THE RAPPORT-BUILDING STRATEGIES USED BY TEACHERS TO REDUCE STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN TAKING ENGLISH TESTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze (1) the rapport-building strategies that English teachers applied to reduce students' anxiety in taking English tests. This study employed a qualitative research design using a descriptive approach, in which data were generated through in-depth interviews with 3 English teachers. Data were collected via classroom observation using an observation checklist and field notes. In addition, classroom observations were conducted using observation checklists and field notes to support the interview findings. The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings revealed that (1) the rapport-building strategies used by English teachers consisted of verbal and non-verbal strategies. The verbal strategies included encouragement, acknowledgment, and management, while the non-verbal strategies included eye contact, hand gestures, affect displays, humor, and smiling expressions. In conclusion, English teachers at MTsN 2 in Makassar employ verbal rapport-building strategies (encouragement, acknowledgment, and management) and nonverbal strategies (eye contact, gestures, affective expressions, humor, and smiles) to address students' anxiety stemming from their lack of familiarity with English, limited vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes.
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Keywords: *Rapport-building strategies, students' anxiety, English tests, teacher–student relationship, English learning*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis (1) strategi membangun hubungan baik yang diterapkan oleh guru Bahasa Inggris untuk mengurangi kecemasan siswa dalam mengerjakan tes Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif, di mana data dihasilkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 3 guru Bahasa Inggris. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas menggunakan daftar periksa observasi dan catatan lapangan. Selain itu, observasi kelas dilakukan menggunakan daftar periksa observasi dan catatan lapangan untuk mendukung temuan wawancara. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis data kualitatif, termasuk pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan/verifikasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa (1) strategi membangun hubungan baik yang digunakan oleh guru Bahasa Inggris terdiri dari strategi verbal dan non-verbal. Strategi verbal meliputi dorongan, pengakuan, dan manajemen, sedangkan strategi non-verbal meliputi kontak mata, gerakan tangan, tampilan afek, humor, dan ekspresi senyum. Kesimpulannya, guru-guru Bahasa Inggris di MTsN 2

Makassar menggunakan strategi membangun hubungan verbal (dorongan, pengakuan, dan pengelolaan) dan strategi nonverbal (kontak mata, gerak tubuh, ekspresi afektif, humor, dan senyuman) untuk mengatasi kecemasan siswa yang timbul dari kurangnya keakraban mereka dengan Bahasa Inggris, kosakata yang terbatas, dan rasa takut membuat kesalahan.

Kata kunci: Strategi membangun hubungan, kecemasan siswa, tes Bahasa Inggris, hubungan guru-siswa, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

A. INTRODUCTION

English language learning requires not only cognitive competence but also emotional readiness. Among the various emotional factors influencing language learning, test anxiety is one of the most common challenges experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Many students experience feelings of nervousness, fear, and lack of confidence when taking English tests, which can negatively affect their academic performance. Test anxiety often prevents students from demonstrating their actual language ability, even when they have adequately prepared for examinations. Therefore, teachers play an essential role in creating a supportive classroom environment that helps students overcome these emotional barriers.

One effective way to reduce students' anxiety is through rapport building. Rapport refers to a positive, trusting, and respectful relationship between teachers and students that encourages open communication and emotional security. According to Fleming (2020), positive teacher–student relationships significantly influence learning effectiveness and students' academic achievement. Similarly, Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) emphasize that strong teacher–student relationships contribute to students' academic success by fostering a supportive learning environment. When students feel respected, understood, and emotionally supported by their teachers, they are more willing to participate in classroom activities, express their ideas, and face academic challenges with greater confidence.

In English language classrooms, rapport-building strategies include both verbal and non-verbal interactions such as providing encouragement, giving constructive feedback, using students' names, maintaining eye contact, showing empathy, displaying positive facial expressions, and creating opportunities for meaningful communication. These

strategies help reduce students' emotional barriers and promote a classroom atmosphere where learners feel safe to make mistakes and learn from them. Chen (2024) further explains that rapport-building language positively influences students' speaking performance and highlights its importance in reducing anxiety during English assessment tasks. Likewise, Hattie (2009) argues that emotional support from teachers contributes significantly to students' academic success by increasing their confidence and engagement.

The importance of rapport building becomes even more evident in testing situations. English tests often create psychological pressure that leads students to experience excessive anxiety, reducing their concentration, cognitive performance, and willingness to demonstrate their language skills. Teachers who establish strong rapport with students can minimize these negative emotions by creating a classroom climate characterized by trust, encouragement, and mutual respect. Consequently, students become more confident and emotionally prepared when participating in English examinations.

This issue was also observed by the researcher during the AjarMi teaching assistance program conducted at MTsN 2 Makassar from January to May 2025. During classroom observations, many students appeared anxious during English lessons because they had difficulty understanding the teacher's explanations. Some students were reluctant to ask questions and admitted feeling afraid of making mistakes. Furthermore, several English teachers reported that many students were particularly anxious when taking English tests. These observations indicate that insufficient rapport and communication between teachers and students may contribute to students' anxiety and negatively affect their learning experiences and test performance.

Although previous studies have investigated teacher–student rapport in English language learning, research specifically examining the rapport-building strategies used by teachers to reduce students' anxiety during English tests remains limited. Chávez et al. (2017) explored how positive teacher–student relationships contribute to effective English learning, while Kang and Chen (2025) examined the effects of teachers' rapport-building strategies on learners' cognitive load and motivation in computer-assisted language learning. In addition, Rzayeva (2025) investigated the

role of eye contact and proxemics in establishing rapport with language learners. While these studies highlight the importance of rapport in promoting learning, they primarily focus on motivation, classroom interaction, or online learning environments. Few studies have specifically explored how rapport-building strategies are implemented to alleviate students' anxiety during English testing, particularly in Indonesian secondary school contexts.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the rapport-building strategies used by English teachers to reduce students' anxiety in taking English tests at MTsN 2 Kota Makassar. The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching by providing practical insights into how teachers can establish positive relationships that foster students' emotional well-being, reduce test anxiety, and improve their confidence and performance during English examinations.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore teachers' rapport-building strategies in reducing students' anxiety during English tests. The research was conducted at MTsN 2 Kota Makassar with eighth-grade students in the 2026–2027 academic year. The participants consisted of English teachers selected through purposive sampling based on their experience in teaching Grade VIII and their relevance to the research focus.

Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Observations were conducted using an observation checklist and field notes to identify teachers' verbal and non-verbal rapport-building strategies, including hand gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, encouragement, acknowledgment, supportive feedback, and classroom management. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore teachers' perceptions of the strategies they used, the reasons for applying them, and their role in reducing students' anxiety during English tests.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, while observation notes were systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. The findings from both data sources were then compared and

interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of how teachers' rapport-building strategies contribute to reducing students' anxiety in English test situations.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Rapport-building strategies used by teachers to reduce students' anxiety in taking English tests

The observation and interview was conducted with three English teachers. The strategies of rapport-building were identified through classroom observation and interview. The strategies are (a) verbal: encouragement, management, and acknowledgment; (b) non-verbal: hand gestures, affect displays, head movement, and eye contact. The description of these strategies was in the following title.

a. Verbal

Teachers used verbal strategies to reduce students' anxiety in taking English tests. As a result, the management strategy led the students well by giving instructions, an encouragement strategy fostering students' confidence, but not giving any hope to the students, and an acknowledgement strategy was very helpful for students because it made the students very excited to learn English.

Table 4.1 verbal strategies

No.		Observation 1					
	Verbal Strategy	Teacher AR		Teacher Z		**Teacher R**	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	**No**
1.	Encouragement	✓		✓		✓	
	Coba mki kerja dulu.	-	-	-	-	✓	**-**
	Kasih applause ke temannya!	-	-	-	-	✓	**-**
	Gapapa, saya tetap nilai dari usaha ta untuk menjawab	-	-	✓	-	-	**-**
	Tidak ada yang instan nak, sudah bagusmi itu	✓	-	-	-	-	**-**
	Perasaan saya kasih yang susah susah, kenapa enteng sekali buat kita	-	-	✓	-	-	**-**
	Jujur itu sudah lebih dari cukup	-	-	-	-	✓	**-**
2.	Management	-	-	✓	-	✓	**-**
	Coba baca halaman sekian.	-	-	✓	-	-	**-**

	Ada yang tidak dimengerti anak anakku sekalian?	-	-	-	-	✓	-
	Masih banyak waktuta, jangan terburu buru.	-	-	✓	-	-	-
3.	Acknowledgment	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
	Good, I love how you do it	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	Bagus nak.	-	-	✓	-	-	-
	Tidak apa, coba lagi ya.	-	-	-	-	✓	-
	Keren.	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
	Di atas rata rata ini jawabanta	-	-	-	-	✓	-
		Observation 2					
1.	Encouragement	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
	Ihh, ada perkembanganta dari minggu lalu.	-	-	✓	-	-	-
	Malahan lebih tertata jawabanta dari jawabanku nak.	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	Saya suka kalau beraniki begini ketimbang tidak sama sekali.	-	-	-	-	✓	-
	Nda usah pikir kalo masalah salahnya nak	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	Kerja saja, kita perbaiki sama sama kalau salah	-	-	✓	-	-	-
2.	Management	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
	Can you guys imagine, bagaimanaki bede selesaikan ki ini?	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	Siapa yang mau coba kerja ayo?	-	-	✓	-	-	-
	Ada yang mau maju kerjakan nomor sekian?	-	-	-	-	✓	-
3.	Acknowledgement	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
	What a pleasure to have students like you guys	-	-	✓	-	-	-
	Nilai Bahasa inggris ta mantap semua, tetap tingkatkan nah.	-	-	✓	-	-	-
	Nda harus sempurna sayangku, that's enough	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	Kusuka na speaking *ta nanda.*	-	-	-	-	✓	-
	Dari sekian banyak kelas ku ajar kitaji yang tinggi tinggi nilai Bahasa Inggrisnya	-	-	✓	-	-	-

The observation findings revealed that all three English teachers (AR, Z, and R) consistently applied three verbal rapport-building strategies encouragement, management, and acknowledgment across both observation sessions as a means of fostering a supportive learning environment and

reducing students' anxiety in English learning and test-related activities. Regarding encouragement, all teachers regularly employed motivational language to boost students' confidence and participation, though minor variations were noted in the specific expressions used, such as *"Coba mki kerja dulu,"* which appeared only in Teachers AR's and Z's classrooms, while phrases like *"Kasih applause ke temannya!"* were exclusive to Teachers Z and R.

In terms of management, all teachers demonstrated effective instructional guidance through clear directions and comprehension-checking questions, with certain expressions such as "Masih banyak waktuta, jangan terburu-buru" observed exclusively in Teacher Z's classroom, while other managerial language was shared across all three. For acknowledgment, teachers consistently offered positive feedback and recognition using expressions such as "Good, I love how you do it," "Bagus nak," and "What a pleasure to have students like you guys," while some phrases were unique to particular teachers, all of which appeared to help students view mistakes as part of the learning process and participate more confidently. Overall, despite individual differences in verbal expression, all three teachers uniformly relied on these strategies to cultivate a positive classroom atmosphere, strengthen students' self-confidence, encourage active participation, and alleviate anxiety during both learning and assessment situations.

The table above shows the results of observations of the three English teachers. In the two observations and interviews above, there were 3 verbal strategies: encouragement, management, and acknowledgment, used by all teachers, described as follows:

1) Encouragement

Based on the classroom observations, encouragement was one of the most frequently used verbal rapport-building strategies employed by the teacher to reduce students’ anxiety during English learning activities and tests. The teacher consistently provided supportive expressions such as motivating words, reassurance, and positive reinforcement to help students feel more comfortable in participating in classroom interactions. The findings revealed that encouragement had a significant influence on students’ self-confidence. At the beginning, students displayed a feeling of unwillingness and anxiety, but slowly they became more willing to answer questions, participate in

discussions and do English tasks without much fear of making mistakes.

Extract 1 (Z, 6 May 2026)

"Saya bisa memastikan hal itu dengan selalu menggunakan strategi memberi semangat disetiap usahanya ketimbang harus mempermasalahkan jawabannya…"(I can ensure that by always using a strategy of giving constructive spirit on every effort he makes, rather than focusing on his answers...)

Z's statement indicates that positive feedback is an important strategy in building supportive teacher-student relationships. Thus, this teacher's reasoning suggests that appreciating students' efforts through constructive feedback, rather than focusing on mistakes, can increase students' confidence and encourage them to participate more actively in learning English.





Figure 4.1 encouragement strategy

The teacher's positive responses fostered a supportive learning environment where students felt a sense of emotional security and felt appreciated. Students, as a result, demonstrated increased confidence in sharing their ideas and responding to English test activities. This finding suggests that encouragement serves not only as emotional support but also as an aid to the development of students' confidence, which plays a significant role in reducing anxiety in English language learning contexts.

2) Management

The classroom observations revealed that management was one of the verbal rapport-building strategies used by the teacher in the English learning process. The teacher was good at managing the classroom by giving clear instructions, orderly explanations and well-structured guidance throughout the whole lesson. The findings proved that the clarity of the teacher's instructions made it easier for the students to understand the learning

activities, task procedures and the materials discussed more easily. When the teacher explained the objectives of the lesson and guided students step by step, students appeared more focused and less confused during classroom activities.





Figure 4.2 management strategy

Extract 2 (MR, 6 May 2026)

Saya jadi yakin untuk menerapkan strategi strategi seperti ini kayak buat mereka jadi lebih percaya diri dengan memberikan arahan yang jelas disetiap penugasan…."(I've become convinced that implementing strategies like this such as giving them clear instructions for each assignment will help boost their confidence…")

In addition, clear instructional management enabled students to participate more confidently because they understood what they were expected to do in English learning tasks and tests. The teacher's ability to manage the classroom through understandable directions also created a more supportive and conducive learning environment. This resulted in higher student involvement in the learning process and better understanding of English lessons. This result means that effective instructional management can contribute to classroom organization as well as to students understanding and reduce the uncertainty during English learning activities.

3) Acknowledgments

The classroom observations showed that acknowledgments were one of the verbal rapport building strategies used by the teacher in English learning activities. The teacher often gave positive responses and feedbacks to students' participation, answers, and efforts in the classroom. The acknowledgments were in the form of praise, appreciation, and supportive comments that acknowledged students' attempts to participate in the learning process even though the answers were not always right.





Figure 4.3 acknowledgment strategy

Extract 3 (AR, 6 May 2026)

"Dengan memberikan apresiasi (acknowledgment) Ketika melakukan aktifitas sekecil apapun contoh memberikan feedback, memberikan reward sebagai hasil usahanya…."(*By showing appreciation (acknowledgment) for even the smallest actions such as providing feedback or offering a reward for their efforts…")*

MR's statement indicates that management strategies, particularly providing clear instructions for each assignment, can help reduce students' anxiety. Thus, this teacher's reasoning suggests that when students understand task expectations clearly, they feel more confident, less confused, and better prepared to participate in learning activities and English tests.

The findings showed that positive feedback by the teacher contributed much to students' self-confidence. Students appeared to be more willing to participate, answer questions, and express their ideas without too much fear of making mistakes. The teacher's supportive responses helped students to view the mistakes as a natural part of the learning process rather than an embarrassing or discouraging thing. As a result, students became much more confident in using English and showed more courage in participating in classroom activities. This finding indicates that acknowledgments are not only a positive reinforcement, but also an important emotional support strategy that helps to reduce students' fear and anxiety in English language learning.

b. Non-Verbal

Teachers also implemented non-verbal strategies to lessen students' anxiety in English tests. The findings revealed that hand gestures helped students to understand the teacher's explanation, which in turn increased their engagement and attention to the English learning tasks. Head movements acted as positive signals that encouraged students to express their ideas confidently. The importance of eye contact in boosting students' confidence was explained by the feeling of being seen, appreciated and emotionally supported by their teacher. In

addition, affective displays like smiling and friendly facial expressions helped create a warm and positive atmosphere in the classroom, which enabled students to feel at ease and less afraid of making mistakes. Such non-verbal strategies were found effective to relieve students' anxiety and build their confidence in English learning and test situations.

Table 4.2 non-verbal strategies

Observation 1						
Non-Verbal Strategy	Teacher AR		Teacher Z		Teacher MR	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	NO
Hand Gestures	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
Affect Displays	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
Head Movement	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Eye Contact	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
Observation 2						
Hand Gestures	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
Affect Displays	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
Head Movement	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Eye Contact	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-

The table above shows the results of observations of the three English teachers. In the first observation, there were 4 non-verbal strategies: hand gestures, affect displays, and eye contact, used by all teachers, while head movement is just used by teacher Z and teacher R. Next, in the second observation, there are also 4 non-verbal strategies: hand gestures, affect displays, and eye contact, used by all teachers, while head movement is just used by teacher Z and teacher R.

1) Hand Gestures

The observations in the classroom showed that the teacher used hand gestures as one of the non-verbal strategies for building rapport during English learning activities. The teacher frequently employed body movements and hand gestures to back up verbal explanations and give clearer instructions to students. These gestures were used to accent important information, to capture the students' attention, and to guide them through classroom tasks and English test activities. The results indicated that the application of hand gestures could make the teacher's instruction more comprehensible, particularly in explaining the task procedures or classroom activities.

Extract 4 (AR, 6 May 2026)

"Saya bisa memastikan hal itu dengan melihat antusias dari para siswa untuk lebih tekun belajar Bahasa Inggris, dan

untuk mencapai semua itu saya selalu menerapkan gestur tangan dalam menjelaskan materi."(I can ensure that by seeing how enthusiastic the students are about studying English more diligently, and to achieve that, I always use hand gestures when explaining the material.)

AR's statement indicates that students' enthusiasm can reflect the effectiveness of the teacher's rapport-building strategies. Thus, this teacher's reasoning suggests that the use of hand gestures while explaining the material can increase students' interest, understanding, and engagement in learning English.





Figure 4.4 hand gestures strategy

The visual aid of the gestures in combination with the verbal communication of the teacher seemed to help students to pay more attention and respond more effectively. This made students feel more confident in following instructions and participating in the learning process without feeling lost or anxious. The finding revealed that hand gestures were one of the important parts of effective classroom communication and helped students better understand the English learning activities.

Extract 5 (MR, 6 May 2026)

"Pada umumnya saya menggunakan Bahasa yang umum yang gampang dipahami siswa seperti melakukan gestur tangan yang membuat siswa merasa nyaman,kontak mata, dan menambahkan sedikit lelucon agar suasana kelas lebih cair…." (In general, I use language that is easy for students to understand. For example, I use hand gestures to put students at ease, maintain eye contact and add a little humour to create a more relaxed classroom atmosphere.)

MR's statement indicates that rapport-building strategies are influenced by the teacher's communication style and classroom interaction. Thus, this teacher's reasoning suggests that the use of simple language, hand gestures, eye contact, and humor can create a more comfortable and relaxed classroom atmosphere, helping students feel more

engaged and supported during the learning process.

2) Affect Display

The observations in the classroom showed that the teacher used affect displays as one of the non-verbal strategies for building rapport during the English learning activities. The teacher showed several positive facial expressions such as smiling, being friendly, and showing enthusiasm when interacting with the students in the classroom. These expressions helped create a warm and supportive atmosphere in the classroom which motivated the students to be more comfortable during the learning process. The findings showed that the teacher's affect displays were important in establishing positive relationships with the students.

Extract 6 (MR, 6 May 2026)

"sebagai seorang guru saya selalu memastikan siswa saya untuk senang dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris dan tentu saja strategi yang saya pakai dari itu adalah perbanyak senyum kepada siswa dan menambahkan rangkaian lelucon." (Going back to the answer I gave earlier, as a teacher, I always make sure my students enjoy learning English and the strategy that I use for that is giving an expressions at my students and tell jokes.

MR's statement indicates that creating an enjoyable classroom atmosphere is an important part of rapport-building in English learning. Thus, this teacher's reasoning suggests that smiling frequently and using humor can help students feel happier, more comfortable, and more motivated during the learning process





Figure 4.5 affect display strategy

Through friendly and approachable expressions, students felt that the teacher was caring, supportive, and open to communication. Consequently, the students seemed more comfortable, confident and willing to participate in classroom activities with less fear of making mistakes. This result shows that

affect displays not only serve as emotional expressions but also as an effective way to improve teacher-student rapport and to decrease students' anxiety in English learning activities.

3) Head Movement

The teacher used head movements as one of the non-verbal strategies to establish rapport in the English learning activities in the classroom. The teacher often used head movements such as nodding and shaking the head to assist communication and to clarify the classroom context. Nodding was often used to indicate agreement, appreciation, or encouragement of students' responses, while shaking the head was used as a non-threatening way to indicate incorrect answers or misunderstandings.



Figure 4.6 head movement strategy

The results indicated that these head movements assisted students to better understand the teacher's reactions and instructions rather than to depend only on verbal explanations. As a result, students became more aware of whether their responses were appropriate and felt more guided during classroom interactions. In addition, the teacher's head movements created smoother communication and helped maintain positive interaction between the teacher and students. This finding suggests that head movement is an important factor in supporting classroom communication, clarifying meaning and helping students to be more comfortable and confident in English learning activities.

4) Eye Contact

Eye contact was one of the non-verbal strategies used by the teacher to establish rapport in English learning activities in the classroom. The teacher often made eye contact with students when explaining the material, asking questions and responding to the students' answers. Eye contact was used to show attention, interest and support, so that the students felt acknowledged and involved in the learning process.





Figure 4.7 eye contact strategy

The results indicated that the nonverbal rapport-building strategies significantly increased students' perceptions of connection with the teacher as well as promoted active interactions in the classroom. Supportive nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, positive facial expressions, head movements, hand gestures and other affective displays sent a message to students that the teacher was attentive to their efforts and responsive to their needs. As a result, students felt more confident to share ideas, answer questions and participate in English learning activities. Furthermore, these nonverbal strategies contributed to a warm, friendly and supportive classroom atmosphere, which reduced students' anxiety and fear of making mistakes.

Extract 7 (Z, 6 May 2026)

"Hal yang selalu saya perhatikan sebelum belajar itu suasana kelasnya kayak gimana, setelah itu baru saya bisa tentukan strategi apa yang bisa saya lakukan, tapi khusus untuk siswaku yang cenderung merasakan kecemasan saya biasa kasih treatment lebih kayak kontak mata, kasih instruksi berulang kali, dan selalu memberi respon yang positif disetiap usahanya"(Before I start learning, I always pay attention to the environment in the classroom. After that, I can decide on the strategies I can use. But for my students who tend to feel anxious, I usually give them more attention, such as making eye contact, giving instructions repeatedly, and always giving positive responses to their efforts.)

Z's statement indicates that teachers need to adjust their rapport-building strategies based on the classroom atmosphere and students' emotional conditions. Thus, this teacher's reasoning suggests that providing special attention through eye contact, repeated instructions, and positive responses can help reduce students' anxiety and create a more supportive learning environment.

The findings lead to the conclusion that the strategies of building rapport by the teachers are important in creating a positive and supportive learning environment in English classes. It can be concluded that students feel more comfortable, engaged, and less anxious when teachers apply strategies such as using simple language, maintaining eye

contact, giving hand gestures, providing positive feedback, smiling, and using humor during the learning process. These strategies collectively strengthen teacher-student relationships, encourage active participation and support students emotionally and academically, thereby making the learning process more effective and meaningful.

D. CONCLUSION

This section presents the main conclusions drawn from the findings and discussion of the study. The conclusions are organized according to the research objectives. Based on the findings, the study concludes that English teachers employed a variety of verbal and non-verbal rapport-building strategies to reduce students' anxiety in learning English and taking English tests. These strategies contributed to creating a supportive and positive classroom environment, fostering stronger teacher–student relationships, increasing students' confidence and participation, and helping them feel more comfortable and less anxious during English learning activities and examinations.

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