



Teacher–Student Rapport and Its Influence on English Language Learning Outcomes: Perceptions of Laghman University English Majors

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Abstract: The teacher–student relationship is a vital component of students' academic success and overall learning experience, fostering a safe and supportive classroom environment. Despite extensive international evidence on the benefits of teacher–student rapport, there is a lack of research on how this rapport specifically affects English language learning outcomes at Laghman University within the Afghan cultural context. This study aims to explore the impacts of teacher–student rapport on English language learning outcomes at the English Department of Laghman University, Afghanistan. A quantitative research design was employed to collect and analyze data. Data were gathered through a 35-item questionnaire distributed to 172 students, of whom 119 responded. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were calculated using SPSS version 26, and regression and correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship and impact of rapport on English language learning outcomes. The findings revealed that positive teacher–student rapport significantly enhanced English language learning outcomes, with key improvements such as increased motivation, greater classroom engagement, reduced anxiety, and enhanced self-confidence. The study adds to the literature on educational psychology and teaching methodology within Afghan higher education. It offers practical suggestions for teachers, educators, and institutions to foster positive relationships and create a safer, more supportive learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher-student rapport is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of effective pedagogy, particularly in language learning, where interpersonal dynamics directly influence student willingness to communicate. While definitions vary, a critical synthesis reveals rapport is consistently characterized as a dynamic, reciprocal relationship built on mutual trust, respect,

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and positive communication (Frisby & Martin, 2010). This goes beyond mere friendliness; it is an essential educational component that empowers the teaching and learning process by creating a learner-centered environment where students feel safe, valued, and understood (Cornelius-White, 2007). Consequently, rapport manifests in key dimensions such as emotional connection, where teachers demonstrate genuine care, and a supportive social environment that fosters collaboration (Halim, 2015; Jiang-yuan & Wei, 2012).

Extensive international research corroborates the significant impact of rapport on outcomes of second language (L2) acquisition. Strong teacher-student relationships are positively associated with increased student motivation (Assali & Davenport, 2024), greater willingness to communicate in the target language (Song et al., 2022), and improved academic performance across diverse contexts (Bhatti, 2020; Zhang, 2022). This established body of literature underscores the importance of rapport as a critical variable for success in communicative, student-centered classrooms, which are the hallmark of 21st-century language education.

Despite this robust understanding of rapport's importance internationally, little is known about its specific role and impact in Afghanistan's unique higher education context. The Afghan classroom presents distinct challenges, where cultural norms of respect for elders can discourage active participation, and factors like ethnic differences and large class sizes may hinder connection (Atifnigar, 2024). In settings like the English Department at Laghman University, where traditional, teacher-centered methods may persist, the potential for rapport to overcome these barriers and foster engagement remains critically underexplored. Previous research has predominantly relied on surveys, lacking the methodological depth to uncover the nuanced ways rapport is built and how it precisely influences learning mechanisms like confidence, anxiety, and participation.

Teacher-student rapport plays a crucial role in shaping learning outcomes, including confidence, anxiety, and classroom participation. However, despite its importance, limited research has examined how rapport functions within the specific cultural and institutional context of Afghan universities. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by employing a quantitative approach to investigate how teacher-student rapport influences the English language learning experience of English majors at Laghman University. Specifically, the research seeks to quantitatively measure the correlation between rapport and key learning outcomes (e.g., motivation, confidence) while qualitatively exploring the specific behaviors and strategies that effectively build rapport.

In line with these objectives, this study seeks to explore the impacts of teacher-student rapport on English language learning outcomes. More specifically, it aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does teacher-student rapport influence students' motivation and classroom participation in English language classes?

2. To what extent does teacher–student rapport correlate with English language learning outcomes at the English Department of Laghman University?
3. What is the statistical relationship between learners’ and teachers’ perceptions of rapport and students’ English language learning outcomes?

Theoretical Framework

Constructivism

The primary goal of teaching English is to enable students to communicate effectively in the target language. The communicative incorporation of language facilitates this. According to Wibowo *et al.* (2025), the “Zone of proximal development highlights the relationship between pupils’ proximal development and tutors’ instructional level”. Additionally, this maintains the important roles of teachers’ instruction and peer collaboration as guides towards attaining proximal development (Hinduja, 2021). Students can construct new knowledge if a teacher supports him/her. This concept is supported by Vygotsky’s theory of constructivism, specifically the concept of scaffolding. In a research article, Atifnigar *et al.* (2023) stated that “Scaffolding is an aided learning process that supports the ZPD or getting to the next degree of understanding of each learner with the help of instructors, peers, or elderly people”. Vygotsky’s theory emphasizes that learning happens through interaction between teacher and students; therefore, an effective atmosphere facilitates learning in English classes where meaningful communication is essential. Saeedi *et al.* (2021) found that participatory teaching methods, such as simulation and cooperative learning, significantly improve students’ academic motivation. These methods are more effective when supported by a strong teacher–student rapport, as positive interactions foster trust and engagement, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. In a constructivist classroom, strong teacher-student rapport fosters active student engagement and ownership of learning, thereby enhancing English language acquisition. Such a supportive relationship helps teachers connect lessons to students’ prior knowledge, increasing motivation and meaningful participation (Efgivia *et al.*, 2021).

Humanism

Many Afghan students tend to remain passive in class because social, economic, and psychological challenges limit their ability to engage actively when equal opportunities, support, and respect are absent in the learning environment (Rohi & Muslim, 2023). Therefore, the humanistic approach focuses on learners’ needs, interests, wishes, and feelings. Educators and instructors must create supportive, enjoyable settings that motivate and empower students to use the language (Khadistani, 2023).

Effective Filter

Krashen’s Affective filter hypothesis highlights the role of students’ feelings and emotions in second language learning. When the relationship between teachers and students is positive, it reduces classroom anxiety and increases students’ emotions and motivation. A supportive

atmosphere facilitates language learning (Horitz et al., 2021). Teachers encourage students to take an active role in the learning process and guide them throughout lessons, recognizing their responsibility for students' academic growth. They also connect new content to learners' prior experiences and encourage them to share feedback on their learning (Himat & Noor, 2024). This approach strengthens teacher–student rapport by fostering trust, mutual respect, and open communication, key elements that make students feel valued and supported in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental research design to investigate the relationship between teacher-student rapport and English language learning outcomes. Specifically, a correlational and predictive design was used to determine both the association between these variables and the ability of rapport to predict learning outcomes. The application of a quantitative design is highly appropriate for achieving the research aims and answering three research questions, as it facilitates the statistical examination of patterns and associations through student surveys. As Miksza et al. (2023) discussed, when researchers study descriptive or correlational questions, they usually collect data through surveys or observation. Surveys are a quick and easy way to gather much information about people's experiences, beliefs, and attitudes.

Data were collected via a survey questionnaire from a convenience sample of 119 students, drawn from a total population of 172. The sample size was justified according to standard sample size determination guidelines (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Taherdoost, 2017). This methodology enabled the analysis of associations between teacher-student rapport and critical variables—namely, language learning outcomes, student motivation, and participation — facilitating broader generalizations across the student population.

Population and Sampling

A convenience sampling method was utilized. Convenience sampling is cost-effective because it requires fewer resources than probability sampling methods. It is also time-efficient, allowing researchers to collect data quickly and achieve timely research outcomes (Doebel & Frank, 2023). The online questionnaire was distributed via existing WhatsApp groups to all first-year, sophomore, junior, and senior students in the English Department at Laghman University. This approach was selected for its practicality and efficiency in reaching a substantial number of the target population. A total of 119 students voluntarily completed the questionnaire out of the 172 who had access to the survey link through the groups, yielding a response rate of approximately 69%.

Instrumentation

An online questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from respondents. To collect responses on the factors affecting learners' English language learning outcomes, a

questionnaire adapted from Masmous et al. (2022) was used. The questionnaire consists of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A comprises demographic data for the participants; Section B comprises statements about the impacts of teacher-student rapport; and Section C comprises English language learning outcomes, namely motivation, engagement, participation, confidence, and reduced classroom anxiety. The questionnaire was reviewed by two experts: a senior lecturer from Kabul Education University and a senior lecturer from Kabul University. They assessed each item for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives, and made modifications based on their feedback. The adapted questionnaire consisted of 35 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The survey was administered online via WhatsApp to the students.

Table 1. *Reliability and Validity of the Study*

Measure	N of Items	Cronbach's α
Questionnaire	35	.981

Table 1 shows the reliability and consistency of the questionnaire; reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. To assess the instrument's internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. The result showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.981 for the 35 items included in the questionnaire. This value indicates excellent reliability, as it exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. A high Cronbach's Alpha indicates that the questionnaire items are highly consistent in measuring the same underlying construct, thereby confirming the reliability and trustworthiness of the data collection tool used in this study. The questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive review of the existing literature on teacher-student rapport and language learning outcomes.

Furthermore, it was reviewed by three experts in the field of language and literature at Kabul Education University and Kabul University. Their feedback was incorporated to ensure the items adequately represented the constructs being measured. Convenience sampling is commonly used in educational research when the target population is easily accessible and time or resources are limited (Creswell, 2014). Although it may not ensure full representativeness, it is appropriate for exploratory studies like this one, where the aim is to gather initial insights from readily available students about teacher-student rapport.

Data Collection Procedure

Following official approval from the Department Head and Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences at Laghman University, the online survey questionnaire was distributed to students in the English Department via WhatsApp and e-mail. Respondents were briefed on the study's purpose to understand classroom dynamics, and the voluntary and anonymous nature of their participation was emphasized. They were given one week to complete the three-section questionnaire, which collected demographic information and responses to the

Teacher-Student Rapport Scale and the Perceived Learning Outcomes Scale. Upon collection, the quantitative data were entered into SPSS software and analyzed using correlation and regression tests.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine trends and patterns in students' perceptions of the impact of teacher-student rapport on their English language learning outcomes, using mean and standard deviation. Furthermore, inferential statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between teacher-student rapport and students' English language learning outcomes.

FINDINGS

The following sections present the study's findings, which examined students' perceptions of the relationship between teacher-student rapport and English language learning outcomes at the English Department of Laghman University. A total of 119 male students participated in the study, representing all four academic years. Most of the respondents were between 20 and 25 years old, reflecting the typical age range of undergraduate students. The collected data provide valuable insights into how rapport influences learners' motivation, behavior, and English-language performance in the university context.

Demographics Information

Table 2 presents the respondents' demographic data, collected from 119 participants, all male (100%). In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents (54.6%) were between 20 and 25 years old, followed by 31.1% aged 18 to 20, and 14.3% above 25.

Table 2. Demographic Information of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	male	119	100.0%
Age	18-20	37	31.1%
	20-25	65	54.6%
	above-25	17	14.3%
Academic year	1st year (freshmen)	27	22.7%
	second year (sophomore)	35	29.4%
	Third year (junior)	23	19.3%
	Fourth year (senior)	34	28.6%

This suggests that most participants fall within the typical age range of university students. Regarding academic standing, students from all four academic years were represented: 29.4% were in their second year, 28.6% in their fourth year, 22.7% in their first year, and 19.3% in their third year. The balanced distribution across academic levels contributes to the data's representativeness regarding educational progress.

Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions of Rapport

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation to show the central tendency and variability of students' perceptions regarding teacher–student rapport and English language learning outcomes.

Results from the descriptive statistics in Table 3 indicate that students reported moderate to high levels of rapport in their teacher-student interactions. The teacher-student rapport received a favorable score from students ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.03$), suggesting that students generally had a good impression of rapport with instructors, but that there was variation in responses among English language students.

Out of all fifteen statements that were rated, the highest means were obtained for “I feel encouraged to share my ideas or opinions in class.” ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.23$) and “My teacher makes the classroom more enjoyable because he/she understands what I prefer.” ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.23$). This means that students feel they are provided with some degree of support and enjoyment through interpersonal connections, which benefits the classroom climate.

Table 3. *Levels of rapport as reported by students*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I feel encouraged to share my ideas or opinions in class.	3.44	1.22
2. My teacher makes the classroom more enjoyable because he/she understand what I prefer.	3.44	1.22
3. My teacher gives me time to explore and understand new ideas in the class.	3.42	1.18
4. My teacher uses examples and resources relevant to Afghan culture and costumes to make the lesson relatable.	3.39	1.30
5. The rapport between my teacher and me is very good.	3.37	1.25
6. My teacher consistently strives to foster a friendly and respectful relationship with students.	3.36	1.33
7. My teacher lets me express my thoughts and feelings freely.	3.35	1.28
8. My teacher encourages me and the students to participate in class discussions.	3.31	1.33
9. My teacher always strikes a balance between discipline and friendliness in the classroom.	3.26	1.25
10. My teacher takes care of my hobbies inside and outside the classroom.	3.26	1.25
11. My teacher treats all students equally, regardless of their diverse ethnic backgrounds and family circumstances.	3.25	1.25
12. My teacher uses Pashto and Dari explanations to clarify complex English topics when necessary.	3.17	1.38
13. My teacher shares personal stories related to the lesson with me.	3.16	1.17
14. My teacher does not differentiate between students with high and low grades in the class.	3.13	1.39
15. My teacher treats me fairly in the classroom.	3.09	1.22
Overall Rapport	3.29	1.02

The students also rated their teachers favorably on allowing them to explore new concepts ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.19$) and culturally relevant teaching ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.31$). This demonstrates a level of flexibility in teaching methods that can improve student interest and understanding.

In the teacher-student relations metric of building a friendly and constructive rapport, the participants reported moderately warm perceptions: “allowing expression of thoughts and feelings” ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.29$) and “encouraging classroom discussions” ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.34$). While most students feel supported, they do not feel strongly supported.

Lower mean responses were reported for “My teacher extends equal treatment to all students in the classroom” ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.23$) and “My teacher does not distinguish between high performing and low performing students” ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.40$). These results suggest there may be issues with inclusivity and fairness for both high- and low-performing students. Lower mean responses were also seen for the item, “My teacher shares personal stories related to the lesson” ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.17$), suggesting that the engaging dimension of rapport is lacking.

Overall, the results show that most students have a reasonably positive view of their relationship with their teachers. They view their teachers as friendly and supportive, and they believe that teachers strive to make lessons engaging and relevant. Still, there are some essentials for improvement, especially in ensuring that all students feel treated fairly and receive sufficient personal attention to build strong connections with their teachers.

Descriptive Statistics of Students’ Perceptions of Learning Outcomes

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation to describe students’ English language learning outcomes in relation to teacher–student rapport. Results from Table 4 showed that respondents generally had a favorable view of teacher-student relationships and their impact on English language learning. The overall mean score was 3.25, and the standard deviation of 1.05 indicated moderate variability in responses. This suggests that students at Laghman University believe that building a relationship with their teachers helps them learn English more effectively.

Table 4. *Levels of English language learning outcomes*

Item	Mean	SD
1. By maintaining a good rapport with my teacher, I am always motivated to learn English for academic success and set high goals.	3.42	1.30
2. With good teacher-student relationships, I have good behavior in the classroom.	3.42	1.39
3. Through a friendly relationship with my teacher, I feel more confident in using English for speaking, writing, reading, and listening.	3.39	1.32
4. Learning occurs best in an environment where there is a positive rapport with my teacher.	3.36	1.26
5. A good rapport between my teacher and me makes me more interested in learning English.	3.36	1.31
6. Overall, I believe a positive teacher-student rapport contributes to better learning outcomes in English.	3.35	1.28
7. My assignments and class materials are relevant to Afghan social, cultural, and educational contexts.	3.31	1.33
8. A good rapport with my teacher creates a relaxing and thriving atmosphere.	3.30	1.23
9. The rapport with my teacher encourages me to be more confident.	3.29	1.32
10. A good rapport with my teacher helped me learn English grammar very easily.	3.28	1.27

11. I perform well when I feel that my teacher is passionate about what they are teaching.	3.27	1.26
12. Most of the time, I perform English language tasks independently after class.	3.27	1.20
13. Maintaining a good rapport, interaction, and communication with my teacher has significantly improved my English pronunciation.	3.26	1.38
14. My teacher always strikes a balance between discipline and friendliness in the classroom.	3.26	1.25
15. Bonding with the lecturer makes me feel prepared for exams and assignments in English courses.	3.22	1.27
16. By maintaining a good rapport with my teacher, my English vocabulary improved significantly during this semester.	3.21	1.32
17. My English communication skills have improved since I built rapport with my English Teacher.	3.21	1.30
18. Through oral and written constructive feedback from my teacher, I noticed improvement in my academic English writing skills.	3.17	1.28
19. My teacher consistently employs a student-centered approach, enabling us to engage in all classroom activities actively.	3.13	1.30
20. The rapport with my teacher influences my emotional and behavioral engagement in class.	3.01	1.22
21. When there is a good rapport between my teacher and me, it is difficult for my teacher to maintain authority.	2.82	1.14
Overall Outcome	3.25	1.05

Specifically, the statements about motivation, classroom behavior, and English proficiency received the highest ratings. For example, respondents strongly agreed with the statement, "By having a solid rapport with my teacher, I am always driven to learn English for academic success and set high objectives," which had a mean score of 3.42. Similarly, the statement "I behave well in the classroom because of positive teacher-student connections" also received a high mean score of 3.42. Mean scores ranged from 3.21 to 3.28, indicating a positive perceived effect of rapport on specific language skills, including grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

This indicates that students feel they can perform better in these areas when they have a positive relationship with their teachers. The statement "When there is a strong rapport between my instructor and me, it is difficult for my teacher to maintain power" had the lowest mean score of 2.82, indicating that respondents disagreed with it. This suggests that students do not see a conflict between maintaining teacher authority and fostering a positive rapport.

Relationship Between Rapport and Learning Outcomes

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between teacher–student rapport and English language learning outcomes ($r = .828$, $p < .001$). This indicates that students who reported a stronger rapport with teachers also tended to report higher English learning outcomes (see Table 5).

Table 5. Correlation between teacher–student rapport and English learning outcomes

Rapport and Learning Outcomes		Rapport	Outcome
Overall Rapport	Pearson Correlation	1	.828**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	119	119
Overall Outcome	Pearson Correlation	.828**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	119	119

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis: Rapport as a Predictor of Learning Outcomes

A simple linear regression was conducted to determine whether teacher–student rapport predicts English language learning outcomes. The overall model was significant, $F(1,117) = 255.23$, $p < .001$, with rapport explaining 68.6% of the variance in outcomes ($R^2 = .686$). Teacher–student rapport was a strong positive predictor of outcomes, $B = .85$, $SE = .05$, $\beta = .83$, $t(117) = 15.98$, $p < .001$ (see Table 6).

Table 6. Regression coefficients predicting English learning outcomes from teacher–student rapport

Model	Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
1	(Constant)	.446	.184		2.424	.017
	Overall Rapport	.852	.053	.828	15.976	.000

The study's findings suggest that students in Laghman University's English Department believe that good teacher-student relationships have a positive impact on their English learning outcomes. The data shows that positive rapport is linked to improved language proficiency, better classroom behavior, and higher motivation. Therefore, fostering a good relationship between teachers and students should be considered an important part of improving English language learning results at Laghman University.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of teacher–student rapport on English language learning outcomes. The findings revealed that a majority of students felt encouraged to share their ideas in the classroom, with a mean score of 3.44, indicating a moderately positive perception. Furthermore, a mean score of 3.42 suggested that students felt motivated and demonstrated positive classroom behavior when a strong rapport with teachers was maintained. These results were further supported by the regression analysis, which showed a high correlation between rapport and learning outcomes ($r = .828$) at Laghman University.

These findings are consistent with Ahmed's (2025) study conducted in Bangladesh, which emphasized that effective rapport-building relies on teachers' empathy, adaptive teaching methods, and cultural responsiveness. Similarly, Himat and Noor (2024) highlighted that instructors hold a positive view of student-centered teaching, actively encourage learner participation, link new lessons to students' prior experiences, and motivate learners to

provide feedback on their learning. The current study also aligns with evidence from the Afghan context, where cultural elements—such as family background and multi-ethnic dynamics—significantly shape classroom rapport. As noted by Atifnigar (2023), these cultural factors often lead to passive participation, particularly among rural students who exhibit higher levels of shyness and lower confidence than their urban counterparts.

The results of this study align with previous research, reinforcing the crucial role of teacher-student rapport in fostering student engagement and motivation. Meng (2021) similarly found that strong relational connections in the classroom enhance student participation and willingness to learn. Likewise, Kahnani and Javed (2024) reported that interpersonal relationships, teacher attitudes, and professional training significantly influence language performance, with rapport emerging as the most dominant factor. In the present study, the unusually high correlation observed ($r = .828$) suggests that rapport is not merely a supportive element but a central driver of academic success, indicating that when students feel respected, understood, and encouraged, their engagement deepens and their learning outcomes improve.

The alignment with Chamani (2024) further underscores the importance of considering cultural and contextual influences when examining rapport. In hierarchical education systems such as Iran and Afghanistan, teachers are traditionally seen as authoritative figures, and classrooms are often characterized by formality and respect. While such cultural norms may sometimes limit open communication, they also highlight how impactful rapport can be when teachers demonstrate empathy within these cultural boundaries. When Afghan students encounter educators who balance authority with approachability, rapport becomes a transformative element rather than a secondary one. This cultural sensitivity is similarly emphasized in the work of Aryaeian and Rezaee (2023), who argue that meaningful connections require teachers to navigate cultural expectations while building trust.

These findings are also consistent with Engki and Ratna (2024), who identified trust, humor, empathy, and encouragement as key components in establishing safe and inclusive learning environments. Similarly, Sánchez et al. (2013) found that students are more willing to discuss academic and personal challenges when teachers show genuine care and interest in their growth. Sun and Shi (2022) add that in EFL contexts, particularly in Asian settings, rapport and teacher support significantly shape student engagement, demonstrating that emotional safety is foundational to active participation.

In terms of performance, the connection between rapport and learning outcomes is clearly evident. Students who reported feeling emotionally connected to their instructors also indicated noticeable improvements in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and writing. This reinforces the argument that academic achievement is deeply linked to emotional security and relational trust. Arrascue (2023) reached similar conclusions, noting that positive teacher-student relationships contribute to academic, behavioral, and emotional development. Likewise, Rahma et al. (2022) found that students thrive in classrooms where they feel safe, supported, and positioned at the center of the learning process.

However, not all feedback was entirely positive. A few students mentioned concerns about unequal treatment or a lack of teacher engagement, suggesting that rapport-building strategies are not consistently applied. This issue aligns with findings from Pan and Yao (2023), who demonstrated that both teacher support and rapport significantly enhance academic engagement, particularly when applied fairly and consistently.

These findings carry meaningful implications for educators, institutions, and policymakers. EFL teachers and university professors are encouraged to incorporate rapport-building strategies into their teaching to improve motivation, participation, and student performance. Educational institutions may consider offering professional development programs to help teachers effectively adopt these strategies. Moreover, curriculum designers can benefit from integrating more student-centered activities that align with learners' cultural contexts and support emotional well-being, ultimately enhancing learning outcomes. Policymakers and education consultants should also recognize the importance of nurturing positive teacher-student relationships as a core component of successful language education programs.

Although this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, it was conducted solely within the English Department of Laghman University, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other faculties or universities in Afghanistan. Second, although a mixed-methods approach is required, a large number of teacher participants in the qualitative interviews was needed, along with observation, to capture teachers' and students' real experiences and fully reflect the diversity of perspectives across the teaching staff. Third, the research did not include classroom observations, which could have provided a more practical and real-time understanding of how rapport unfolds in actual teaching contexts. Lastly, student perspectives were captured only through surveys; including interviews would have added richer, more nuanced insights to complement the teachers' views.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how teacher-student rapport affects English-major students' English learning at the English Department of Laghman University. The results showed a strong positive relationship: students with better relationships with their teachers were more motivated, behaved better in class, and performed well in key skills such as speaking, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Regression analysis also confirmed that rapport is a strong predictor of English learning success, accounting for a large part of why some students do better than others. Overall, the findings show that good teacher-student relationships are not just nice to have; they are essential for effective learning. Beyond the numbers, these results highlight the importance of building positive relationships in Afghan higher education. Teachers who create respectful, culturally aware, and encouraging classrooms help students feel more engaged and confident. There is still room to improve fairness, inclusiveness, and personal attention to make sure all students benefit equally.

Universities and teacher-training programs should focus on teaching strategies for building rapport, including empathy, communication, and student-centered methods. By prioritizing rapport, English departments can boost both academic achievement and the overall learning experience, leading to more caring and effective teaching.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All research data are presented in this paper. Further details can be provided by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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