

# Positive Classroom Climate: An Effective Foreign Language Pedagogy in the Perspectives of Experiences and Observations

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## ABSTRACT

The researches in the past have revealed that the positive and congenial atmosphere of learning in the classroom can affect students' motivation, engagement, cooperation and performance. So it is sine qua non on the part of the language instructor in particular to create a healthy congenial environment of learning in the class. Whether the class is the open space of the college campus, in a large lecture hall, a small seminar, or a laboratory section, a learning environment where all feel safe, valued, and respected is necessary for students to achieve and demonstrate their full potential. Needless to say; uncongenial classroom environment can be an obstacle to learning growth as well to learning outcomes, it is essential to understand how to create and sustain a positive climate in the classroom. Language instructors have realized and noticed the significance of the positive Classroom in teaching and its effectiveness in accomplishing the course objectives. The positive atmosphere have a positive effects and consequences in the students' comprehension and adoptability as well as intake of the second/ foreign language. Classroom climate is a broad construct, made up of students' feelings about their instructor and the peer group. Although there is a plethora of research on the effects of classroom climate on students' outcomes. This paper will thus provide strategies to help instructors promote positive interpersonal relationships in the classroom, which increases student connectedness, thereby improving classroom climate. Foreign language instructors should always consider how their behaviors may be interpreted by their disciples and keep the classroom climate in mind when creating resources, preparing instructional materials, developing courses and lesson plans. Doing so is likely to increase positive outcomes for students as well as levels of satisfaction for the instructor.

**Key words:** Classroom climate; interpersonal relationships; rapport, instructor-student relationships, learning outcomes, instructor behaviors, affective teaching and learning

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In a standardized teaching and learning frame work we often do not pay attention beyond the existing pedagogical strategies into the classroom. Being language instructors we feel that there are other pedagogical dimensions and aspects too in our teaching professions that strike to our minds. Language instructors, linguists and applied linguists as well as educators have to fluidly adapt to constant interruptions, create new instructional as well as remedial teaching and learning materials, apply latest technologies, speculate and initiate in accordance with the changing requirements of the target group. Positive learning environments don't just happen on their own, they must be created consciously by the language instructors by college administrators from the beginning of the semester.



It is a fact that apart from the instructional strategies there are other important issue or aspect that play an effective role in foreign language pedagogy. Needless to say, learning is not simply to provide information to the target group. It is something beyond the learning or course contents, syllabus and information. The main objectives of any foreign language educational programme is to motivate, inspire and encourage the entire classto acquire the target

language by applying whatever means are available or possible. Our focus and goal at the outset of a foreign language educational programme should be that our disciples at the end of a programme must accomplish the required objectives in the concerned courses. Any foreign language educational programme classroom is generally a multidimensional environment comprising psychological and social interactions among a diverse academic community. Moos (1979) concluded that “the social-ecological setting in which students function can affect their attitudes and moods, their behavior and performance, their self-concept and general sense of well-being” (p. 3). The social-ecological setting of the classroom, often referred to as classroom climate, encompasses its social and emotional aspects. According to Norton (2008), the association between classroom climate and students’ academic performance has been well researched. Classroom climate is also the best predictor of students’ overall satisfaction with their college (Graham & Gisi, 2000). Instructors help develop the classroom climate and can engage in several interpersonal behaviors that contribute to a positive one (Frisby, Berger, Burchett, Herovic, & Strawser, 2014); specifically, those behaviors that build a strong rapport with students. Good rapport between language instructors and students is essential to a positive classroom climate and leads to better student outcomes.

## 2. CLASSROOM CLIMATE DEFINED AND EXPLAINED IN THE BROADER PERSPECTIVES

What is a Positive college Climate? A positive college climate in a broader sense felt or exists when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust. A positive college climate affects everyone associated with the college campuses, students, staff, parents, and the



community. Hopefully creating a positive learning climate in the college campuses in general will result into the congenial learning atmosphere which will consequently enhance the understanding of the students and pave for the real academic growth. Foreign language instructors need to relentlessly work toward improving their campuses’ climate, culture, and conditions so that students’ learning is improved in a desired way.

Numerous studies have concluded that classroom environment, both physical and emotional, deeply impacts upon student attainment (Frank, 2010). Wubbels (Marzano, 2007) argues that the foundation for building a positive classroom environment and relationships with students stem from the promotion of two key concepts: *the dominance of the teacher*, and *the fostering of a cooperative environment*.

Creating a safe and inclusive classroom climate for diversity requires effort long before a course begins. The teachers engaged in teaching English as foreign language should take steps during the planning of the course in order to help make a diverse set of students feel safe, valued, confident and respected.

In the light of the decades of observations and experiences in teaching English as a foreign language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the following issues emerged as important and need attention while creating an inclusive classroom environment for all students.

Building a positive teaching and learning climate refers to create the conditions in the entire classroom to work and learn mutually, cooperatively and effectively, feeling safe, motivated and satisfied with their learning outcomes and thereafter to contribute to the improvements in the educational output. The researches in the past have proved that the climate of our educational institutions have a tremendous impact on students’ behaviour and educational accomplishments. A positive and an effective classroom climate in general include a sense of full respect, dignity, security and safety, engagement and humour, confident, well-motivated etc. Needless to say, mutual respect is one of the important ingredients of an effective classroom climate.

Developing the sense of humor and nurturing a quality humor both among students and teachers, are ways in which school would get more value, in the sense that it would provide the necessary tools to create and maintain wellness, to stimulate thought, imagination, positive emotions etc. as goals or targets of an authentic education.

For an effective and congenial classroom climate both the peer group and the language instructors have a right to be treated with respect in the classroom. All of them share a common responsibility in terms of respect. This will pave the way for the well-disciplined environment of teaching and learning in the college campus including the classroom.

Our college students need a safe, caring and psychologically stress free environment in which they could speculate, innovate, and also explore concepts, feelings, ideas and issues. We must ensure in the beginning of the semester that the college campuses should be very friendly, feel, free from ego, taking care of each other, free to speak, express their

ideas, emotions and feelings etc. A learning climate should be free from all kinds of social evils like ridicule, teasing, taunting or other humiliations. The students should be left independent to express their feelings, ideas, emotions etc. while maintaining the ethics.

Class engagement and cooperative learning stimulates a sense of anticipation about the concerned topics and learning activities, and sharing all those emotions and enthusiasm with the entire class. The language instructors should ensure a sense of trust and confidence among the peer group. When students feel that their learning needs are being met, they feel excitement about what they are doing in and outside the class. A proper classroom and college environment climate will facilitate the active participation of the students and the teachers in the entire learning and teaching processes.

The researchers have done extensive studies in the use of humor in the college classroom. It has been proved beneficial for the students. (Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez & Liu, 2011; Garner, 2006; Huss & Estep, 2016; Pollio, 2002), Needless to say; humour is a life-management skill. Students—and teachers— who can see the lighter side of things manage stress more effectively. It normally relates to psychological stress management.

There is a need to create a healthy climate and consequently developing a plan for preventing and correcting undesired and inappropriate behaviours among the students in the college campuses.

Positive feedback should instill in the students a sense of trust, confidence, acceptance and appreciation, and may at times be offered with a touch of humour. Positive feedback includes positive reinforcements. Encouragement from teachers can be an effective way to make students feel appreciated and there after rewarded in a manners possible. Praise to the individual or the class as a whole must be within the defined boundaries and justified to a greater extent otherwise it would have negative impact on the students' behaviors and academic outcome.

The classroom climate is a reflection of students' opinions of their academic experience (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). This includes students' perceptions of the rigor of the class, their interactions with their instructor and class peers, and their involvement in the class. Although each student will develop his or her individual sense of the classroom environment, there is also a community, or collective, sense among the students and the instructor, so the classroom climate is a general feeling shared by all in the class (Fraser & Treagust, 1986). Students' perceptions often define the classroom climate because their exposure to multiple learning environments and their many opportunities to form impressions give them a credible vantage point from which to make judgments (Fraser & Treagust, 1986).

A few factors that contribute in creating a positive learning environment are establishing a supportive learning culture, addressing a learner's needs and encouraging a student's involvement in all activities. Also, classrooms can be made visually appealing by using bright colours on the walls, filling up bulletin boards with students' work and thematic learning posters. Additionally, classroom seating needs to be arranged such that students can learn individually as well as participate in a group activity.

Teachers should keep in mind that the classroom is a child's second home and therefore, they should make efforts to make students feel as comfortable as possible. Teachers should strive to create an environment that is more conducive to engagement and learning. A classroom environment that is not positive and full of restrictions and rigid rules impairs learning by narrowing a student's focus and inhibiting his/her ability to explore multiple viewpoints and solve problems. A positive classroom environment helps improve attention, reduce anxiety, and supports emotional and behavioural regulation of students.

### **3. BEYOND TEACHING STRATEGIES: PAYING ATTENTION TO THE INTERPERSONAL ASPECTS OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS:**

The term "rapport" lexically refers to "a friendly relationship in which people understand each other very well", and in the context of teaching and learning, it means the relationship that the students have among themselves on the one hand and between teachers and students on the other hand. That is to say, the maintenance of a positive, enjoyable, respectful and socio-cultural relationship among the students themselves and with their teacher is the subject of good rapport.

Teachers need to find creative ways to teach the language and increase the students' motivation to learn the language and eventually appreciate language. It has been claimed that the more learners are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated the more they are independent, active, participating, autonomous and successful. One of teacher's main aims, therefore, should be to help students to sustain their motivation using different activities or making them remind a variety of factors that can create a desire to learn. It means there are number of methods

that English instructors can use to motivate students in class and outside and they (instructors) should flexibly imply the most suitable methods for the class. Kabilan (2000) stated "Teacher should develop mutual relationship with their learners". Thus, building good relation with learner by the teacher for learning and teaching process is a practical/

# Rapport

natural way of arousing curiosity in them to learn more and better. Motivation of the students also depend largely on their perception of what the teacher thinks of them and how they have treated. His/her behavior influences the behavior of the students and directly affects learning outcomes. It is also a fact that teaching and learning style or process with good rapport improves attitudes, behavior, motivation and learning.

Teaching is about formal as well as informal relationships. Positive rapport means having good relationships, and as teachers, one of our important goals is to build a classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable and willing to learn. When positive classroom rapport exists, students feel a sense of belonging and are prepared to work and share information confidently together. Rapport building, as a relationship variable, has recently drawn the attention of linguists, pedagogues, academicians, scholars and language instructors in instructional settings (e.g., Catt, Miller, & Schallenkamp, 2007; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frisby & Myers, 2008; Nguyen, 2007). Frisby and Myers (2008) support this claim and assert that instructor-student rapport is an understudied phenomenon.

Interpersonal communication exists in every sphere of life and its significance in a particular teaching/ learning and working environment. Dobransky and Fymier (2004) support this assertion by claiming that teacher-student relationships in the classroom are often interpersonal in nature. Needless to say, rapport building play a significant role in achieving the prescribed learning as well as educational objectives in a course syllabus/ curriculum. Many researchers in the findings of their researches pinpointed that interpersonal relationship building is necessary for the effective transmission of ideas between instructors and students to occur. One such study is done by Worley, Titsworth, Worley, and Cornett-Devito (2007) in which they state that instructor-student relationships are not only important for effective communication to take place, but are vital for student learning. Tsui (1996) also notes, "Establishing a good relationship with students is extremely important in creating a conducive learning atmosphere in the classroom" (p. 164). Extensive studies in the past have examined this question by studying instructor-student relationships and the learning outcomes associated with certain behaviors. A wide variety of behaviors are associated with positive classroom outcomes, including self-disclosure (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007), humor (Gorham & Christophel, 1990), non-verbal immediacy, (Frymier & Houser, 2000), clarity (Chesebro & McCroskey, 1998), fairness (Faranda & Clark, 2004), and rapport building (Frisby & Martin, 2010).

As an Assistant Professor in the department of English, college of Science and Arts, Alnamas, University of Bisha since a decade we administer numerous quizzes, blackboard assignments and mid-term tests to the students' evaluations, in prescribed courses at various levels in a semester. The students argue with the teacher regarding their marks and question his judgement about a given marks or low achievements. They see their mid-term tests papers and argue with the teacher about their low marks. Rapport is, in essence, the quality of the working relationship between an instructor and his or her students. In addition, there is ample research proving that rapport plays a significant role in teaching and learning (Fleming 2003).

It cannot be denied that in a foreign language education programme every language instructor might be trying his level best to maintain a good teacher taught relation during the course of teaching. But at the same time it is possible that he might forget to take into consideration the some other significant and indispensable aspects that play an important role in building relationship for effective teaching/learning. Instructors strive to encourage students' learning and to build a satisfying relationship with students (Ellis, 2004). However, Ellis argued that the primary job of an instructor is to promote learning, and thus called for more research to identify the instructor behaviors that contribute to that primary goal of promoting learning. The authors argued that positive instructor behaviors evoke affect toward the instructor and the class, which then enhances cognitive learning. There are others scholars like (Dwyer et al., 2004; Nuthall, 2004) who countered that the focus should not only be on instructors, that student- student interactions should be assessed for their contribution to learning outcomes. The classroom is made up of multiple interpersonal relationships, which contribute to the construction of a unique community. Generally, a positive classroom experience is associated with positive academic outcomes at the college level including adjustment, learning outcomes, and retention (Bean & Eaton, 2001; McKinney, McKinney, Franiuk, & Schweitzer, 2006; Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan 2007; Schaps, Lewis, & Watson, 1997; White, 2002; Zhang, 2004).

Rapport is a feeling between two people encompassing a mutual, trusting, and prosocial bond, and students have reported that rapport with pupils is a fundamental characteristic of any successful instructor (Catt, Miller, & Schallenkamp, 2007). Teaching is a rapport-intensive field (Jorgenson, 1992) where both instructor and students enter the classroom with relational goals (Frymier, 2007). Rapport is built and a positive classroom climate is developed when instructors and students co-construct a learning environment that encourages active student participation (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). The development of rapport and a positive classroom climate has been linked to positive student outcomes, such as promoting student motivation and diminishing student apprehension (Ellis, 2004). Engaging in rapport-building behaviors has been shown to positively influence students' opinions of instructor credibility and students' evaluations of instruction (Schrodt, Turman, & Soliz, 2006). For example, using the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson, Ryan, & Pugh, 2010), instructor rapport was found to account for 54% of the variance in end-of-semester student ratings of instruction (Richmond, Berglund, Epelbaum, & Kelin, 2015). Additionally, Richmond et al. found that students' self-reported course engagement and their perceptions of professor humor added only 4% and



1% of variance respectively to end-of-semester student ratings of instruction. Instructors should remember that communication with their students is both interpersonal as well as content-driven (Frymier & Houser, 2000), meaning that instructors not only influence what students learn but play a crucial role in developing rapport and a positive classroom climate. Students who rate their instructors high in rapport also report that their instructors convey caring by expressing concern for how well they learn, create an atmosphere that encourages student effort and commitment, clearly communicate course expectations, and stimulate their interest in and enthusiasm for the subject (Hoyt & Eun-Joo, 2002). Such rapport-building communication behaviors include confirming behaviors, which are “the transactional process by which teachers communicate to students that they are endorsed, recognized, and acknowledged as valuable, significant individuals” (Ellis, 2000, p. 266).

Instructors can utilize several confirming behaviors to convey care and develop rapport (Ellis, 2000, 2004). First, instructors respond to questions, which verbally and nonverbally communicates interest in students’ comments. This occurs in class, during office hours, or electronically, demonstrating the instructors’ accessibility outside of class. Instructors demonstrate interest in and communicate concern for students, whether regarding academic or personal matters. Such interest can be expressed toward the whole class (e.g., “Because of the low quiz grades, I want to review the material from last week to make sure it is clear before we move on) or individually (e.g., “Your high absenteeism is concerning because I’m afraid you won’t be able to complete the required assignments”). Students have reported that instructors who help build rapport and communicate concern and interest do so by praising student work, actions, or participation; engaging in informal conversation with students before or after class; utilizing the terms *we* or *our class*; and asking students about their feelings regarding assignments (Ellis, 2000, 2004).

Instructors can engage in many teaching practices to help develop rapport with their students and demonstrate warmth and openness, reinforce student participation, and show clear organization (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007). For example, the use of humor can aid in building rapport with students, possibly because it makes professors seem more approachable (Frymier, Wanzer, & Wojtaszyk, 2007). Humor may also help clarify the content, which, in turn, may increase students’ capability to process the information (Wanzer, Frymier, & Irwin, 2010). Rather than infusing humor into all aspects of the class, instructors can find subtle ways to add humor wherever they feel comfortable. Humor can include funny stories and comments, appropriate jokes, or professional humor, such as mnemonic devices, cartoons to illustrate course content, puns or riddles, top 10 lists, and comic verses. Students can also use humor, such as sharing their experience about a comical moment in a classroom (Berk, 1996). Interestingly, instructor use of self-deprecating humor is positively associated with learning, possibly because it may be unexpected and therefore gains students’ attention (Wanzer, et al., 2010).

Another way for instructors to develop rapport and communicate interest and concern to students is by talking openly about themselves in class, using appropriate self-disclosure (Hosek & Thompson, 2009), which increases students’ perception of a comfortable classroom climate (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007). Brookfield (2006) claims that instructor self-disclosure illuminates an instructor’s personhood to students, which is “the perceptions students have that their teachers are flesh and blood human beings with lives and identities outside the classroom” (p. 71). Another way for instructors to reveal their personal identities to their students is to show how they apply course material and skills in their own work and lives and to describe their own fears and struggles related to learning new material.

In fact, online self-disclosure (e.g., via web pages or social media) has been found to have the same positive effects on students’ learning and motivation as in-class self-disclosure (O’Sullivan, Hunt, & Lippert, 2004; Mazer et al., 2007). Conversely, instructors who engage in disconfirming behaviors may not develop a good rapport with their students, and their classroom climate may not be as positive. For example, students have reported that it is difficult to build rapport with instructors who neglect to learn students’ names, are inconsistent in their policies or practices, or are unresponsive to student questions (Webb & Barrett, 2014). Engaging in these disconfirming behaviors may lead to more negative student outcomes. For example, if an instructor engages in offensive behaviors, such as verbal aggression, they are evaluated less positively and are viewed as less trustworthy by students, because these behaviors are negatively associated with students’ perception of the classroom climate (Myers & Rocca, 2001).

Students who perceive the classroom climate as less personalized, satisfying, task oriented, involving, cohesive, and individualized are more likely to cheat and to justify cheating behaviors (Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999). As the preceding research shows, instructors who develop positive rapport with their students help create a positive classroom climate. When instructors engage in interpersonal interactions that demonstrate that students are valued and cared for, it has a profound impact on student outcomes. Just as it would be difficult to develop an exhaustive list of all rapport-building behaviors, it would be equally difficult for instructors to engage in all such behaviors in every class. Rather, the goal is to keep some rapport-building behaviors in mind and infuse them into the teaching of course material and communications with students. When instructors establish positive instructor-student relationships, focus on the students and their needs, and strike a balance between being challenging and being caring (Pratt, 2002), their students will demonstrate better academic outcomes.

#### 4. CREATING A CONNECTED CLASSROOM: A SINE QUA NON TO ENHANCE THE BETTER CONGENIAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

At the outset of teaching L2, the focus of a language instructor should be to build the entire class for a successful, productive and responsible future. Needless to say, mobile devices increase our connectivity to people, places and things. Our students will become successful digital citizens who can solve problems in collaboration with others while producing innovative solutions and sharing them in creative ways. Connected learning will promote the following learning outcomes viz; *Creativity, Collaboration, Problem Solving*

**What is a Connected Classroom?** In a connected classroom, teachers and students are able to make use of technology for a variety of learning opportunities, such as:

- collaborating with their peers from around the world
- taking virtual field trips to far-off museums, national monuments, zoos, aquariums and historical sites
- getting instant, face-to-face homework help through video collaboration
- connecting with leading educational organizations
- learning remotely through interactive online courses



In digital era generally we see that in the colleges, connected classrooms use a high-speed internet connection, devices and equipment viz; a projector and screen), video collaboration technology, webcams and microphones to bring participants together. New technologies in the classroom offer exciting opportunities for students to make meaningful connections with the outside world from the comfort and protection of their college environment. The information age opens a world of possibilities for teachers to demonstrate the value of

subjects in a wider life context by connecting student interests to real world experiences – creating active learners who see the classroom as a place they want to be.

Needless to say, the students of a foreign language learning in general are now shifting from the traditional modes of learning to modern approach based on the technological innovations. The latest devices in the hands of the students have now become an important tools for learning. They are using it in and outside the class in order to enhance their understanding in the target language. In connected classroom an increasing numbers of students are disengaged from traditional teaching methods and the modern learner demands a personalized learning experience delivered on a flexible schedule (Abdous, 2010). Connecting classrooms using technology provides the opportunity for student learning and instructional strategies to be expanded well beyond the constraints of a traditional classroom such as: rote memorization, teacher centered approaches. Connected classrooms are learning environments where high levels of engagement occur as students work cooperatively to access information, create new ideas, build artifacts from their experiences and formulate models through project-based learning (Daley et al., 2008).



experiences and formulate models through project-based learning (Daley et al., 2008).

In this global changing era there is a tremendous change and shift kind of scenario in the area of language pedagogy and improved technologies. Now it is possible for educators to connect themselves and their students with others for a wide range of pedagogical and learning opportunities. As a result of my decades of teaching English as foreign language experiences in the practical classroom situation. I have observed and noticed as well as noted that personal relationships in and outside the college campuses and classrooms have played an effective role in my own connected classroom instructional practices. This resulted in the students' deeper understandings and higher levels of students' engagement in the classroom.

It has been noticed in the practical classroom situation that creating a connected classroom played an effective role in enhancing the comprehension of the students. Although instructor-student rapport plays a critical role in classroom climate, student-student rapport may also contribute as well (Frisby & Martin, 2010). A connected classroom climate is perceived by students as a compassionate and supportive student-to-student environment (Dwyer et al., 2004). Student-to-student connectedness is built on a collection of behaviors—including praise, smiling, or sharing personal stories or experiences—that have positive effects on educational processes and outcomes (Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2012).

Teaching and learning do not occur only between the instructor and students, but also among students themselves (Hirschy & Wilson, 2002), and instructors are critical in modeling positive interactions and demonstrating supportive behaviors in the classroom (Johnson, 2009). For example, instructor behaviors such as calling on students by name, asking probing questions, smiling, and nodding (Crombie, Pyke, Silverthorn, Jones, & Piccinin, 2003), as well as disclosing personal opinions and posing questions to the class (West & Pearson, 1994), can help increase student participation. Such behaviors aid in the development of student trust in the instructor, which makes it easier for students to take risks in class (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Fassinger (1997) claims that instructors' interpersonal style might not affect student interaction as much as do the structures they create to encourage it.

For example, to promote interaction and participation, students should be encouraged to engage in one-on-one conversations with one another, moving next to small-group interactions and eventually to whole-class involvement (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). This contrasts with how interaction and connectedness are typically developed in the classroom: asking whole-class questions initially and then focusing more on small-group and one-on-one interactions as the class progresses (Howard & Henney, 1998). Instructors could also articulate expectations for behaviors at the beginning of the class, as well as structure the class into smaller learning communities, encouraging debate and constructive conflict within these smaller groups before doing so within the larger classroom (Book & Putman, 1992). Fassinger suggests developing in-class exercises that increase students' confidence and encourage active participation, such as asking students to work together to develop strategies for conquering the fear of public speaking or to discuss what it means to be prepared for class.

Researches in the past indicate that students benefit from a connected classroom climate. Instructors who create connected environments may help motivate students to learn and discourage cheating (Bouville, 2010). A connected classroom climate is linked to students' increased preparedness for class (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010) and



participation in class (Frisby & Martin, 2010). Students have recognized the importance that supportive peers play in creating a participatory environment (Dallimore, Hertenstein, & Platt, 2004). In fact, students' perceptions of peer friendliness are a greater influence on their decision to participate in class than their perceptions of the instructor (Fassinger, 2000). There are positive relationships between student-to-student connectedness and learning, specifically affective learning (feelings toward course material and instructor) (Johnson, 2009); cognitive learning (recall, knowledge, and skills related to the course) (Prisbell,

Dwyer, Carlson, Bingham, & Cruz, 2009); and self-regulated learning (being active in one's own learning and goal setting) (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). The combination of supportive peers and a supportive instructor increases attendance, study time, school satisfaction, and academic engagement and leads to higher academic efficacy (Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowman, 2000). Such results are consistent regardless of the size of the class (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010).

In contrast, Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, and McMullen (2011) found that instructor misbehaviors such as irresponsibility, derisiveness, and apathy are negatively associated with student-to-student connectedness in higher education classrooms. Instructor behaviors such as not paying attention to students, making fun of students, or being overly critical can reduce student participation (Wade, 1994). Instructors who are described by students as boring, bored, pushy, moody, close-minded, too opinionated, condescending, and unfriendly also have students who report reduced classroom participation (Berdine, 1986). Overall, if students perceive their instructors as verbally aggressive or overly critical, they are less likely to attend class, participate (Rocca, 2009), and communicate with their instructor (Goodboy, Myers, & Bolkan, 2010).

Although it is important for instructors and students to establish a positive rapport with one another, it is equally important for students to develop a positive rapport with their peers in order to foster a positive classroom climate. A climate where students and the instructor respect one another, the students respect one another, and the instructor demonstrates that he or she cares about students is conducive to high levels of class participation (Dallimore et al., 2004). Moreover, students who participate more in class value the course and subject more (Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001). Similar to building rapport with students, when instructors model interpersonal interactions that demonstrate students are valued and cared for, students are more inclined to treat their instructors and one another with respect.

## 5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN PRACTICAL CLASSROOM SITUATIONS

Language instructors, applied linguists in general are now realizing that apart from the learning strategies there are other factors too that influence learning outcomes as well as course objectives. Among others one of the factors for being an effective English teacher is here/his dynamic personality,





his behavior, his way of interactions to the entire class, his interpersonal characteristics, his dedications and motivations in imparting his duties, his confidence in his students future, knowledgeable about the subject matter, accessible, caring relationships with the peer group, clear objectives for lessons, possession of effective discipline skills, possession of effective class management, skills fair and respectful, and passionate, strong rapport with students in and outside the college campus which play a vital role in students' motivation, cognitive and affective learning, and overall learning performance and outcomes. The researches done in the past revealed that learners believe their learning

is greatly enhanced through personal interaction with their concerned teachers and with other peer group. Many studies have investigated the factors which most strongly influence students' learning and achievement (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Koutsoulis, 2003; Lang et al., 1993; Witcher et al., 2001).

The role as well as the characteristics of a teacher is inevitable for an effective foreign language pedagogy. The researches in the past have identified and highlighted the desired qualities for effective teachers both inside (Bernhardt & Hammadou, 1987; Lafayette, 1993; Mollica & Nuessel, 1996; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Schulz, 2000; Vélez-Rendón, 2002) and outside (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Lowman, 1996; Witcher et al., 2001; Koutsoulis, 2003) the domain of foreign language education.

Furthermore, in a practical classroom situations it was observed and noted that the students in general want their teachers, guide and instructors to be encouraging, motivational respectful, supportive, available, and display enthusiasm for teaching. This objective could help guide faculty development efforts as well as individual instructors' efforts, which usually place more emphasis on the instructional aspects of teaching, and less on the interpersonal aspects of the classroom. Instead, a learner-centered manner of instruction would be adopted, whereby the instructor focuses on the students' perspectives, experiences, interests, capacities, and needs (McCombs, 1997); establishes positive instructor-student relationships; fosters student self-efficacy, and strikes a balance between being challenging and being caring (Pratt, 2002). This contrasts with a teacher-centered manner of instruction, which focuses on teaching and assessing learning objectives solely through course contents and delivery. It has been seen practically that not all the teachers feel comfortable engaging in every type of interpersonal interaction with students, they should be made aware of the importance of such interactions. Some language instructors feel convenient interacting with students in a practical classroom environment or during office hours in the college. One teachers use WhatsApp intermittently to interact with their students after the college times. The interaction through WhatsApp has been very effective and fruitful for both the teachers and the students.

Another aspect of faculty development could focus on encouraging instructors and students to discuss their expectations of the classroom environment at the beginning of a course. Although both instructors and students want more positive interactions in the classroom, instructors view the classroom environment as more positive than do students (Fraser & Treagust, 1986). Instructors can benefit from assessing their students' views of the classroom environment as well as their own, using one of several measurement instruments readily available (e.g., Fraser & Treagust, 1986; Winston et al., 1994; Wilkie, 2000). The emerged feedback could help the teachers engage their class in discussions and collective behavior, and instructors' and students' expectations for interaction inside and outside the classroom. These adopted strategies in the classroom will help both the teachers as well as the target group to a greater extent to accomplish their learning outcomes in a foreign language educational programme.

## CONCLUSION

It has been widely accepted fact that the positive classroom is the sine qua non for the effective foreign language pedagogy. The goal of the present study was to explore the elements of a positive classroom climate. Although it does not provide an exhaustive list of important interpersonal classroom skills, it does demonstrate that interpersonal skills influence the classroom climate, which has a profound impact on students' learning outcomes. Specifically, developing a positive rapport with students improves students' learning and motivation. It also creates a model for how students should behave in class toward their peers, which increases students' connectedness and also leads to greater students' learning and motivation. Language instructors should always consider how their behaviors may be interpreted by their students and keep the classroom climate and interpersonal interactions in mind while teaching as well as in developing courses and lesson plans. Hopefully it is likely to increase positive outcomes for students as well as higher levels of satisfaction for the instructor. Last but not least Classroom environment is one of the most important factors affecting student learning. Simply put, students learn better when they view the learning environment as positive and supportive (Dorman, Aldridge, & Fraser, 2006). A positive environment is one in which students feel a sense of belonging, trust others, and feel encouraged to tackle challenges, take risks, and ask questions (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009). Such an



environment provides relevant content, clear learning goals and feedback, opportunities to build social skills, and strategies to help students succeed (Weimer, 2009).

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