

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A RAPPORT IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Annotation: The article deals with the importance of establishing mutual understanding when learning a foreign language.

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Building a rapport with students can make the difference when teaching, especially in a foreign language. Developing rapport - including building trust, using humor and getting to know the students outside of the classroom can not only help to better understand the background of student's but can also help with classroom management and instruction. In the case studies many of our teacher friends mention the fact that getting to know the students is important. At the same time however, some of these teachers also express some challenges in building rapport, especially when using the target language. In this section we will discuss the importance of building rapport with students and some strategies that can be used to do so in the language.

Building student rapport is the development of a positive relation between the teacher and the students. There are several techniques a teacher can use to develop this rapport; some techniques are geared towards the beginning of the course, where others are techniques that can be used on a day to day basis.

William Buskist and Bryan K. Saville define the student teacher relationship as:

- the extent to which students accept or "buy into" the goals the teacher has spelled out to the class;

- the student's ability to work toward these goals;

- the teacher's ability to care genuinely for students and to nurture their learning;

- the student and teacher "connecting" emotionally and students' motivation to participate actively in their education.

- In order to help build rapport with students we can suggest the following strategies:

- Get to know the students both inside and outside of the classroom;

- Learn student names as quickly as possible;

- Consider non-verbal factors such as body language;

- Develop a relationship built on trust;

- Have a sense of humor and have fun with students.

- Here are some activities and strategies that we can use to develop rapport.

Ice Breaker Activities

Used at the beginning of the course to create a positive atmosphere in the class and between students and teacher. They can also be used to facilitate students (and teacher) getting to know each other.

Activities to help learn student names

Learning student names is an important part of building student rapport. Why do you think this is so? What are some strategies that you have experienced or used for learning student names?

Passport - students are given time to create a passport about themselves, including relevant information and at least one piece of memorable information that will stick in the minds of others.

Student teams - putting the students in teams creates a pattern in your mind of where they sit. It is similar to a seating plan but letting the student compete with their groups makes it seem more like an activity.

Unforgettable Neighbour - have the students work in pairs or with partners and share a memorable fact about each other. They can then share these facts with the class so there is an additional fact to help make each student's name easier to remember.

Adjective Name Game - similar to the unforgettable neighbor activity, students work in pairs but have to come up with an interesting adjective that starts with the same letter as their first name, i.e.: Meticulous Miranda, Artsy Anna.

Seating Chart - creating a seating chart allows the teacher to quiz himself about which student sits where and forces the teacher to make the mental connection.

Here some body language factors of which we have to be aware.

Smile! Show the students you are happy to be there and to see them. Move around the classroom - as students get used to your presence, they will feel less intimidated by you and will be more likely to interact with you voluntarily;

Make eye contact - this shows a sense openness, honesty and caring;

Gestures - using lively and animated gestures demonstrates friendliness and that the teacher is involved in the material. It also helps keep the students alert and shows that the teacher isn't afraid to make fun of his or herself from time to time;

Be aware of student discomfort - certain students will feel really uncomfortable with teacher proximity or excessive eye contact. Get to know who these students are so they can be given the space they require in order to feel safe and respected;

Developing Trust. Discuss trust with your students, its limits and its benefits. Having this discussion shows that the students are valued and respected enough to make their own decisions;

Laugh at your own mistakes! This shows that students can do the same, that you trust they will keep this within reason; this then allows for further amusing situations to happen later on, that students don't feel so self-conscious that no fun can be had;

Give the students' responsibility. This shows you trust them and value them as young, responsible adults. Talk about your own interests, showing the students that you are a person and want to share who you are with them;

Discuss with the students why they are receiving certain assignments. Let them be part of their educational direction and show them that all assignments have a purpose; they can then learn to trust you as a teacher, that you aren't assigning information randomly;

Using humor in the classroom. Jokes and amusing behaviors are great as long as they are within reason. Keep in mind what tone of voice is used so as not to give a mixed message to the students. Use of sarcasm should depend on the classroom and what relationship the teacher has with the class; the teacher should know whether the students are going to understand it or whether it will cause resentments and problems later on down the line.

In conclusion, we would like to say that building a good rapport with students helps us to create a friendly English speaking atmosphere which leads to developing and improving of our teaching process. Moreover, it will help us to make our lessons more effective and productive which leads to achieving the objectives of the teacher and the learner.

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