



STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON RAPPORT IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Journal History

Submitted 17th December 2019

Revised 29th December 2019

Accepted 2nd January 2020

Published 29th January 2020

Keywords:

EFL classroom, Maintaining Rapport, EFL teacher rapport.

ABSTRACT

Rapport is necessary to establish effective teaching and learning process. To maintain the rapport, the EFL teacher needs to find appropriate activities to be conducted in the classroom. Therefore, this study is established to investigate the EFL teacher's activities in maintaining rapport in EFL classroom. By conducting a questionnaire survey to 125 students, the activities conducted by EFL teacher in maintaining rapport are identified. It reveals that the teacher has conducted 19 activities from 20 activities provided in maintaining rapport in EFL classroom based on students' perception. EFL Teacher has not done showing their interest on students completely. EFL teacher needs to emphasize more their interest to students and try to approach them individually through group discussion. Furthermore, EFL teacher can evaluate their teaching activities to foster a positive learning environment. Further research is recommended to investigate the activities done by EFL teachers in maintaining rapport based on the teacher's perception.

INTRODUCTION

A good education is not only about academics but also the positive development in social interaction (Bruney, 2012) since teaching is essentially a process of interaction among teacher and students in a social setting (Çakir, 2010). It determines the success of teaching and learning activity depending



on the interaction between the teacher and the students (Bruney, 2012). Indeed, maintaining the teacher-students relationship is being a concern in classroom to foster positive development on students learning in classroom (Bruney, 2012; Nguyen, 2007; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). This teacher and students' relationship is defined as a rapport in which there is a positive, enjoyable, and respectful relationship (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). It also includes harmonious interaction and communication between teacher and students (Bernieri, 1998) in building trust and respects that leads the students to feel capable, competent, and creative in learning (Brown, 2001).

Teacher-students' relationship gives big effect in holding a success teaching and learning activity. It contributes to teacher's effectiveness and students' learning (Pianta et al., 2012; Sánchez, González, & Martínez, 2013; Swenson, 2010). Bruney's study (2012) reveals the presence of the rapport in the classroom affects the students' view of teacher's performance in arranging activity and establishing any activities in classroom will not be effective if the relationship between the teacher and the students is not established well. Good rapport is categorized as an important factor in student learning and enhancing effective teaching and learning activity (Özer, Atik, Şad, & Kiş, 2015; Swenson, 2010; Webb & Barrett, 2014). It makes the students gain higher achievement (Nguyen, 2007) and create positive attitude from the students toward the learning activity (Pianta et al., 2012). Sánchez et al. (2013), in their study reveals a positive teacher-student relationship influences students' motivation in learning in which students feel more confident and comfortable to approach teacher and share personal and academic issues. If the students feel they have a good relationship with the teacher they will feel comfortable and motivated to pay attention to the teacher (Pianta et al., 2012; Sánchez et al., 2013). It has been shown by studies that positive rapport between teacher and students brings positive impact to teaching and learning activity.

Besides, language learning process in the classroom can be facilitated through teacher and students' interaction. In Nguyen's study (2007), it is revealed that EFL teacher can use target language in giving instruction and guidance to the students and the students learn the target language and use the target language to communicate with the teacher. As the goal of language learning is to use language (Burns, & Richards, 2012; Johnson, 2001) to create and maintain social interaction (Nguyen, 2007), building rapport can be an effective way in communicating with students in target language to encourage them in learning (Swenson, 2010; Webb & Barrett, 2014). Therefore, the relationship between teacher and students can be categorized as a crucial factor in the process of the acquisition of a second language for the students (Sánchez et al., 2013) since the target language is seldom used outside the classroom, and the only input and language use is



in classroom interaction especially in teacher-student interaction (Suryati, 2015). As the result, a positive relationship between teacher and students is needed to build a good language learning environment in the classroom.

In fact, building rapport is not an easy task for EFL teacher to be established in teaching and learning activity (Gebhard, 2009; Webb & Barrett, 2014). Even though it will be automatically maintained after some period of time (Swenson, 2010), especially in face-to-face meeting (Coutrim, 2016; Murphy & Manzanares, 2012), but mostly EFL teacher still faces many difficulties in maintaining the rapport (Gebhard, 2009), such as having not enough time to talk with the students, facing limited English speaker students, and finding difficulty in remembering students' name (pp. 95-97).

To maintain the rapport, the EFL teacher needs to find appropriate strategies to be implemented in the classroom. In building a rapport, a teacher needs to concern on two factors influencing the rapport development. One factor influencing rapport the most is respect. Respect is a vital factor in dealing with any kind of problem behavior appears in classroom (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). Any problem behavior may appear because of the unrealistic learning goal set in the classroom which can be too difficult or too easy for the students. Be realistic with the learning goal is a way to give respect to the students which have different level in learning and language acquisition (Scott & Ytreberg, 2000). Brown (2001) adds that giving respect on their ideas is also necessary to maintain good rapport. It includes the attitude of the teacher in responding the students' talk. The way of teacher talk to students influences the respect of students (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). One example of teacher talk commonly happened in classroom is in giving feedback. Teacher needs to consider in correcting the mistakes carefully without losing any positive effort from the students (Paul, 2006) since not all students are happy to be corrected, but some of them need more support and positive reinforcement (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). Therefore, positive feedback which motivates the students without making them feel down is needed to be enhanced in classroom (Paul, 2006). Beside of teacher talk, another aspect needed to be recognized is teacher's gestures. Gesture, expression, and mime should be appropriate with the language use in classroom (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). Eye contact needed to show interest and attention toward students' talk (Levine & Adelman, 1982) and giving smile build a positive atmosphere around classroom (Paul, 2006). Therefore, a teacher who gives respect to students will show positive attitude towards them and be respectful in handling any problems in classroom (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b).

Another factor gives big influence to rapport development is fairness. Scott & Ytreberg (2000) stated that being fair is also necessary in building



relationship with the students since the students can sense the unfairness from the teacher. Since they are learning a language, they need to have equal chance to practice their language and to be assist by the teacher (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b) whether they are active or inactive learner, and good or bad learner (Paul, 2006). It is necessary for the teacher to give a fair attention to each student in the classroom, not only focusing on the bad one, but also concern with the good one (Paul, 2006). Treating the students equally is helpful in establishing and maintaining rapport (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b).

Therefore, this study is established to investigate the EFL teacher's strategies in maintaining teacher-students' rapport in English as Foreign Language classroom. The research question proposed in this study is what kind of activities has been the EFL teacher held to maintain relationship with the students in teaching and learning activity?

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted using a quantitative research. In this study, data were collected from 125 senior high school students in Bandung, Indonesia. This study focuses on rapport happened in classroom from the students' perception. Since student's perceptions have an important impact on their learning (Fleming, 2003), therefore, this study investigated young adult students' perception toward rapport in classroom.

The data were collected through questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey designed based on theoretical construction and principles on activities maintaining the rapport in classroom (Brown, 2001; Bruney, 2012; Harmer, 2007a; 2007b; Levine & Adelman, 1982; Paul, 2006; Pianta et al., 2012; Sánchez et al., 2013; Scott & Ytreberg; 2000). The questionnaire survey consisted of 20 statements which used a five-Likert scale to indicate their agreement with statements regarding teacher's activities in maintaining the rapport in the classroom, from strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=5). The items of questionnaire are constructed in the students' first language so that the students can more accurately self-assess their performance compared to when the items are delivered in their target language.

In order to establish the reliability of the instrument used, the questionnaire survey was evaluated by two experts for face and content validity. Their comments and suggestion were used to revise the instrument and then the revised version was used for data collection. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument used, the reliability test was analyzed with Cronbach's alpha through SPSS 19.0. The reliability analysis



was conducted and the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of instrument was .791. Because of higher than .7, the acceptable of internal consistency (Goerge & Mallery as cited in Gliem & Gliem, 2003), the instrument can be considered as a reliable instrument to be used for study sample.

The students' responses on the questionnaire were then analyzed through percentage of each statements mentioned in questionnaire. Then, after receiving the percentage, the interpretation of the result was analyzed descriptively with related theory and research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

From 125 responses analyzed, the result can be seen in Table 1. From students' perceptions shown in Table 1, the research question of activities done by teacher in maintaining rapport can be answered. Table 1 shows that the EFL teacher has done 19 activities from 20 activities provided in maintaining rapport in teaching and learning activity.

Table 1. Students' perception on teacher's activities in maintaining rapport in EFL classroom

(SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Uncertain, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree)

No	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
	Teacher knows my name and my class.	59 (47.20)	59 (47.20)	2 (1.60)	5 (4.00)	0 (0.00)
	Teacher is humble to me in classroom.	58 (46.40)	63 (50.40)	3 (2.40)	1 (0.80)	0 (0.00)
	Teacher use polite and appropriate language in classroom.	67 (53.60)	58 (46.40)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Teacher often gives smile.	52 (41.60)	71 (56.80)	1 (0.80)	1 (0.80)	0 (0.00)
	Teacher will laugh when there is something happened inside the classroom, but not laughing at me or the other students.	38 (30.40)	76 (60.80)	6 (4.80)	2 (2.40)	2 (1.60)
	Teacher shows his or her interest of me when I study in the classroom.	9 (7.20)	57 (45.60)	22 (17.60)	35 (28.00)	2 (1.60)
	Teacher looks at me when he or she talks to me.	43 (34.40)	66 (52.80)	11 (8.80)	5 (4.00)	0 (0.00)
	Teacher accepts my idea and respects it.	34 (27.20)	75 (60.00)	15 (12.00)	1 (0.80)	0 (0.00)

Teacher listens to my utterances properly.	41 (32.80)	81 (64.80)	2 (1.60)	1 (0.80)	0 (0.00)
Teacher asks previous topic I have learned.	49 (39.20)	66 (52.80)	6 (4.80)	4 (3.20)	0 (0.00)
Teacher invites me to solve questions together.	51 (40.80)	63 (50.40)	8 (6.40)	3 (2.40)	0 (0.00)
Teacher gives compliment to me when I can answer the question.	30 (24.00)	81 (64.80)	7 (5.60)	7 (5.60)	0 (0.00)
Teacher gives feedback or evaluates what I have done in classroom.	29 (23.20)	79 (63.20)	8 (6.40)	9 (7.20)	0 (0.00)
Teacher is fair in classroom in giving help to me or my friends.	63 (50.40)	56 (44.80)	6 (4.80)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Teacher does not differentiate the smart students or not.	88 (70.40)	35 (28.00)	2 (1.60)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Teacher is active in helping me or my friends who face difficulty in learning.	69 (55.20)	48 (38.40)	8 (6.40)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Teacher gives motivation in learning English.	64 (51.20)	55 (44.00)	6 (4.80)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Teacher trusts me if I can learn English and understand it.	55 (44.00)	62 (49.60)	7 (5.60)	1 (0.80)	0 (0.00)
Sometimes, teacher shares his or her feeling of my class.	35 (28.00)	56 (44.80)	19 (15.20)	12 (9.60)	3 (2.40)
Teacher often shares his or her experience in classroom.	48 (38.40)	48 (38.40)	21 (16.80)	5 (4.00)	3 (2.40)

Many students believe that their teacher knows their name and their class (94.40%). The students feel that their teacher is humble (96.80%) and use polite and appropriate language in talking with them (100%) in classroom. The teacher often gives smile to them (98.40%) and laughs together with them (91.20%) in classroom. The students also feel that their teacher is looking at them when the teacher talks to them (87.20%). They also believe their teacher respects them by accepting their idea (87.20%) and listen to them properly (97.60%). Besides, they are often asked by the teacher about previous topic learned (92.00%). The teacher solves the questions together with them (91.20%) and gives praise to them when they can answer the question (88.80%). They recognize of receiving feedback from their teacher (86.40%). They feel their teacher is fair in helping them (95.20%), without differentiating them based on their proficiency level (98.40%), and be active in helping them in learning (93.60%). Their teacher gives motivation in learning English (95.20%) and trusts them if they can learn English (93.60%). They also listen to experience sharing (76.80%) done by the teacher in classroom.

One activity which is not completely done by EFL teacher in maintaining rapport in classroom is showing their interest in their students. Only 66 students (52.80%) feel that their teacher shows his or her interest in them in teaching. 22 students (17.60%) cannot decide whether their teacher shows the interest or not and 37 students (29.60%) does not feel their teacher's interest in them. It indicates the EFL teacher has less interest in his or her students when he or she teaches in class.

DISCUSSION

Based on literature review, 20 activities provided can give positive influence on teaching and learning activity and brings positive environment in learning. From the findings above, it was found that the teacher has done the 19 activities from 20 activities provided in maintaining rapport in EFL classroom.

The EFL teacher knows their students' name and class. It fulfills a principle of maintaining rapport from Harmer (2007a; 2007b). Harmer (2007a; 2007b) mentioned that knowing student's name is necessary to establish good rapport with students since it makes the students feel pleased. By knowing their students' name, the teacher has developed a positive sense of community in the classroom including showing their cares about their students and developing a sense of trust with their students (Glenz, 2014). Recognizing students is not only knowing the name, but also knowing their ability in learning. Therefore, there is a need to know their ability in order to set the learning outcome based on their background knowledge (Harmer, 2007a) by asking their previous topic learned and aware about students' characteristic and ability in acquiring the language (Manning, 2006). The EFL teacher has asked the students' about their previous topic lesson and it indicates that the EFL teacher has recognized their students well.

The EFL teacher is humble and use polite and appropriate language in talking with their students in classroom. It fulfills three principles of maintaining rapport; 1) having respect to the students (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b), 2) establishing ongoing relational supports (Planta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012), and 3) the way of teacher talk (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). Being a humble teacher can be recognized from the way of greeting their students. In a study, Allday and Pakurar (2007) revealed that greeting the students at the door of classroom, with their name and praise them, increases student on-task behavior. It shows that greeting students' give positive effect on their learning. Besides, having polite and appropriate language in classroom is also necessary in teaching. Harmer (2007a) mentioned the way teacher



talking to the students is a crucial teacher's skill. The teacher needs to consider the kind of language used, the topic going to be talked, and the manner of talking (Harmer, 2007a). It indicates that the EFL teacher has considered appropriate language which can be easily understood by students and have positive manner in delivering the language.

However, to be successful in communication, especially in teaching, teacher needs to be able in using not only the verbal communication but also in non-verbal communication (Behjat, Bayat, & Kargar, 2014). Non-verbal communication includes facial expression, eye contact, body postures, and gestures (Ozieblo, 2013; Stamatis, 2011) which is often used for gaining attention (Geng, 2011) and emphasizing the meaning of words in utterance (Harmer, 2007b; Levine & Adelman, 1982) in face-to-face interactions (Ozieblo, 2013), such as having eye contact (Levine & Adelman, 1982) to gain students' attention and positive attitude toward teacher, giving smile (Paul, 2006) to affect students' positive perception of the teacher (Beebe, 1980), or using facial expression to express certain emotion and feeling (Ozieblo, 2013). The EFL teacher has given smile to the students in conducting teaching and learning activity and has looked at students when talking with them in classroom. It fulfills the principle of giving smile promoted by Paul (2006) and a principle of having eye contact suggested by Levine & Adelman (1982). Thus, it indicates the EFL teacher has conducted a successful communication with the students in non-verbal communication.

The EFL teacher has laughed with their students. It fulfills a principle suggested by Brown (2001) and it also indicates the teacher has shown good sense of humor in classroom. Sharing humor and laugh can be an appropriate strategy in approaching the students in classroom. Humor can be used for reducing stress (MacAdam, 1985; Steele, 1998), relieving monotonous and boredom classroom, helps students stay tuned in learning, keeping their attention, and building their confidence (Lovorn, 2008) which unlocks social barriers between teacher and student (MacAdam, 1985) and creates a more positive classroom environment (Steele, 1998). It shows that the EFL teacher has created a positive climate with relaxed situation in classrooms.

The EFL teacher has done an idea sharing session in classroom. It fulfills two principles of maintaining rapport suggested by Brown (2001); 1) openly soliciting students' ideas and feelings and 2) valuing and respecting what students think and say. Sharing idea with students is an essential activity to be involved in teaching and learning process. By asking for students' ideas and thoughts, and also providing opportunities for students to share their idea (Pianta et al., 2012), the students can express their ideas



and opinions freely (Sánchez et al., 2013) and the teacher should help the students to elaborate their ideas more (Suryati, 2015). It indicates that the EFL teacher has succeed in helping the students in elaborating their idea in learning.

The EFL teacher has listened to their students properly. Listening properly to the students will raise teacher's awareness on students' needs and it fulfills two principles of maintaining rapport; 1) listening properly to the students as an individual (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b), and 2) valuing and respecting what students think and say (Brown, 2001). The teacher needs to listen properly to the students as an individual to make a reflection on the way of teaching, whether the technique is being liked by the students, any activities motivate the students to learn, or the students' reaction on the teacher's teaching style (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). The importance of listening and paying attention to students' explanations contributes to build an equal communication between teacher and the students (Sánchez et al., 2013). By listening to their students properly, it indicates that the EFL teacher has done teaching reflection and has promoted an equal communication in classroom interaction.

The EFL teacher has built a cooperative work with students by solving questions together with them. This activity indicates cooperativeness between teacher and students and it fulfill a principle from Brown (2011) who suggested that to work with the students as a team. Teamwork creates positive relationships which are necessary for knowledge sharing and effective discussion (Georgiadou, Siakas, & Berki, 2006). Working cooperatively with students as a team makes the students tend to be less disruptive behavior in class, be more positive, have supportive relationships, and have more positive attitudes toward learning activity (Felder & Brent, 2007). The interaction between teacher and students will raise students' effort (Davis, 1999) and foster their engagement in learning (Brank & Wylie, 2013). Thus, it indicates that the EFL teacher has created a cooperation work with students and involves them in enhancing effective teaching and learning activity.

Teacher has given feedback to students in classroom by praising them, giving evaluation, and giving motivation. Feedback can raise students' awareness on their errors (Abdollahifam, 2014; Kazemipour, 2014; Maarof, Yamat, & Li, 2011) and informs them about their learning progress and their improvement for the weaknesses (Abdollahifam, 2014; Alavi & Kaivanpanah, 2007; Maarof et al., 2011; Tran, 2007). Therefore, the teacher needs to ensure that the students receive a clear and meaningful feedback (Davis, 1999) which is positive and motivates the students (Paul, 2006) and does not hurt students' feeling (Abdollahifam, 2014). By giving feedback in

classroom, the EFL teacher has brought learning awareness into classroom and motivated students to learn better.

The EFL teacher has been fair and equal in treating the students in classroom by giving help to any students without differentiating the high and low achieving students. It fulfills the principle of being fair in classroom by Scott & Ytreberg (2000) who stated that being fair is also necessary in building relationship with the students since the students can sense the unfairness from the teacher. Since they are learning a language, the students need to have equal chance to practice their language and to be assist by the teacher (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b) whether they are active or inactive learner, and good or bad learner (Paul, 2006). It is necessary for the teacher to give a fair attention to each student in the classroom, not only focusing on the bad one, but also concern with the good one (Paul, 2006). Treating the students equally is helpful in establishing and maintaining rapport (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b) and it contributes to enhance a balance amount of interaction between students and the teacher in classroom (Sánchez et al., 2013). By seeking help for the students, the teacher has been being fair in treating students who need help and face difficulty in learning (Bruney, 2012). Thus, the EFL teacher is being fair and equal in assisting students in learning.

The EFL teacher has built the trust in their students. The trust between teacher and students is essential as a fundamental concept of effective learning (Özer et al., 2015) and it fulfills a principle proposed by Sánchez et al. (2013). Trusting the student makes student feel more confident and comfortable to approach the teacher and share personal and academic issues with the teacher (Sánchez et al., 2013; Bruney, 2012). Having trust in the classroom creates a safe environment for learning in which “students can grow and learn and develop personally, socially, emotionally, and academically under the direction of their teacher” and the teacher can “spend less time with classroom management issues” (Bruney, 2012). It indicates that the EFL teacher has successfully created a comfortable situation between teacher and students in sharing personal and academic issues to improve students’ confident in learning.

The EFL teacher has shared their feeling and experience to their students in classroom. These fulfill the principle of sharing feeling and storytelling proposed by Brueny (2012). Sharing feeling with students encourages the students to trust and learn from the teacher (Bruney, 2012) and they will feel more confident and comfortable to approach the teacher and share personal and academic issues with the teacher (Sánchez et al., 2013; Bruney, 2012). Furthermore, when a student shares his or her feelings, it makes a positive perspective toward the teacher (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009)



and their feelings and opinions should be valued (Bruney, 2012). While sharing experiences with students increases students' interest the relevance of the material into real life context (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009). Gordon (2009 in Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009) suggests that "teachers should promote experiences that require students to become active learners". Sharing experience may promote awareness of learning responsibility (Tinto, 2003) in which experience shared should be followed by reflection on previous learning to transform the students' previous understanding into some applicable manner (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009) for further learning. Thus, the EFL teacher has conducted an intimate moment with students to share feeling and experience together and building trustful relationship.

However, there is one activity has not been done conducted by EFL teacher in maintaining rapport in classroom. The EFL teacher has not done showing their interest in students completely in classroom. Brown (2011) mentioned that a successful rapport building including the teacher showing interest in each student as a person. However, it cannot be fulfilled by the teacher who has large group of students in a class (Harmer, 2007b). Gebhard (2009) proposes a way to solve this problem by paying attention on students' social and emotional needs. However, only paying attention to certain students will impact on attention equality among the students. Another solution is also given by Aubrey (2013). He suggested that the teacher to divide the students into groups and to show teacher's interest towards their learning, the teacher can walk around the group, listen to their discussion, and give positive feedback towards students' opinion in group. This can be an effective way since teacher can focus on group discussion and also pay attention to students' explanation. Besides, being listened to the teacher will influence students' perception of gaining teacher's interest (Harmer, 2007a; 2007b). Therefore, the teacher needs to emphasize more their interest in students and try to approach them individually through group discussion (Aubrey, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed the activities done by EFL teacher in Indonesia to maintain rapport in classroom. The EFL teacher has done the 19 activities from 20 activities provided in maintaining rapport in EFL classroom. The EFL teacher has: known students' name and class, been humble, used polite and appropriate language, smiled, laughed with students, had eyed contact with students, accepted students' idea, listened to students properly, asked previous topic learned by students, invited students to solve questions together, given compliment, given feedback and evaluation, been fair in giving help, been undifferentiated the students,



been active in helping students, given motivation in learning English, trusted the students, shared feeling, and shared experience. One activity which has not been done by the EFL Teacher is showing their interest in students completely in classroom. The teacher needs to emphasize more their interest in students and try to approach them individually through group discussion. Furthermore, EFL teachers can reflect on their own teaching and find additional activities to enhance positive rapport to foster positive learning environment. Additionally, the result of this study is based on students' perception only. The teacher's perception may give different result in implementing activities in maintaining rapport. Therefore, further research is recommended to investigate the activities done by EFL teacher in maintaining rapport based on teacher's perception.

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