured consistently, the following operational definitions were used to guide the design of the questionnaire items and the interpretation of results. Rapport refers to the quality of the interpersonal relationship between a teacher and a student, operationalized through questionnaire items on teacher friendliness, approachability, fairness, and supportive behavior. Classroom management refers to the teacher's strategies for organizing classroom interaction and behavior, including discipline, the structuring of activities, and the establishment of rapport as a relational management tool. Teacher immediacy refers to verbal and nonverbal behaviors that reduce the psychological distance between teacher and student, such as eye contact, smiling, humor, and addressing students by name, and was measured through items asking how frequently these behaviors occur. Fairness refers to students' perception that a teacher treats all students impartially and without bias, operationalized through a single item asking whether the teacher is impartial toward all students. Motivation refers to students' self-reported willingness to attend, engage with, and put effort into classroom activities, operationalized through items on effort, attendance, and engagement in response to teacher communication. On-task behavior refers to students' self-reported engagement, comfort, and adherence to classroom expectations, operationalized through items measuring comfort participating in class, engagement during lessons, and avoidance of disruptive behavior.

3.1 Sampling and Participants

The research involved a dual-perspective analysis combining a faculty sample and a student sample. The faculty sample consisted of 30 academic staff members drawn from different academic disciplines, including the Faculty of Arts, the Medical College, and the Dentistry College. This multidisciplinary representation allowed the study to capture variations in teaching practices, communication styles, and rapport-building strategies across both humanities and health-related fields, where teacher–student interaction may differ significantly in structure and frequency.

The student sample consisted of 51 students, who were taught by the participating faculty members and completed a parallel questionnaire on their perceptions of classroom rapport. This student population was highly female-dominated, with 96.1% ($n = 49$) female participants and 3.9% ($n = 2$) male participants. This demographic distribution may reflect the enrollment patterns within the selected colleges and provides an important context for interpreting students' perceptions of classroom rapport and interaction dynamics; it is addressed further as a limitation in Section 3.4.

The faculty participants also showed considerable variation in teaching experience. Nearly half of them (49%) had between 5–10 years of teaching experience, indicating a strong presence of mid-career educators who are actively refining their teaching practices. In contrast, around 20% of the participants were highly experienced instructors with more than 15 years in the field, representing veteran educators with long-term exposure to classroom environments and student interaction. The remaining participants included early-career faculty members, adding further balance to the sample.

Overall, the diversity in both academic specialization and teaching experience strengthens the study by providing a more comprehensive understanding of how rapport-building is perceived and practiced across different institutional contexts and career stages.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a quantitative survey method, which is widely used in educational research to gather measurable data on participants' perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The study relied on structured questionnaires as the main instrument for data collection, as they are effective in obtaining standardized responses from a large group of participants in a relatively short time (Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2023).

The student questionnaire primarily focused on capturing learners' perceptions of teacher behavior, particularly in relation to communication style, approachability, supportiveness, and the extent to which teachers establish positive rapport in the classroom. It also aimed to identify how these behaviors influence students' engagement, motivation, and overall learning experience.

On the other hand, the teacher questionnaire was designed to assess instructors' self-reported classroom practices, with a particular emphasis on rapport-building strategies, interaction techniques, and classroom management approaches. In addition, it explored teachers' perceptions of how these practices impact student behavior, participation, and the overall classroom environment.

Together, the dual-questionnaire approach provided a balanced perspective by combining student perceptions with teacher self-assessments, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal dynamics in the EFL classroom.

Both questionnaires used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The student questionnaire comprised 25 scored items across three subsections: teacher communication-building behaviors (15 items), classroom atmosphere and behavior (6 items), and the impact of teacher personality and humor (4 items). The teacher questionnaire comprised 13 scored items measuring communication-building strategies. Responses were averaged within each subsection to produce the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) scores reported in Section 4, with higher means interpreted as indicating more frequent or more positive perceptions of the behavior in question. The items were developed by the researcher based on constructs commonly used in rapport and teacher-immediacy research rather than adapted from a single previously validated published scale, and no formal piloting, expert panel review, or statistical reliability or validity testing (e.g., Cronbach's alpha, content validity index) was conducted prior to administration. This absence of psychometric evidence is acknowledged as a limitation of the study in Section 3.4.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The study relied on descriptive statistics, including Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD), to summarize Likert-scale responses for items ranging from teachers calling students by name to teachers' impartial treatment of students.

Likert responses were coded numerically from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) and treated as ordinal data. Mean scores above 4.0 were interpreted as indicating strong or frequent agreement, scores between 3.0 and 4.0 as moderate agreement, and scores below 3.0 as weak or infrequent agreement, consistent with the interpretive labels used throughout Section 4 (e.g., "Moderate Immediacy," "Limited Approachability"). Some items were additionally grouped descriptively under broader interpretive labels, such as "Procedural Justice" for fair treatment or "Nominal Recognition" for calling students by name, to aid discussion of the findings; this grouping served as an interpretive aid rather than a formal thematic or statistical analysis, and is presented as such rather than as an additional statistical metric.

[Author to confirm the statistical software used to compute the descriptive statistics reported in Section 4.] Because the analysis was limited to descriptive statistics rather than inferential tests such as correlation or regression, formal checks of statistical assumptions (e.g.,

normality, homogeneity of variance) were not required and were not conducted. Accordingly, any "relationship" or "impact" language used elsewhere in this report to describe associations between rapport and student outcomes should be read as descriptive rather than as evidence of a statistically tested causal effect.

3.4 Scope and Limitations

The investigation was localized to an educational setting where English is an additional language. While the findings offer deep insights into this specific cohort, the results are framed as context-specific and not universally generalizable to all EFL environments.

Several further limitations should be noted. First, the student sample was strongly imbalanced by gender (96.1% female, $n = 49$, versus 3.9% male, $n = 2$), which reflects the enrollment pattern of the selected colleges but means the findings may not generalize to more gender-balanced EFL settings or capture how male students perceive teacher–student rapport. Second, both the faculty sample ($n = 30$) and the student sample ($n = 51$) are relatively small and were drawn from a single institution, which limits statistical power and the generalizability of the findings beyond the University of Zawia. Third, both questionnaires relied entirely on self-report data, which is susceptible to social desirability bias and may not correspond closely to teachers' and students' actual classroom behavior. Fourth, the study did not include classroom observation or any other independent source of behavioral data that could corroborate or contextualize the self-reported perceptions. Finally, as noted in Section 3.2, the questionnaires were developed by the researcher without formal piloting, expert review, or statistical testing of reliability or validity (e.g., Cronbach's alpha, content validity index), so the psychometric quality of the instruments cannot be confirmed and should be treated as an open question for future research.

4.0 Results

This section presents the findings derived from the quantitative analysis of data collected from both students and teachers. The results are organized to highlight key perceptions regarding pedagogical interaction, equity, and the overall classroom climate.

The study used a cohort of 51 student participants. The demographic analysis reveals a pronounced gender imbalance: females made up 96.1% ($n=49$) of the sample, while males made up 3.9% ($n=2$). This distribution aligns with the current enrolment pattern in the Faculty of Education, and the findings below should be interpreted within this demographic context; the gender imbalance is discussed further as a limitation in Section 3.4.

Table 1: Student Perceptions of Pedagogical Interaction

Dimension	Key Statement/Focus	Mean Score (M)	Key Findings & Sentiment
Pedagogical Efficacy	Use of real-life examples in lessons	4.35	Highest score. Strong preference for experiential and contextualized learning.
Pedagogical Interaction	Promotion of open discussion and listening	4.31	78.5% positive sentiment. 66.7% strongly agreed; high consensus on open dialogue.
Equity & Respect	Teacher impartiality toward all students	4.25	High uniformity is critical for trust and a psychologically safe environment.
Socio-Emotional Support	Strategic humor and empathy for struggles	3.92	Over 2/3 of students feel that emotional intelligence reduces classroom tension.
Individualized Discourse	Individual conversations about progress	2.90	Lowest score. Indicates a deficit in one-to-one monitoring and a need for intervention.

practice. Bridging this gap requires educators to intentionally design lessons that integrate experiential and student-centered learning strategies. By linking academic content to students' lived experiences, teachers can make lessons more accessible, engaging, and effective, ultimately fostering deeper understanding and more active participation in the learning process.

4.4 Socio-Emotional Support and Classroom Climate

The socio-emotional dimension of teaching was also positively perceived by the participants. This is reflected in the relatively high mean score of 3.92 for the use of strategic humor, as well as the favorable responses regarding teachers' empathy toward students' personal challenges. These findings indicate that students generally value emotional sensitivity in the classroom, particularly when it is expressed through supportive communication, understanding attitudes, and appropriate use of humor to reduce classroom tension.

The aggregated data further suggests that more than two-thirds of the respondents believe that emotional intelligence in teaching plays a significant role in shaping a positive learning environment. Specifically, students reported that when teachers demonstrate empathy and use humor appropriately, classroom anxiety decreases, and a more relaxed and welcoming atmosphere is created. This emotional support contributes to stronger interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, which in turn encourages openness and trust in communication.

Statistically, this perception is associated with higher levels of student engagement, participation, and willingness to communicate transparently in class discussions. When learners feel emotionally supported, they are more likely to express their ideas without fear of judgment, ask questions freely, and actively participate in learning activities. Therefore, the findings highlight the importance of integrating emotional intelligence into teaching practices as a key factor in enhancing both classroom climate and academic engagement.

4.5 Individualized Discourse and Personalized Monitoring

On the contrary, the data revealed a noticeable deficit in individual academic support. The item "The teacher conducts individual conversations to discuss students' progress" recorded a relatively low mean score of 2.90, indicating a generally weak or neutral perception among students regarding the frequency of one-to-one academic interactions. This suggests that personalized academic follow-up is not consistently experienced across the cohort, which may limit students' opportunities for individualized feedback and academic guidance.

The neutral to slightly negative leaning of this result implies that routine individual consultations between teachers and students are not a common practice within the observed context. This absence of personalized interaction may reduce the extent to which students feel individually supported in their learning journey, particularly in areas that require continuous feedback and targeted guidance, such as language development.

This situation may be attributed to systemic constraints such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, or heavy teaching workloads, all of which can restrict teachers' ability to provide individualized attention. However, despite these practical limitations, the findings highlight a critical pedagogical gap that warrants attention. Strengthening one-to-one communication practices could significantly improve students' academic confidence, enhance their sense of being valued as individual learners, and provide more targeted feedback essential for effective language acquisition and skill development.

4.6 Behavioral Correlates of Positive Interaction

This shows that there is a significant link between effective communication and engagement with students. Over 75% of participants agreed that positive interactions directly contribute to improved academic motivation. Students reported several positive behavioral and emotional

outcomes associated with their classroom experience. These include increased feelings of security when participating in class activities, which suggests that learners feel more comfortable expressing their ideas without fear of judgment or negative evaluation. In addition, there was a noticeable increase in motivation for regular attendance and active engagement, indicating that students are more likely to consistently attend classes and participate meaningfully when they feel supported and included in the learning environment. Furthermore, the findings also show improvements in adherence to classroom protocols, along with a stronger focus on completing assignments on time. This reflects a generally more disciplined and goal-oriented learning atmosphere, where students demonstrate greater responsibility toward their academic tasks.

4.7 Align with Results

The sample consisted of 30 academic staff, with diverse experiences covering various academic disciplines. Data showed that there was a preponderance of female lecturers, which correlated with the gender ratio in the institution. This was important, since published literature about education indicated that male and female teaching styles may importantly impact classroom interactions.

In relation to the age range, it can be observed that the focus of participation was on individuals aged 27 to 46 years old. This straddling of age groups ensures that the data collected has adequate credibility, with contributions from both young and experienced members of the profession, thereby enriching the study's findings.

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Pedagogical Interaction and Institutional Climate

Faculty Survey Question	Mean (M)	Std Dev (SD)	Academic Interpretation
Call students by names	3.43	1.16	Moderate Immediacy; suggests name recognition is not prioritized.
Individual talks	3.23	1.19	Fragmented Mentorship; individual progress monitoring is inconsistent.
Learn student interests	2.86	1.45	Academic Isolationism; disconnect between student life and school.
Share personal stories	3.00	1.11	Neutral Relatability: teachers maintain high professional distance.
Use of humor	3.60	1.13	Strategic Humor: used as a tool but not a primary feature.
Informal availability	2.86	1.40	Limited Approachability; availability is strictly formal.
Encourage open discussion	3.80	1.09	Participatory Pedagogy: strong focus on student voice.
Options in assignments	3.03	0.92	Standardized Assessment: low flexibility in student grading.
Real-life examples	4.23	0.97	Pragmatic Instruction: excellent contextualization of material.
Personalized notes	3.36	1.24	Feedback Loop: moderate use of written encouragement.
Display student work	2.46	1.30	Visibility Deficit: low celebration of student output.

"functional" aspects of a classroom, the full potential of student engagement may remain underutilized where deeper interpersonal and emotional communication is limited.

6.2 Recommendations

To enhance the educational experience and optimize learning outcomes, it is recommended that educational institutions transition toward a model of "relational pedagogy" by implementing professional development training that views communication as both a pedagogical and administrative tool. Teachers should prioritize shifting from simple content delivery to a more personalized approach that includes routine individual conversations to monitor student progress and provide formalized feedback.

Furthermore, educators should actively utilize immediacy behaviors such as strategic humor, eye contact, and personal teaching narratives to reduce psychological distance and humanize the learning process. There is also a need to modernize motivational strategies by incorporating student-centered media and engaging with students' interests outside the strictly academic sphere to deepen socio-emotional bonds. Finally, addressing institutional constraints like class sizes is essential to allow faculty the temporal space required to foster the high-quality, individualized interactions associated with student success.

6.3 Future Research

Future research should address the limitations of the present study by drawing on larger and more gender-balanced samples across a wider range of EFL institutions, which would improve the generalizability of findings beyond the University of Zawia. Longitudinal designs would also help clarify whether the patterns of rapport and engagement identified here persist or change over an academic term or year. In addition, complementing self-report questionnaires with classroom observation, interviews, or correlational and regression analyses would allow researchers to test the directional relationships between rapport, motivation, and on-task behavior that this descriptive study could only describe. Finally, future studies should report the reliability and validity evidence of the instruments used, including pilot testing and expert review, so that findings can be compared more confidently across studies and contexts.

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Appendix

Student Questionnaire:

Please read each statement carefully and answer honestly and accurately. The information will only be used for scientific research purposes.

Demographic Information

Gender

•Male ()

•Female ()

Age

[Your answer]

Grade / Academic Year

[Your answer]

Subject You are Answering About

[Your answer]

Your Teacher's Years of Teaching Experience

•Less than 5 years ()

•5–10 years ()

•11–15 years ()

•More than 15 years ()

Teacher's Communication Building Behaviors

Please rate from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always)

1.The teacher calls students by their correct names starting from the first days
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

2.The teacher shows interest in your personal life and hobbies outside of school
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

3.The teacher shares appropriate personal stories related to the lesson or life
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

4.The teacher is available before or after class to talk with students informally
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

5.The teacher shows an appropriate sense of humor during explanation
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

6.The teacher encourages open discussion and listens to all students' opinions
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

7.The teacher understands the difficult circumstances that may affect your academic performance
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

8.The teacher treats all students fairly and equally without bias
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

9.The teacher uses examples from daily life to explain the subject matter *
(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

•Master's ()

•PhD ()

Years of Teaching Experience

[Your answer]

Subject You Teach

[Your answer]

Number of Students in Your Classes (Average)

[Your answer]

Communication Building Strategies You Use

Please rate from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always)

1.I call students by their names starting from the first week

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

2.I intentionally conduct individual conversations with each student

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

3.I learn about students' interests and hobbies outside of school

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

4.I share appropriate personal stories with students

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

5.I use humor and jokes appropriately

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

6.I am available before/after class to talk with students informally

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

7.I encourage open discussion and listen to all opinions

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

8.I give students choices in assignments or assessment methods

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

9.I use examples from daily life to explain the material

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

10.I write encouraging personal notes to students

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

11.I display students' artwork or projects

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

12.I communicate with parents about positive achievements

(Never) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Always)

13.I use music or playlists chosen by students

(Never)