



Teacher-Student Relational Strategies and Students' Perceptions in a Thai University

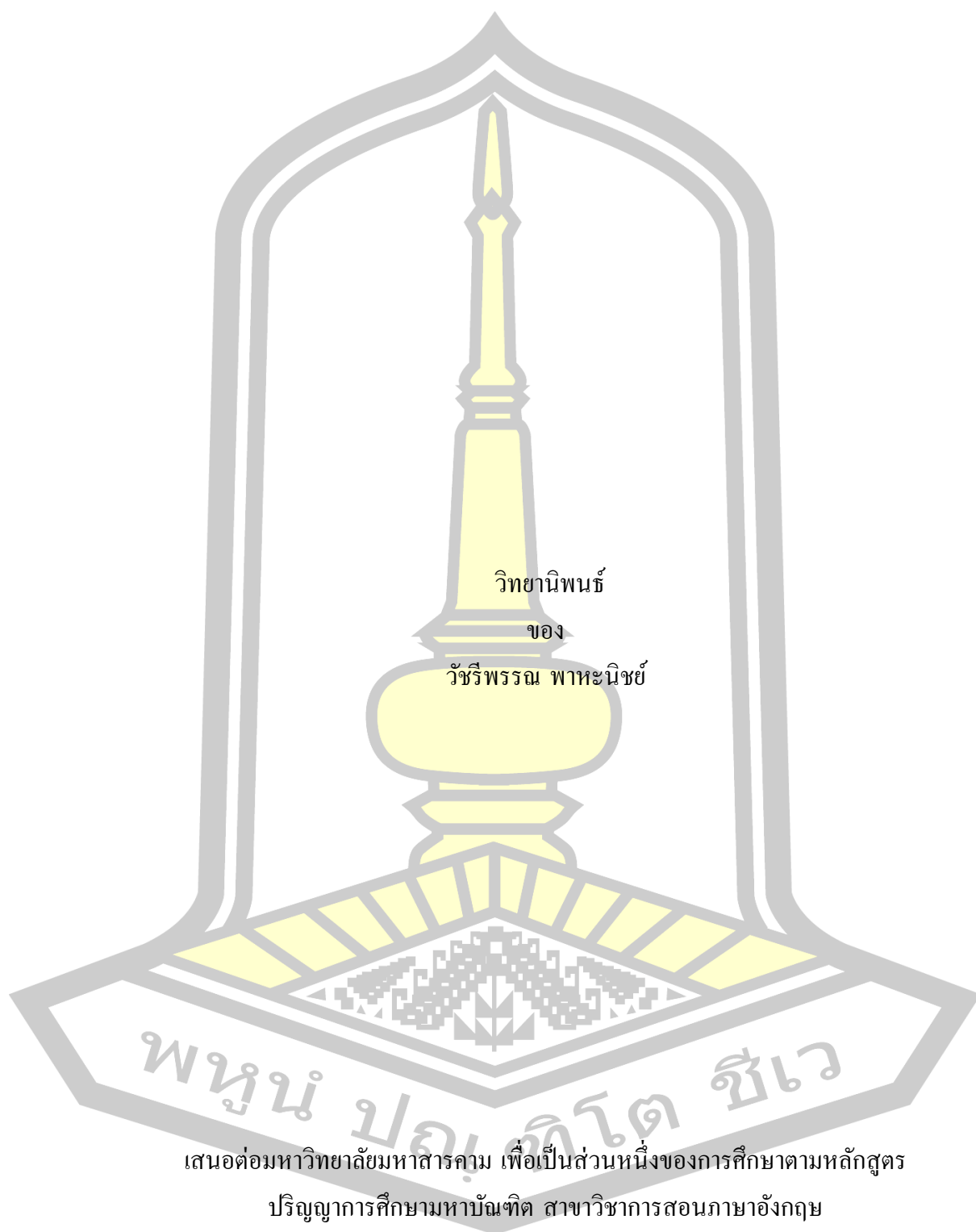
Watchareepun Pahanit

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
degree of Master of Education in English Language Teaching

April 2025

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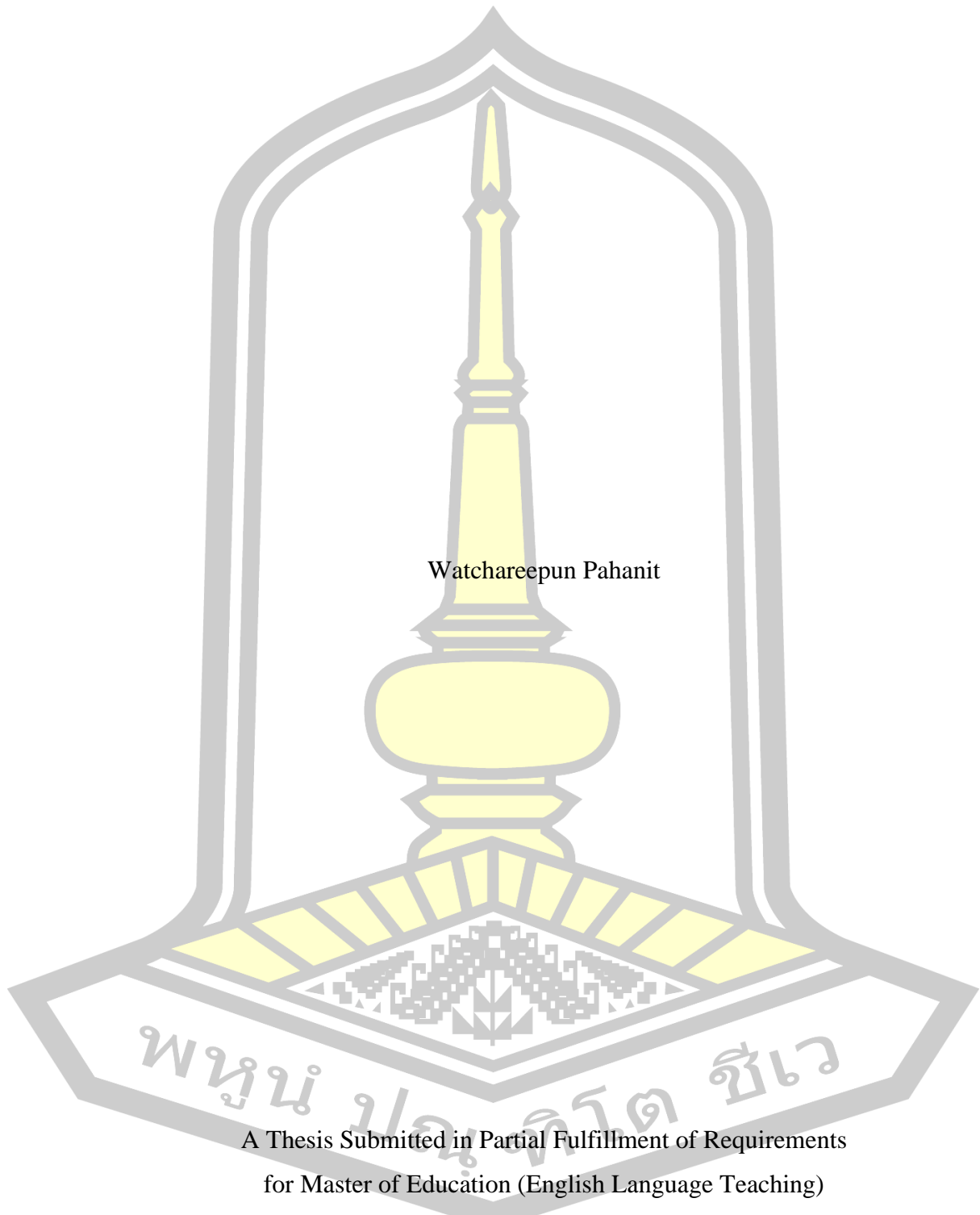
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April 2025

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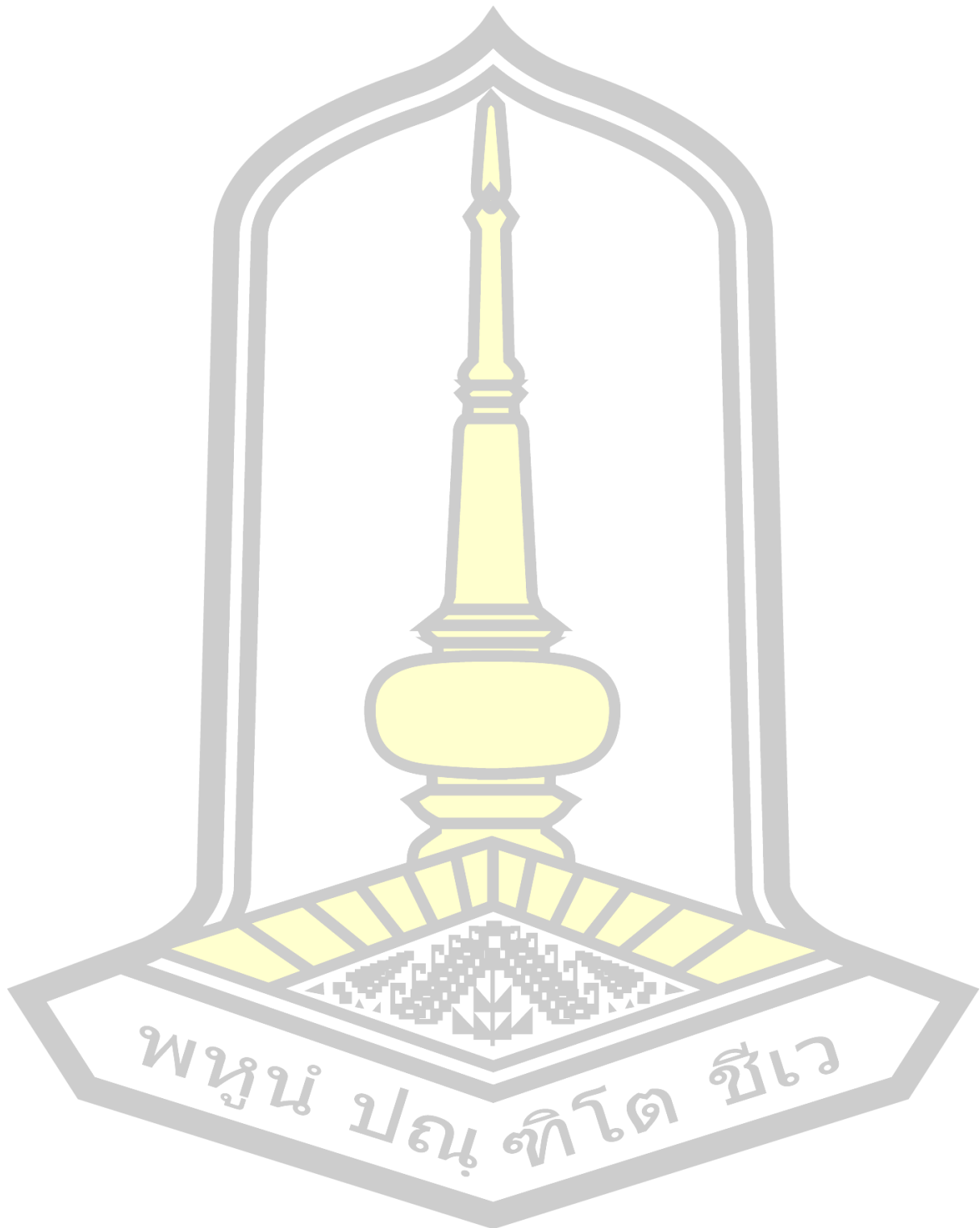
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ABSTRACT

Teacher-student relationships play a fundamental role in establishing credibility and trust, both of which are essential for fostering long-term learning. Despite their significance, the dynamics of these relationships in Thai EFL classroom settings remain underexplored. This study examines the relational strategies employed by a Thai university English teacher in a Phonology course to build rapport with students and investigates students' perceptions of these strategies in enhancing engagement and learning. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, supplemented by detailed field notes. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify key themes and insights. The findings highlight the crucial role of teacher-student relationships in creating a positive classroom environment conducive to student learning and engagement. Six key relational strategies emerged from the analysis: (1) engaging in conversations with students and getting to know them, (2) incorporating off-topic discussions, (3) maintaining a positive atmosphere, (4) avoiding the singling out of students, (5) promoting collaborative learning, and (6) providing positive reinforcement. Students' perceptions of these strategies varied. Many students reported feeling more engaged and motivated when the teacher employed relational strategies such as personalized interactions and active listening. They particularly valued the teacher's approachability, humor, and encouragement, which fostered motivation and engagement. Additionally, they appreciated the supportive and low-stress environment, which enhanced their confidence and willingness to participate. However, some students expressed neutral or negative perceptions, citing occasional disruptions in lesson flow due to off-topic discussions and challenges in maintaining engagement in larger classes. This study provides valuable insights for teacher preparation programs by emphasizing the importance of fostering positive relational strategies, taking into account factors such as technology integration, teacher training, and individual student characteristics. Practical strategies for building strong relationships are discussed, along with a framework for enhancing students' learning environments and overall academic experiences.

Keyword : Teacher's relational strategies, Teacher-student relationship, Student

perceptions, University teacher, Thailand



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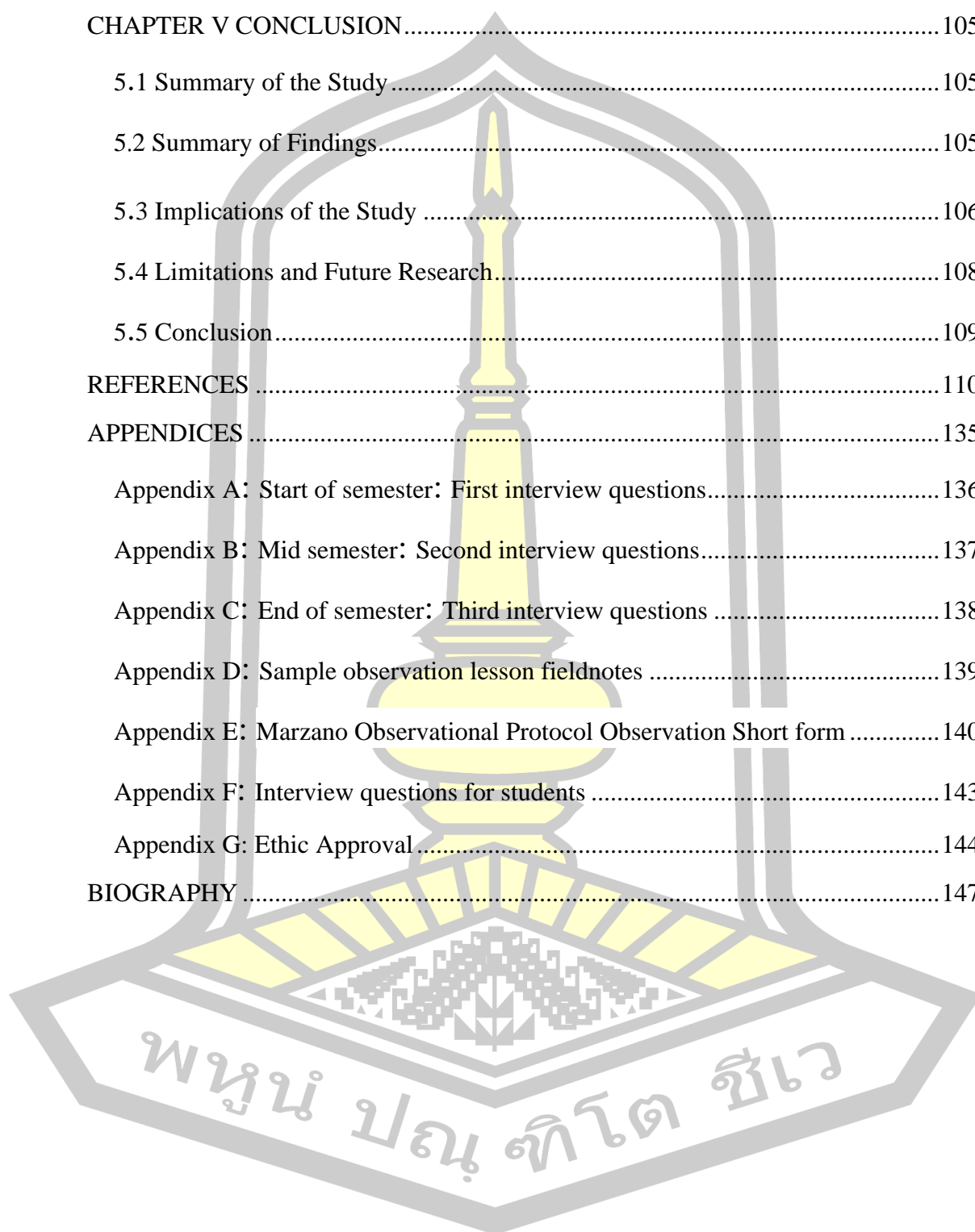
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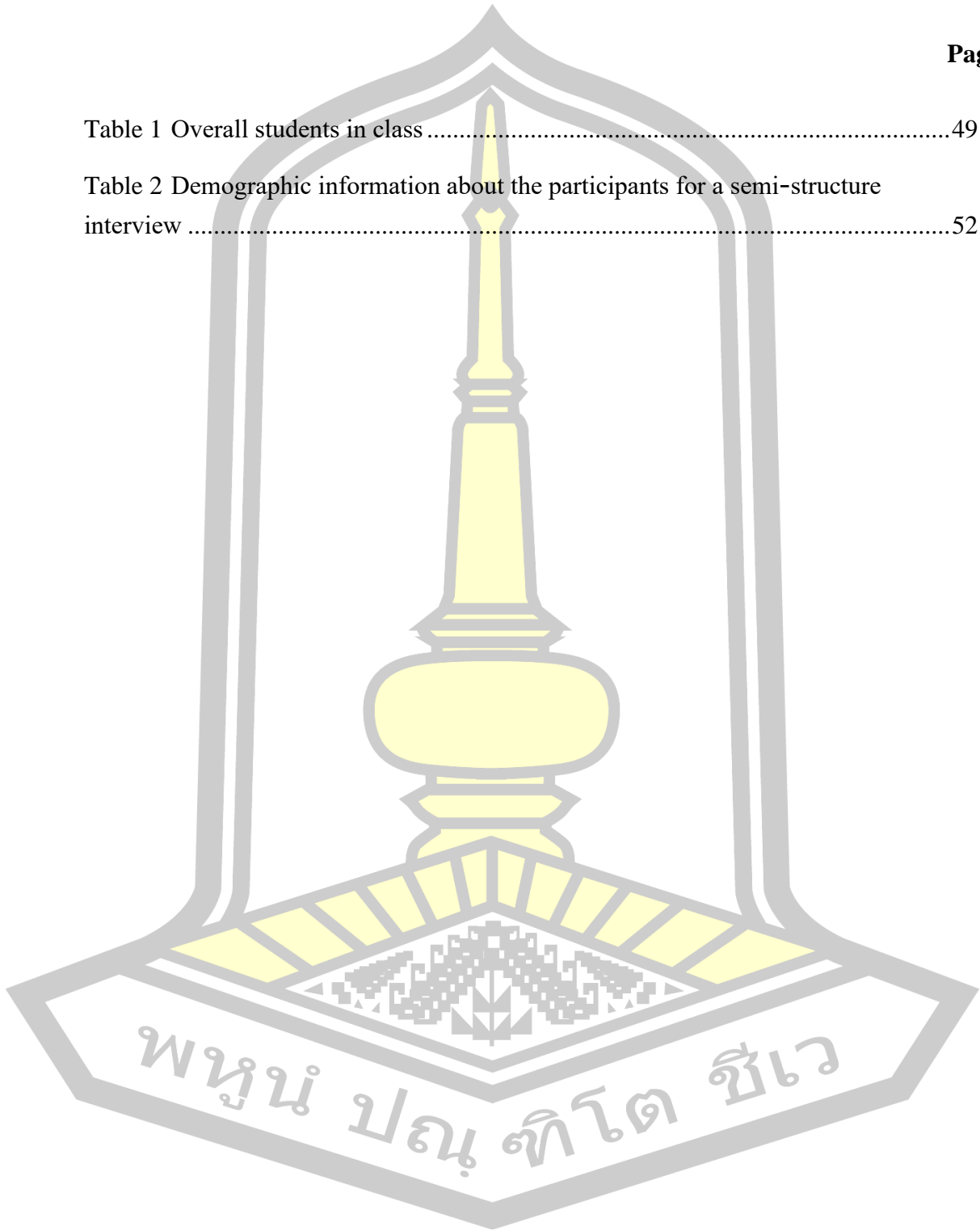
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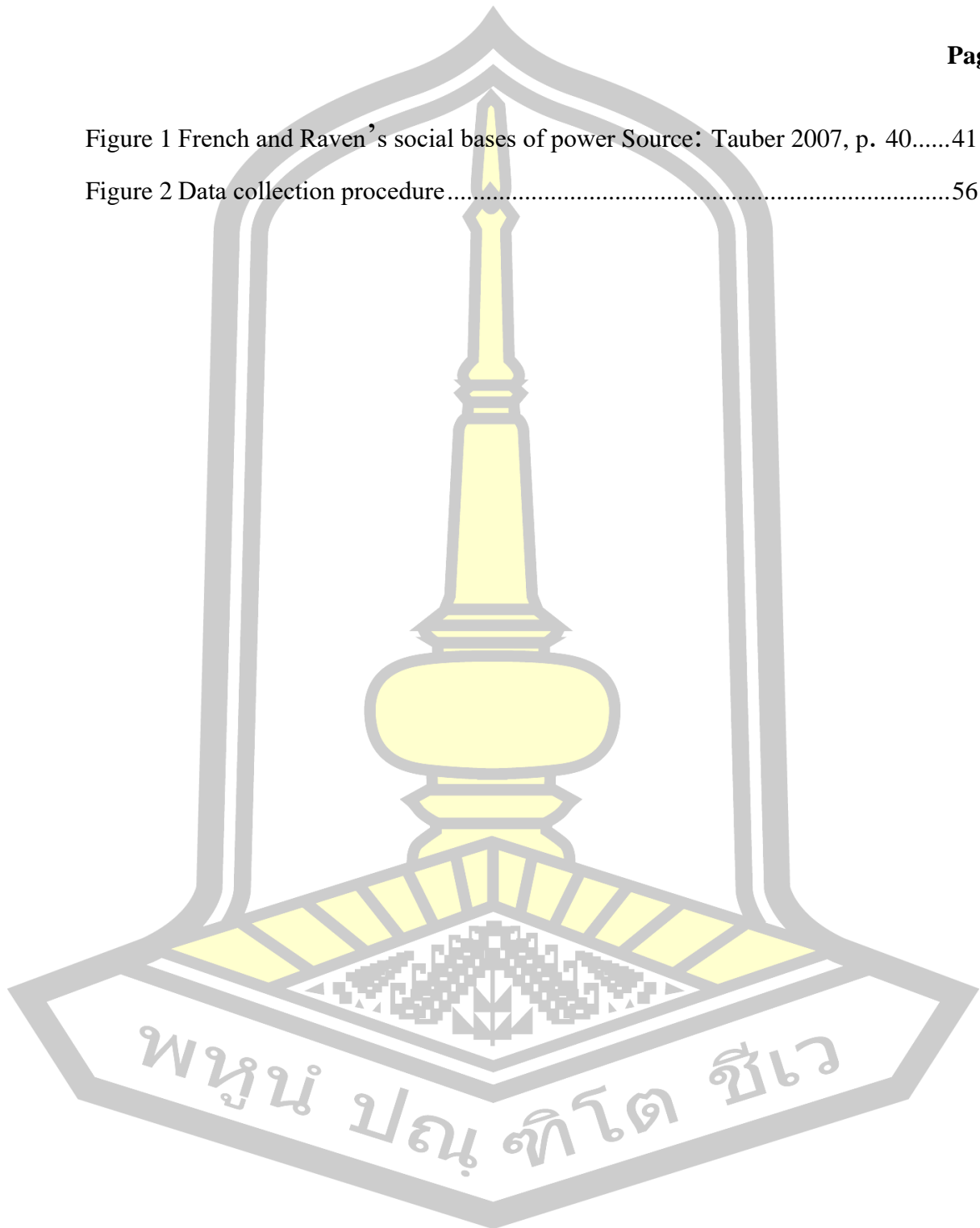
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research. It begins by detailing the background of the study (see 1.1), which sets the context for the research. Following this, the chapter presents the statement of the justification of the study (see 1.2), outlining the specific issues the study addresses. The purpose of the study is then articulated (see 1.3), explaining the study's objectives and intended outcomes. The research questions (see 1.4) are listed to guide the investigation and focus the analysis. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the significance of the study (see 1.5), highlighting the potential contributions and impact of the research. It also delineates the scope of the study (see 1.6), specifying the boundaries and limitations of the research. Key terms used throughout the study are defined (see 1.7) to ensure clarity and consistency in understanding. The chapter concludes with an outline of thesis structure (see 1.8).

1.1 Background of the Study

Establishing strong connections between teachers and students to build credibility and trustworthiness as a source of information is widely recognized as essential for promoting long-term learning (Yakubu, 2023). A considerable body of literature underscores the importance of robust teacher-student relationships for the comprehensive development of students within educational settings (Ahmad, 2018). Hamre and Pianta (2006) argue that positive relationships between students and teachers are a critical asset, enabling students to work independently with the assurance that their teacher will provide support if problems arise. This confidence stems from knowing that their concerns will be acknowledged and addressed. As students begin their formal education, these relationships form the foundation for their successful adaptation to both the social and academic environments (p. 49). Hamre and Pianta (2006, p. 55) emphasize the importance of communication with teachers and classroom observations as essential tools for designing effective interventions. They assert that nurturing strong and supportive relationships with teachers helps students feel safer and more secure within the school environment, enhances their sense of competence, fosters positive relationships with peers, and ultimately

contributes to greater academic achievement (p. 57). Although there is an expanding body of research on this topic, additional empirical studies are necessary to explore various dimensions of teacher-student relationships. This further research aided in more effectively integrating these relationships into existing teacher training programs (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004).

While research has predominantly focused on assessing teacher effectiveness through standardized test scores, there is a considerable body of literature highlighting the importance of a teacher's emotional intelligence in determining their overall effectiveness as an educator (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004; Hamre et al., 2012). An accountability approach that includes a wider range of measures for evaluating effective classroom instructional practices should take into account the relationships teachers build with their students. Marzano (2003) investigated effective teaching practices and concluded that "an effective teacher-student relationship may be the linchpin enabling other aspects to function effectively" (Marzano, 2003, p. 91). This suggests that the quality of teacher-student relationships plays a critical role in facilitating various dimensions of effective teaching. The relationships that teachers establish with their students are crucial for students' academic progress. Relying solely on test scores to measure success does not accurately capture all the factors that contribute to an effective learning environment. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder (2008) agree, noting, "It is surprising that many education policymakers have been misled into thinking that simple quantitative measures such as test scores can be utilized to hold schools accountable for achieving complex educational outcomes" (p. 27). This underscores the necessity of a more holistic approach to evaluating educational success, one that includes the quality of teacher-student relationships.

It is essential for both teachers and students to understand that the roles of teacher and student are interdependent; one cannot exist without the other. Additionally, every teacher should see themselves as a mentor to their students, while every student should regard themselves as a protégé, or at least a friend, of their teacher. Consequently, it is vital for teachers to create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere where students feel comfortable seeking help when they encounter challenges or difficulties. Without such an environment, some students may choose to remain silent

and not seek assistance, potentially leading to academic disengagement or even dropping out of school. A tense classroom environment negatively impacts both teachers and students, making it difficult for either to succeed. Therefore, fostering a positive and approachable atmosphere is crucial for the overall success and well-being of the educational experience. Conversely, positive relationships among students and between students and teachers are strongly associated with increased academic interest and motivation (Furrer, 2014) and greater participation in classroom discussions (Hamre, 2013). These relationships foster a sense of security, creating an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their opinions, which in turn enhances their engagement, motivation, and interest in classroom activities (Baker, 2008). Teacher-student relationships form the academic connection through which teachers impart knowledge and communicate ideas and principles to their students. This connection is one of the most powerful tools teachers have for creating a positive learning environment (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). As Cazden (2001) emphasizes, the development of social relationships can significantly impact effective teaching and the accurate assessment of student performance in the classroom.

1.2 Justification of the Study

Extensive research highlights the importance of a teacher's affective acumen—the ability to understand and respond to students' emotions and needs—in determining their effectiveness as teachers (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004; Hamre et al., 2012). An accountability framework that encompasses a broader spectrum of metrics for assessing effective relationships between teacher and student should incorporate the quality of the relationships that teachers build with their students.

The concept of teachers building connections with their students to establish credibility and trustworthiness as sources of information is crucial for fostering long-term learning (Yakubu, 2023). Relying solely on test scores to measure success fails to capture the full scope of what contributes to an effective learning environment. Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder (2008) noted that it is surprising how many education policymakers have been misled into believing that simple quantitative measures like test scores can hold schools accountable for achieving complex educational outcomes (p. 27).

Meyer and Turner (2002) argued that their findings highlight the significance of both students' and teachers' emotions during learning interactions. They illustrate that "by studying student-teacher interactions, our understanding of what constitutes motivation to learn increasingly involves emotion as essential to learning and teaching" (p. 107). These findings support the need for further research on the role of interpersonal relationships within the educational context and the extent to which these relationships impact students' learning environments. Downey (2008) asserts that the quality of learning in the classroom is directly influenced by the quality of the student-teacher relationship. Mohrman, Tenkasi, and Mohrman (2003) state that "lasting change does not result from plans, blueprints, and events. Rather, change occurs through the interaction of participants" (p. 321). Strong teacher-student relationships can significantly shape a student's educational trajectory (Baker, 2006). This research investigates the relational strategies employed by a female Thai English teacher to create a positive learning environment with her students. Additionally, it explores students' perceptions of these strategies and their influence on the classroom using a case study approach. According to Cazden (2001), establishing social relationships can profoundly impact effective teaching and accurate assessment in the classroom. While existing research extensively explores the positive impact of teacher-student relationships in various EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, a significant gap remains in studies specifically examining these dynamics within Thai EFL classrooms led by Thai teachers. Most of the previous work had primarily focused on teacher actions and strategies, thereby neglecting the valuable insights that student perspectives can offer. This case study aimed to address this two-fold gap by investigating the teacher-student relationship from both perspectives in a Thai EFL setting. By delving into this under-researched area, the study hoped to contribute new knowledge about how these relationships functioned within a specific cultural and linguistic context, potentially informing better educational practices and enhancing learning outcomes in Thai EFL classrooms. Thai teacher-student relationships in higher education were underexplored (Kaur, Young, & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Pianta et al., 2012), with most studies focusing on primary and secondary levels (Wongwanich, Sakolrak, & Piromsombat, 2014). A qualitative case study could address these gaps by examining a Thai university teacher-student relational

strategies, as well as students' perspectives regarding to strategies the teacher employed.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Numerous researchers in the field of education recognize the importance of the relationships established between teachers and their students, which are closely linked to positive academic outcomes. This study aimed to conduct a case study focusing on the methodologies employed in a classroom rich with information, highlighting the teacher-student relationship within an authentic classroom setting. By utilizing responsive interviewing techniques, the researcher intended to uncover the processes of the teacher as she fosters relationships with students and delivers instruction. Downey (2008) argues that "teachers need to comprehend how their daily efforts in classrooms can incorporate interactions and instructional strategies that research has shown to positively impact students at risk of academic underachievement" (p. 56). Darling-Hammond (2006) asserts that "teaching is about serving students, which implies that teachers should understand how students learn and what they need to learn effectively and integrate that into their teaching" (p. 4).

1.4 Research Questions

This qualitative research aimed to explore the following research questions:

1. How does a Thai female university teacher foster a good learning environment with students in the classroom?
2. What are students' perceptions of the teacher's classroom relational strategies in promoting a good classroom learning environment?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Research investigating factors associated with classroom quality suggests that teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward students play a significant role in shaping the quality of education that children receive (Pianta, LaParo, Payne, Cox, & Bradley, 2002). The individual teachers' relationship engage in with their students can deeply influence the students, as highlighted by Downey (2008), who emphasizes the critical importance of teachers' relationships with their students.

While existing research broadly covers teacher-student relationships, this study seeks to delineate intentional affective strategies and relationships employed by a teacher to actively engage students in the learning process. By showcasing relationship-building strategies utilized by a highly effective teacher in a real-world, authentic classroom setting, this study aims to offer valuable guidance for teachers and administrators in the field of education. Building upon their ecological study on teacher-child relationships and behavior problems, O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins (2011) emphasize the importance of nurturing elementary school teachers' awareness of their relationship with students and providing insights on fostering high-quality relationships with them (p. 152). Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that teachers have a responsibility to educate policymakers and the public about the requirements for effective teaching in contemporary times (p. 3). She contends that teachers have a limited ability to shape conducive learning environments that enable teachers to effectively practice and facilitate children's learning and success. Through this case study, we can strive to reclaim a voice in shaping teaching practices conducive to quality learning experiences for children.

The endeavor of teachers to cultivate relationships with their students, aiming to be recognized as credible and trustworthy sources of information, is laudable for promoting sustained learning (Ahmad, 2018; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005; Yakubu, 2023). This study centered on the concrete practices and intentional measures adopted by a teacher to nurture relationships with her students, thereby facilitating effective delivery of instructional content essential for learning.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The concept of teachers building rapport with their students to establish themselves as credible and reliable sources of information is an essential endeavor for promoting long-term learning (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). In this study, the focus centered on the practical techniques and purposeful actions undertaken by a teacher to nurture relationships with her students, including student' perceptions of teacher strategies, thereby facilitating the effective delivery of instructional content crucial for learning.

A specific participant was selected based on criteria such as experience, reputation for effective relationship-building, and willingness to participate, ensuring that the study captured in-depth and meaningful insights.

This qualitative investigation entailed classroom observation, including the teacher's interactions with her students, as well as fieldnotes recorded during these observations. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher to explore her strategies for fostering positive relationships with her students to enhance classroom learning. Data collection spanned a semester and was subjected to qualitative analysis employing content analysis methods.

1.7 Operationalized Definition of Key Terms

Ensuring the precise definition of terms and operationalizations enhances clarity for both researchers and readers by explicitly stating key aspects of the study (Stake, 2010). The following was a list of terms that were used in this study:

1. *Learning environment*: The social, cultural, and physical conditions within the classroom that shape students' experiences, interactions, and academic engagement. It encompasses the teacher's relational strategies, classroom management approaches, and the overall atmosphere that supports or hinders student learning (Rusticus, Pashootan, & Mah, 2023; Shochet et al., 2013).
2. *Teacher-student relationships*: The professional and interpersonal connections between the teacher and students that foster academic success, emotional well-being, and classroom engagement. These relationships are characterized by the teacher's ability to provide academic support, emotional encouragement, and structured guidance that enhances students' confidence and motivation (Hofkens & Pianta, 2022).
3. *Strategies*: The deliberate instructional and relational approaches that the teacher implement to create a supportive and engaging classroom environment. These include structured lesson planning and communication techniques aimed at fostering a positive teacher-student relationship thereby enhancing student participation (Stone & Morris, as cited in Isaac, 2010).
4. *Perception*: Students' and teacher's individual interpretations and evaluations of classroom interactions, relational strategies, and the overall learning

environment. It reflects their subjective experiences, expectations, and emotional responses, which influence their engagement and academic performance (McDonald, 2011).

1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis structure is comprised of five chapters.

Chapter One, the present chapter, serves to introduce the study's background, framework, and purpose. It outlines the research problem, discusses the significance of the study in relation to previous research, and presents the research questions. Additionally, this chapter concludes with the definition of key terms that utilized in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two conducts a comprehensive review of relevant literature. This literature review encompasses a historical overview of the importance of teacher-student relationships and encompasses a diverse array of perspectives from various scholars on the instructional issue investigated.

Chapter Three details the research methodology employed in this study, outlining the instruments, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques to be utilized.

Chapter Four presents the findings and discussion of the study. This chapter synthesizes the results from qualitative interviews and classroom observations, identifying key themes related to the teacher's relational strategies and students' perceptions of a supportive learning environment.

Chapter Five concludes the study by summarizing its key findings, discussing limitations, and outlining the implications for teaching practices and future research. This chapter emphasizes the contributions of the study to the field of teacher-student relationships and classroom learning environments while offering recommendations for enhancing classroom practices and conducting further investigations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a comprehensive literature review focusing on teacher-student relationships, examining the influence these relationships have on the learning environment, and exploring various scholarly perspectives on the topic. The chapter is structured as follows: it begins with an introduction (see 2.1), followed by a discussion of the background of teacher-student relationships (see 2.2). It then provides the nature of the teacher-student relationship (see 2.3). Subsequent sections include importance of teacher-student relationship (see 2.4), perspectives on teacher-student relationships (see 2.5), relational strategies (see 2.6), and teacher-student relationship theory (see 2.7). The chapter concludes with a summary of the key points discussed (see 2.8).

2.1 Introduction

The existing literature provides substantial evidence that strong relationships between teachers and students are critical for the well-being and academic development of students in schools (Kiuru et al., 2020; Lippard et al., 2018; Robinson, 2022; Roorda et al., 2017). Over the past decades, numerous studies across various research genres have explored the dynamics of teacher-student relationships and their impact on learning outcomes. These studies consistently demonstrate that the nature and quality of the relationship between teachers and students significantly influence students' educational experiences and achievements (Guo et al., 2010; Thornberg et al., 2022). This body of research underscores the importance of fostering positive and supportive relationships in educational settings to enhance student learning and development.

Sociologists, psychologists, social constructivists, and teachers have all contributed significantly to the growing interest in developing interventions aimed at improving the quality of teacher-student relationships. According to Hamre et al. (2012), "teachers need to be actively engaged with students in order for learning to occur" (p. 98). Consequently, contemporary educational environments increasingly prioritize school accountability through standardized test scores, viewing these scores as the primary indicator of an effective learning environment. This shift underscores the

importance of measuring and enhancing the quality of relationships between teachers and students to foster better educational outcomes.

La Paro, Pianta, and Stuhlman (2004) argue that educational policy necessitates schools and classrooms to be held accountable for the academic achievements they produce, such as student performance. However, the mechanisms for ensuring accountability and implementing standardized testing typically commence in the third grade. Strong teacher-student relationships provide a unique entry point for teachers working to improve the social and learning environments of schools and classrooms. These relationships significantly influence the quality of interactions between teachers and students, which in turn affects student learning outcomes. Furthermore, Hamre et al. (2012) hypothesize that it is not enough for teachers to merely acquire knowledge about effective teacher-student relationships; “they must also develop practical skills to identify and implement effective interactions with a high degree of specificity, to ensure these skills translate into meaningful changes in their teaching practices” (p. 98).

Blazar and Kraft (2017) and Engels, Spilt, Denies, and Verschueren (2021) have concluded that teachers exert a significant influence on student learning, with a substantial portion of this impact being attributed to the affective aspects of teaching employed by teachers. The level of intimacy in the teacher-student relationship is determined by the extent of open, affectionate, and harmonious communication (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Students particularly benefit from teachers who cultivate positive relationships with them. The subsequent sections present additional compelling evidence on the significant influence that teacher-student relationships have on the learning environment.

2.2 Background of Teacher-Student Relationships

Effective teaching requires the ability to gauge a student's comprehension of the subject matter and determine the next logical step in their learning process. Roorda et al. (2017) emphasized that a teacher must possess an intuitive understanding of their students' needs, guiding them to uncover necessary knowledge and providing the appropriate resources and support to facilitate their learning journey. This perspective

highlights the importance of a teacher's role in not only delivering content but also in assessing and responding to the unique learning stages of each student. Braun et al. (2019) believed that a successful teacher must be perceptive and proactive, helping students discover essential concepts and then equipping them with the tools and information needed to deepen their understanding and advance their education.

According to Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2010), teachers must possess the capacity to discern which attitudes foster continued growth and which hinder it, employing relational knowledge to craft meaningful educational experiences for students. He emphasizes that teachers serve as conduits through which knowledge, skills, and codes of conduct are imparted, and they must adeptly utilize the physical and social environment to extract the fullest contributions from their students. Cornelius-White and Harbaugh underscores the centrality of human communication in all aspects of human experience, affirming that these interactions form the core of educational endeavors. Nguyen, Lämsä, Dwiarie, and Järvelä (2024) asserts that teachers should aim to cultivate lifelong learners by leveraging their understanding of individuals and fostering social structures that afford every student the opportunity to contribute meaningfully. He posits that education, fundamentally, is a social process, with the development of experience occurring primarily through interaction. Stetsenko (2017) vision encapsulates the notion that education is not merely about the transmission of knowledge but about engaging students in dynamic interactions that promote growth, both intellectually and socially. In essence, Stetsenko perspective highlights the multifaceted role of teachers as architects of meaningful learning experiences and cultivators of social environments conducive to ongoing intellectual and personal development. By recognizing the interconnectedness of individuals and the profound impact of social interactions, Stetsenko advocates for an educational approach that prioritizes collaboration, communication, and the cultivation of a lifelong thirst for knowledge and growth.

Vygotsky (as cited in Margolis, 2020) proposed that higher mental functions are developed through social and cultural transmission. He posited that intellectual development occurs through language-mediated dialogues between teachers and

students. Vygotsky suggested that instructional messages transition from external dialogue to internal speech, organizing students' thoughts and becoming internal mental functions. Central to Vygotsky's theory is the notion of mediated development, wherein skilled teachers shape students' thinking processes through purposeful interaction. According to Vygotsky, learning stimulates various internal development processes that are activated when a child is engaged with others in their environment and collaborates with peers. Vygotsky criticized tests as inadequate measures of a child's learning potential, advocating instead for the process of concept formation through relationships between children and adults as a more effective means of assessing learners' abilities. Vygotsky introduced the concept of the zone of proximal development, which emphasizes the importance of relationships between a child and an adult in facilitating the child's understanding of adult reasoning and learning new concepts. He defined the zone of proximal development as the distance between the actual development level and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance. This concept underscores the critical role of scaffolding by adults in enabling children to reach their full learning potential. In essence, Vygotsky's theory underscores the social and interactive nature of intellectual development, highlighting the essential role of language-mediated dialogues and guided interactions in shaping students' mental functions. By emphasizing the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of supportive adult-child relationships in facilitating children's learning and development.

Jackson (1968, as cited in Craig & Flores, 2020), renowned for his seminal study on classroom dynamics, asserted that the level of social intimacy observed in schools surpasses that which is found in other societal settings. He emphasized the pivotal role of the teacher in orchestrating the flow of classroom dialogue, noting that in elementary school settings, teachers can engage in up to one thousand interpersonal exchanges per day. Hence, Jackson suggests that analysing these interpersonal exchanges could yield valuable insights into the learning processes occurring within these relationships. Put differently, Jackson's research underscores the significance of examining the intricate social dynamics within classrooms as a means of

understanding the educational experiences of students. By recognizing the teacher's central role in shaping classroom relationships and the frequency of interpersonal exchanges in educational settings, Jackson highlights the potential of studying these exchanges to gain deeper insights into the learning processes unfolding within classrooms.

2.3 The Nature of Teacher-Student Relationship

The emotional aspect of teaching is encapsulated in the concept of a relationship, which is defined as “a state of connectedness between people, especially an emotional connection” (Webster Dictionary, 2024). Consequently, a teacher-student relationship can be defined as “the emotional bond shared between a student and a teacher” (Newberry & Davis, 2008, p. 1966). The strength of this bond directly influences the quality of the relationship. Various factors related to both the teacher and the student can influence and modify the quality of these relationships (Kintu, Zhu & Kagambe, 2017; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

2.3.1 Defining a Good Teacher-Student Relationship

Definitions of high-quality teacher-student relationships, or what constitutes good teacher-student rapport, are characterized by minimal conflict and a high degree of closeness (Hagenauer, Muehlbacher & Ivanova, 2023; McCormick et al., 2013; White, 2013). Such relationships are marked by affection, warmth, and open communication between the student and teacher (Ahnert, Harwardt-Heinecke, Kappler, Eckstein-Madry, & Milatz, 2012; Pianta, 2001; Vandenbroucke, Spilt, Verschueren, Piccinin, & Baeyens, 2018). This definition draws upon the extended attachment theory derived from studies on mother-child relationships (Korthagen et al., 2014). According to this theory, children require nurturing bonds with their primary caregivers to feel secure; inadequate responsiveness from caregivers during infancy may lead to the development of insecure attachment patterns, which can have adverse effects on children's overall development (Yan, Zhou & Ansari, 2016). The quality of mother-child relationships can influence the nature of relationships that students establish with their teachers (Ansari, Hofkens & Pianta, 2020; Caputi, Lecce & Pagnin, 2017). While attachment theory initially emerged from studies involving young children, it has been extrapolated to research involving older students and

adults (Bergin, 2016; Drugli & Hjemdal, 2013; Riley, 2009; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012).

Students may exhibit one of three distinct patterns characterized by conflict dependence or closeness (Roorda et al., 2017), which are regarded as “internal working models” shaping subsequent relationships (Spilt et al., 2011, p. 463). Patterns marked by conflict or dependence signify insecure relationship patterns, while those characterized by closeness denote a secure relationship pattern (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Students demonstrating insecure patterns often display excessive seeking of contact with teachers, leading to conflict or dependency. Such insecure patterns may deter students from engaging in interactions with teachers. Teachers may encounter challenges in fostering positive relationships with students exhibiting insecure patterns and may exhibit lower levels of affection toward them compared to more cooperative students (Camacho & Parham, 2019; Olivier, Morin & Langlois et al., 2020). Attachment theory posits that good teacher-student relationships are essential for students to feel comfortable in the school environment and effectively concentrate on learning (Hagenauer et al., 2023; Quin, 2017; White, 2013). Thus, a positive teacher-student relationship is considered a prerequisite for effective learning (Korthagen et al., 2014, p.23).

Furthermore, the depiction of an effective teacher-student relationship as characterized by closeness (Roorda et al., 2017) is reinforced in literature using descriptors such as supportive (Longobardi, Settanni, Lin & Fabris, 2020), positive (Liew et al., 2012; Mason, Hajovsky, McCune, & Turek, 2017), and caring (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). This research endeavor involves engaging teachers in discussions regarding their perceptions of a quality teacher-student relationship, particularly focusing on the levels of closeness.

2.3.2 Student Characteristics Influencing the Teacher Relationship

According to Koles, O'Connor, and Collins (2013), the quality of teacher-student relationships is more significantly influenced by student characteristics rather than those of teachers. Research suggests that across all grade levels, boys tend to experience poorer and more conflictual relationships with teachers compared to girls

(Koles et al., 2013; Summers, Davis & Hoy, 2017; Brinkworth, McIntyre, Juraschek & Gehlbach, 2018). Furthermore, student challenges, such as disruptive behavior, may hinder the development of close teacher-student relationships (Scherzinger & Wettstein, 2019), constituting one of the most prominent factors. Students with chronic behavioral issues often encounter a consistent pattern of negative teacher-student relationships throughout their academic years (McGrath & Bergen, 2015).

Behavioral issues encompass not only disruptive and detrimental externalizing behaviors but also withdrawn and internalizing behaviors accompanied by symptoms of depression and anxiety (Berry & O'Connor, 2010; Zee & Roorda, 2018). Students with conflictual relationships with teachers are more likely to engage in open confrontation and actively seek contact with teachers compared to students exhibiting internalizing behaviors (Drugli et al., 2011; Roorda & Koomen, 2021). This pattern may emerge because openly challenging students actively pursue interaction with teachers, while those with internalizing behaviors tend to avoid such interactions (O'Connor & McCarthy, 2007; Pöysä et al., 2019). Similarly, Newberry and Davis (2008) discovered that close teacher-student relationships in three American primary schools relied heavily on students initiating contact, prompting teachers to develop a more personalized relationship. Unfortunately, withdrawn students often receive less attention from teachers compared to their more extroverted peers, resulting in lower levels of closeness (Wu et al., 2015).

The contrasting traits of extroverted and introverted personalities can be characterized as sociable versus shy, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2024a, 2024b). Extroversion tends to be a prevalent personality trait in individualist cultures (Nadeem & Haroon, 2019). Hence, disparities in behavior between introverted and extroverted students in multicultural classrooms may be influenced by their cultural backgrounds in individualist versus collectivist societies. Individualist cultures, as defined by Noprianto (2017) prioritize the self-interests of individuals and their families, while collectivist cultures place strong emphasis on loyalty to larger groups. Another aspect of cultural identification is the concept of power distance, as the extent to which less powerful individuals in a society accept inequality in power. Bakker (2022) posits that in societies with small power distances, teachers expect students to initiate

communication, whereas in those with large power distances, students expect teachers to initiate communication. Similarly, students from collectivist cultures may refrain from speaking in class unless personally prompted by the teacher.

Hence, students from cultural backgrounds divergent from those of their teachers may encounter challenges (Glock, Kovacs, & Pit-ten Cate, 2019; Ho et al., 2012; Roorda et al., 2011), particularly if they hail from high collectivist cultures with significant power distance, as they may be less inclined to initiate contact with teachers. When teachers encounter difficulties with students from different cultural backgrounds, the risk of a negative relationship escalates (Glock, Kovacs, & Pit-ten Cate, 2019; Ho et al., 2012). Research indicates that positive teacher-student relationships wield a more substantial impact on student outcomes for ethnic minority students than for non-minority students (Glock & Böhmer, 2018; Roorda et al., 2011). Consequently, it is imperative for teachers in multicultural school settings to prioritize the development of strong relationships with students, given that students from minority backgrounds rely more heavily on positive teacher relationships (Brok et al., 2010; Wubbels et al., 2016).

Withdrawn student personalities can encompass academically and behaviorally average students, as stated by Newberry (2008), who referred to them as the “forgotten middle” (p. 96). Drawing from attachment theory, confrontational and withdrawn student personalities are indicative of insecure relationship patterns (Thomas, 2012). Nguyen and Wright (2019) found that these student categories were at risk for lower self-esteem. Certain behaviors, such as disengagement, can further suggest their withdrawal (Balwant, 2018; Skinner et al., 2008). Hence, these students often depend on teachers to initiate communication with them, as supportive teacher-student relationships have been shown to bolster students' confidence in themselves as learners (Li, Bergin, & Olsen, 2022; Verschueren et al., 2012). Effective teachers prioritize building students' self-esteem (Kington et al., 2012; Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020), potentially elucidating the link between positive teacher-student relationships and students' motivation levels (Crossman, 2007; Li, Bergin, & Olsen, 2022), aligning with the proficiency requirement outlined in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Nonetheless, developing good relationships with these students

demands additional effort from teachers, who often must manage negative emotions like frustration and anger (McGrath & Bergen, 2019).

Consequently, while teachers may feel distant from confrontational and withdrawn students, they tend to feel close to students with friendly and polite personalities (Trajkovik, Malinovski, Stojanovska & Vasileva, 2018). These students typically exhibit a secure relationship pattern with their teacher (Heatly & Votruba-Drzal, 2017) and actively seek positive contact with their teacher. They generally display high levels of engagement and academic performance (Martin & Collie, 2019; Newberry & Davis, 2008; Nurmi, 2012; Roorda et al., 2017). Supporting this perspective, research indicates that students with learning difficulties often have lower-quality relationships with their teachers (Martin & Collie, 2019; Roorda et al., 2011, 2017). The study suggests that teachers' preference for high-achieving students may foster positive relationships, which, in turn, could lead to higher student achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Košir & Tement, 2014). This possibility arises from the limitations inherent in many studies examining teacher-student relationships, which have predominantly been non-experimental and cross-sectional. These studies primarily demonstrate correlational rather than causal influences between relationship quality and learning achievements (Cornelius-White, 2007; McCormick et al., 2013; Roorda et al., 2017). However, research exploring the causal relationship between teacher-student relationships and student outcomes suggests a bidirectional effect (Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; Quin, 2017). To elucidate, student performance, participation, and the quality of teacher-student relationships are interconnected elements within a dynamic system of reciprocal influence (Tao et al., 2022).

2.3.3 Teacher Characteristics and Student Relationship

Cornelius-White (2007; 2010) juxtaposes the realm of teacher-student relationships with person-centered and learner-centered education models rooted in humanistic and constructivist theories. Both models underscore teacher attributes such as warmth and empathy (Pakarinen et al., 2020). Learner-centered education, influenced by Carl Rogers' client-centered therapy, underscores the significance of positive teacher-student connections for optimal learning outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007).

Bialystok and Kukar (2018) posited that fostering a conducive learning environment necessitates teachers to embody sincerity, caring, and empathy in their relationships with students. These teacher dispositions, according to Bialystok and Kukar (2018), foster students' self-assurance and enhance their learning experiences significantly.

Similarly, literature scrutinizing the traits of outstanding, exemplary, skilled, or proficient teachers portrays them as compassionate (Gentry et al., 2011; Stronge, 2018; Uitto, 2011). For instance, two studies conducted respectively in Israel by Arnon & Reichel (2009) and in Finland by Uitto (2012) polled the general public about their perceptions of a good teacher. The Israeli study underscores desirable teacher qualities such as empathy, compassion, and authority (Arnon & Reichel, 2009). Uitto's research (2012, 2011), involving recollections from 141 individuals regarding their teachers, highlighted that good teachers actively engaged with students' ideas and interests, fostering an environment where students felt acknowledged and respected. Additionally, Gentry, Steenbergen-Hu, and Choi (2011) examined 17 American teachers deemed exemplary by their students to identify common characteristics. Their findings revealed four themes delineating teachers' traits: personal investment in students, deep understanding of their students, establishment of high expectations, rendering teaching meaningful and relevant, and deriving joy from their teaching roles (Gentry et al., 2011). Likewise, in a study by Floress, Beschta, Meyer, & Reinke (2017), good teachers were recognized for their provision of praise and maintenance of high expectations for their students.

Another trait highly esteemed by students is the utilization of humor by teachers to infuse learning with enjoyment (Bieg & Dresel, 2018; Kington et al., 2012). Humor serves a social function and can alleviate stress levels (Moran & Hughes, 2006; Savage, Lujan, Thipparthi, & DiCarlo, 2017). Consequently, classroom rapport flourishes when teachers and students share moments of laughter together (Cholewa et al., 2012; Jeder, 2015; Uitto, 2012), such as when humorous anecdotes or jokes are exchanged (Gentry et al., 2011; Jeder, 2015; Knoell, 2012). Similarly, the act of teachers smiling at students is pivotal for students to perceive a positive attitude from their teacher (Cholewa et al., 2012; Krane, Ness, Holter-Sorensen, Karlsson & Binder, 2017; Newberry, 2010). Furthermore, research also identifies various forms of body

language, including tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, and frequent eye contact with students (Bambaeroo & Shokrpour, 2017; Cholewa et al., 2012; Knoell, 2012; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). Employing humor and positive body language can instill in students the perception that the teacher holds them in high regard, thereby bolstering their self-esteem and motivation (Crossman, 2007; Reschly et al., 2008; Savage et al., 2017).

However, both humor and body language can be wielded unfavorably (Bilokçuoğlu & Debreli, 2018; Uitto, 2011). Research demonstrates that memories of being laughed at and ridiculed by teachers can linger profoundly (Uitto, 2011). Students keenly discern how teachers regard them, which significantly impacts their motivation, as evidenced by an observation from an American first-grader in Daniels, Kalkman, and McCombs (2001), who noted, “she smiles at other kids, but not at me” (p. 268). Hence, emotional self-regulation emerges as a pivotal and foundational skill for teachers. This entails the ability to remain composed and refrain from displaying anger and frustration (Harvey et al., 2012; Madalinska-Michalak, 2015). Particularly crucial is the equitable treatment of all students by teachers, steering clear of criticism, blame, and ridicule (Cholewa et al., 2012; Knoell, 2012; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Instead, teachers should strive for impartiality and a forgiving demeanor (Cooper, 2010; Grant, 2017). Consequently, teachers’ socio-emotional competence, including their ability to perceive students’ emotions, proves indispensable for fostering positive teacher-student relationships (Jenning & Greenberg, 2009; Poulou, 2017).

The delineated attributes of effective teachers encompass traits such as compassion, warmth, care, and impartiality, which align with an ethics of care approach to teaching. According to an ethics of care theory, teachers have a responsibility to be compassionate (Noddings, 2013; Whitehead, Schonert-Reichl, Oberle, & Boyd, 2023), which is further categorized into two forms of caring. Ethical care can manifest as a sense of duty, while natural care involves an innate fondness for students (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020; Newberry, 2010). Noddings (2013) contends that through the practice of ethical caring, teachers can undergo a transformative process leading to a genuine sense of caring for students. Moreover, teachers' attitudes and the quality of teacher-student relationships can be enhanced as teachers cultivate empathy for

students by developing a deeper understanding of them (Cooper, 2010). Two in-depth case studies conducted in the United States by Newberry (2010) and Worthy and Patterson (2001) exemplify such a process, illustrating that transitioning from ethical caring to natural caring is facilitated when teachers sincerely engage as reflective practitioners (Schön, 2017) of their own behaviors and student relationships.

However, establishing robust relationships with students demands considerable effort from teachers (Hattie, 2009; St-Amand, Girard & Smith, 2017) because teaching entails emotional labor (Chang, 2009; Poulou, 2017). As previously noted, this task becomes particularly challenging when dealing with students who seek conflict or avoid engagement. Noddings (2013) illustrates that to foster a positive teacher-student relationship, students must reciprocate the teacher's efforts in some manner, such as by asking questions, demonstrating effort, or participating (p. 68). Despite its inherent asymmetry, the teacher-student relationship is inherently reciprocal; both parties must feel valued and respected (Heinrichs, Ziegler & Warwas, 2021). Newberry (2008, 2006) posits that teachers may experience feelings of rejection when students avoid interacting with them, and overcoming this rejection and reaching out to unresponsive students necessitates emotional exertion. Teachers may encounter challenges in determining the appropriate response to students who exhibit avoidance behaviors (Ginsburg, Pella, DeVito & Chan, 2023; O'Connor & McCarthy, 2007).

However, given their adult status and more influential position, the teacher primarily shapes the quality of the relationship (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). This underscores the critical importance of teachers' interpersonal behavior in teacher education programs. The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (MITB), developed in the Netherlands in the 1980s by Wubbels (2013), offers a framework to enhance awareness of teacher behavior. This model delineates eight types of teacher behavior: steering, friendly, understanding, accommodating, uncertain, dissatisfied, reprimanding, and enforcing (Wubbels, 2013). Teachers characterized by a balance between student support and classroom management demonstrate an ethics of care approach toward their students (Gage, Scott, Hirn, & MacSuga-Gage, 2018; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005).

Research on effectiveness has also explored the impact of teacher experience on teacher-student relationships (Li et al., 2022). Li et al. (2022) observed that positive teacher-student relationships foster the utilization of complex teaching practices, contrary to the findings of Cornelius-White (2007). Conversely, some studies have suggested that teachers with more experience may exhibit poorer relationships with students (Erdem-Keklik & Keklik, 2014; Mashburn et al., 2006), possibly due to teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Yin, Huang & Chen, 2019). While teachers tend to enhance their effectiveness over the initial five years of teaching, the impact on student learning diminishes thereafter (Boonen et al., 2014). As teachers approach the latter stages of their careers, typically after 20 years, they often perceive a growing disconnect in their relationships, potentially attributed to an increasing age gap with older teachers feeling less connected to their students (Brekelmans et al., 2005).

Critics caution that directing attention to emotions and nurturing relationships within schools may steer teachers toward roles resembling those of social workers and therapists (Ecclestone et al., 2005; Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009). For instance, Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) argue that an excessive focus on affective educational outcomes may result in a diminished view of individuals as emotionally fragile and lacking in self-esteem (p. 372). This shift undermines the traditional educational goal of intellectual learning by no longer treating personal and social outcomes as mere by-products of schooling (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009). However, despite the recognition of theoretical and empirical evidence regarding the importance of positive teacher-student relationships for cognitive and behavioral outcomes, as discussed in this chapter, there is a risk of overly prioritizing academic performance, overlooking the potential negative impact of emotional well-being on students (Fielding, 2007; Hargreaves & Preece, 2014; Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2020).

2.4 Importance of Teacher-Student Relationship

The initial phase of research on teacher-student relationships encompasses numerous quantitative studies aimed at assessing the impact of relationship quality on student outcomes (Hughes, 2012; Quin, 2017). The efficacy of these investigations is evident in meta-analyses conducted by Cornelius-White (2007), Roorda, Jak, Zee, Oort &

Koomen (2017) and Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, and Oort (2011). Notably, a significant portion of these studies originates from the United States. For instance, Cornelius-White (2007) examined data spanning from 1948 to 2004, involving 355,325 students and 14,851 teachers across Brazil, Canada, Germany, the UK, and the USA. Similarly, Roorda et al. (2011) synthesized findings from 99 research studies conducted between 1990 and 2011, encompassing 129,423 students from diverse regions, including Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, and the USA. Both reviews underscored a strong association between positive teacher-student relationships and student interactions and outcomes.

In addition, Roorda et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate whether student engagement mediates the relationship between affective teacher-student relationships and student achievement. This comprehensive analysis incorporated 189 studies involving 249,198 students from preschool to high school. The study differentiated between positive relationship aspects, such as closeness, and negative aspects, such as conflict. The results indicated that both types of relationships were partially mediated by student engagement, a finding consistent across primary and secondary school settings. Notably, a more robust direct association between positive relationships and engagement was observed in secondary school. Furthermore, longitudinal analyses confirmed the presence of partial mediation, highlighting the nuanced interplay between teacher-student relationships, student engagement, and academic achievement across educational contexts.

2.4.1 Teacher-Student Relationship Vs. Learning Achievement

The synthesis of research on teacher-student relationships within the broader context of educational effectiveness offers valuable insights. Hattie's (2009) comprehensive synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses, spanning 52,637 quantitative studies and involving 236 million students, sheds light on what constitutes effective practices in education. Notably, the majority of these studies were conducted in developed countries, particularly the USA (Hattie, 2009). Hattie's findings indicate that 95 percent of educational interventions have a positive impact on achievement. Thus, the crucial inquiry shifts from discerning what works in education, as most initiatives yield positive outcomes, to identifying interventions with above-average impacts on

learning. The synthesis underscores the significance of various factors across student, home, school, curriculum, teacher, and teaching approach categories in influencing academic achievement.

In terms of the importance of teacher-student relationship quality, Hattie (2009) draws upon Cornelius-White's (2007) meta-analysis, which highlights learner-centered education's emphasis on the pivotal role of teacher-student relationships in fostering learning achievement and mitigating disruptive behavior, absenteeism, and dropout rates. This assertion is further supported by Roorda et al. (2017), who reaffirm the robust association between positive teacher-student relationships and improved student engagement and learning outcomes. Hattie (2009) concludes that Cornelius-White's meta-analysis underscores the critical role of teachers in nurturing strong relationships with students, fostering increased engagement, mutual respect, reduced resistance, enhanced student-initiated activities, and ultimately, elevated learning outcomes (p. 119).

However, the use of meta-analysis as a research method faces criticism for its practice of comparing and amalgamating studies with differing characteristics, akin to comparing 'apples and oranges' (Hattie, 2009). Meta-analysis involves a systematic review of existing literature, employing specialized statistical techniques to amalgamate and synthesize findings into a single quantitative estimate (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006, p.19). Despite this, Hattie (2009) rebuffs the contention that comparing two non-identical studies is inherently flawed, highlighting the inherent diversity among studies; the fundamental query revolves around understanding how studies vary across different factors (p. 10). Petticrew and Roberts (2006) draw a comparison between a systematic review and a survey of individual studies (p. 15), likening each study to a survey respondent. Although respondents differ, addressing a research question is more effectively achieved by considering data from all respondents rather than relying solely on one individual's responses (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Hence, the conclusions drawn from meta-analyses by Cornelius-White (2007), Hattie (2009), and Roorda et al. (2011, 2017) underscore a robust overall consensus regarding the significance of teacher-student relationship quality for student achievement, notwithstanding the diverse findings across individual studies.

2.4.2 Influence of Relationship Quality on Learning and Motivation

The studies conducted by Cornelius-White (2007) and Roorda et al. (2011, 2017) underscore a strong correlation between the quality of teacher-student relationships and students' motivation to learn, which in turn is intricately linked to academic achievement. More recently, a meta-analysis encompassing 71 studies on students' perceptions of teacher support and academic attainment (Tao, Meng, Gao & Yang, 2022) noted that teachers reported experiencing greater closeness in relationships with highly engaged students. According to Cornelius-White (2007) and Roorda et al. (2011, 2017), the quality of teacher-student relationships exhibits a stronger association with student engagement than with academic achievement. However, the connection between positive teacher-student relationships and achievement is influenced by students' motivational states (Hughes et al., 2008; Martin & Dowson, 2009; Roorda et al., 2017).

In the realm of motivational research, the significance of fostering strong teacher-student relationships is highlighted by self-determination theory, positing that all individuals possess three fundamental psychological needs: relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Relatedness, or the need for belonging, pertains to the innate human desire 'to feel connected to others, to love and care' (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 231). Osterman (2023) contends that the concept of belonging encompasses a sense of community, acceptance, and support, underscoring its broad scope. The need for belonging is deemed 'a fundamental feature of social programs' (Deci & Ryan, 2001, p. 253). However, Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest that the need for belonging persists as a potent motivator, compelling individuals to forge relationships even in adverse circumstances. This need for belonging serves as a powerful impetus (Allen et al., 2021; Baumeister & Leary, 1995), fostering greater student motivation to learn when they feel connected and supported by their teachers (Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Osterman, 2023).

Good teacher-student relationships are intricately linked to students' intrinsic motivation, as evidenced by studies such as Li, Bergin, and Olsen (2022), contrasting with extrinsic motivation driven by external pressures or the pursuit of rewards, as

explored by Howard, Bureau, Guay, Chong, and Ryan (2021). Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) delineate three forms of school engagement: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive, which offer insights into why positive relationships bolster intrinsic motivation. Emotional engagement pertains to students' affective responses, encompassing feelings of boredom or interest (Dewaele & Li 2021; Fredricks et al., 2004). Teacher warmth and attentiveness have the potential to foster a sense of belonging and affinity toward school among students. Such positive emotions have been shown to bolster student motivation (Skinner et al., 2008) and can translate into behavioral engagement as students actively participate in learning activities and adhere to classroom rules (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Thus, the journey of student engagement often commences with fondness, paving the way for active involvement (Fredricks et al., 2004), as students may exert greater effort for teachers they admire (Davis, 2006). Consequently, student involvement may be spurred by external motivations, such as the desire to garner approval from teachers. For instance, students may seek teacher favor and attention as a form of reward, driven by a sense of 'feeling special and valued' (Furrer & Skinner, 2003, p. 149). Over time, emotional engagement can evolve into cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004), characterized by intrinsic motivation to learn fueled by a genuine enjoyment of the learning process.

2.4.3 Good Teacher-Student Relationships and Failure

Positive relationships between students and teachers play a crucial role and can act as a preventive measure for students who are at risk of experiencing academic difficulties or failure (Baker, 2006; Decker et al., 2007; McGrath & Bergen, 2015; O'Connor et al., 2011; Spilt et al., 2012a). This includes students facing behavioral challenges, learning disabilities, economic disadvantages, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds (Lathren, Rao, Park & Bluth, 2021; Ly et al., 2012; McCormick et al., 2013; Niehaus et al., 2012; O'Connor et al., 2011; Roorda et al., 2011). For instance, a study by Hamre and Pianta (2005), which followed 910 American first-graders over one year, discovered that at-risk students in classrooms with strong teacher support achieved at the same level as low-risk peers, while those

in less supportive environments exhibited lower achievement and increased conflicts with teachers.

Negative teacher-student relationships, particularly marked by conflict, can have severe detrimental effects on students, surpassing the impact of simply lacking closeness in teacher-student relationships (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Mason, Hajovsky, McCune & Turek, 2017; Rudasill, 2011). Despite this, research by Hughes, Wu, and Kwok (2012a) indicates that conflictual relationships with teachers can induce feelings of discomfort and insecurity in students, impeding their ability to focus on learning. For instance, Palestinian children in a study by Affounh and Hargreaves (2015) reported being unable to learn when they felt scared of their teachers, describing it as a situation where 'my brain stops' (p. 9). This assertion was supported by findings from a German study (Ahnert et al., 2012) that assessed stress management in first-graders by analyzing cortisol levels in saliva samples. It found that students experiencing conflictual teacher-student relationships exhibited inadequate down-regulation of cortisol levels, indicating prolonged stress compared to those with positive relationships (Ahnert et al., 2012).

Specifically concerning the extent of students' struggles with poor teacher-student relationships, O'Connor and McCartney's (2007) study, which involved 880 American children, demonstrated that 13 percent exhibited a suboptimal relationship pattern. Contrasting this, Murray and Greenberg's (2000) study of 289 American elementary school students revealed a higher figure, with approximately 25 percent of students categorized as having dysfunctional teacher-student relationships. Additionally, Pianta (1994) identified 25.5 percent of American preschool students as experiencing difficulties in their relationships with their teachers.

2.4.4 Teacher-Student Relationship Vs. Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Research indicates that positive relationships with students are equally beneficial for teachers, with good teacher-student relationships serving as a primary source of motivation (Li et al., 2022; Veldman et al., 2013). Teachers have consistently reported that positive teacher-student relationships are the primary motivator (Cui, 2022; Day & Gu, 2013), while negative teacher-student relationships are commonly cited as

sources of stress and burnout among teachers (Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Shen et al., 2015; Ramberg et al., 2020), often leading them to consider leaving their positions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This is particularly evident given the emotional labor, such as managing feelings of anger, inherent in teachers' work, especially when dealing with disruptive student behavior (Aloe et al., 2014; Martin & Collie, 2019). Goetz et al. (2021) identified a spectrum of emotions experienced by teachers during instruction. Negative emotions include anger, anxiety, disappointment, frustration, and guilt, while positive emotions encompass excitement, joy, and pride. Experiencing positive emotions stemming from successful relationships with students is vital for cultivating teachers' resilience and confidence in their effectiveness as teachers (Scales et al., 2020).

2.5 Perspectives on Teacher-Student Relationships

Over the past few decades, significant scholarly inquiry has delved into diverse viewpoints concerning teacher-student relationships. Despite their varied nature, these perspectives often converge on several fundamental principles. The ensuing subsections offer a range of perspectives on the influence of teacher-student relationships on the learning environment, encompassing discoveries and implications delineated by researchers. This comprehensive examination provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics inherent in teacher-student relationships and their consequential effects on the educational landscape.

2.5.1 Educationist Perspective

Downey (2008) undertook a comprehensive study synthesizing educational research to identify factors influencing academic achievement. The primary aim of the study was to investigate classroom practices that proved beneficial for all students, with a particular focus on those deemed as a heightened risk of academic underachievement. The findings highlighted the pivotal role of a teacher's personal relationships with their students in influencing academic outcomes significantly. Downey's analysis underscores the importance of teachers establishing robust interpersonal connections with their students, which involves recognizing and nurturing their strengths while maintaining high, yet, realistic expectations for their academic success. These

interactive relationships are advocated to be built upon principles of respect, trust, care, and unity, fostering a sense of belonging among students, which in turn has a profound impact on their academic accomplishments. Downey emphasizes that “the study serves as a potent reminder of the critical importance of daily teacher-student interactions within the classroom” (p. 63).

Ravitch (2010) contends that the fundamental aim of education extends beyond the mere attainment of higher test scores; rather, “it is to cultivate responsible individuals with well-developed minds and admirable character traits” (p. 227). She argues that the prevailing system of school accountability is flawed, characterized by “overly rigid criteria and excessively severe consequences, rendering it ineffective” (p. 163). Ravitch warns against the detrimental effects of an overemphasis on test scores, suggesting that such a narrow focus may erode students' intrinsic motivation to learn and their enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge.

Moreover, Ravitch (2010) criticizes the teacher evaluation system for its inadequate consideration of the affective domain, highlighting a deficiency in assessing effective teaching practices. She observes that the evaluation system disproportionately prioritizes the assessment of students' learning outcomes based on test scores, thereby neglecting other crucial dimensions of teaching effectiveness and the holistic development of students. This narrow approach fails to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of education and undermines the significance of fostering positive teacher-student relationships and nurturing students' socio-emotional growth alongside academic achievement.

Langer (1997) posits that “individuals are more likely to be influenced by and retain information when it originates from a respected source, compared to when it comes from an untrustworthy one” (p. 86). The initial acquisition of information is heavily influenced by the credibility of its source. Furthermore, Langer suggests that when individuals engage in mindful learning, maintaining an open and receptive attitude towards the potential variations of information across different contexts, they are more likely to retain the knowledge acquired. In essence, by cultivating strong connections with students, teachers facilitate the development of critical and enduring

learners. Consequently, while the memory of the source of information may diminish over time, the acquired knowledge endures (Langer, 1997).

Cazden (2001) contends that students' intellectual abilities are intimately linked to the social relationships they cultivate, both within the school environment and at home. Familiarity with subject matter enhances their capacity to respond effectively, which is essential for facilitating learning. Cazden underscores the importance of fostering an affective interpersonal relationship between teachers and students, asserting that such relationships are integral to establishing a conducive learning environment. By fostering a learning environment characterized by mutual investment from all stakeholders, the learning process is positively influenced. Cazden emphasizes the significance of teacher-student relationships, emphasizing their relevance in both whole-class lessons and individual seat work assignments, with a particular focus on recognizing each student as an individual. This approach ensures that each student becomes "an integral component of the official learning environment" (p. 131).

Marzano (2003) advocates for a critical inquiry into understanding the factors that contribute to enhancing student achievement by posing the question, "What influence does an individual teacher exert on a student beyond the collective efforts of the school?" (p. 71). He asserts that researchers widely concur that the decisions made by individual teachers have a significantly greater impact than those made at the institutional level. Marzano emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between 'dominance and collaboration' in fostering effective teacher-student relationships (p. 49). He suggests that demonstrating a genuine interest in students as individuals positively affects their learning outcomes.

Furthermore, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) assert the necessity for teachers to demonstrate personal interest in their students is deemed essential for fostering effective learning environments. It is widely acknowledged that the relationships between teachers and students plays a pivotal role in shaping student outcomes. This recognition underscores the importance of fostering positive and supportive teacher-student relationships as a cornerstone of effective educational practices. As earlier

mentioned, such relationships are characterized by mutual respect, trust, and collaboration, creating an environment conducive to student growth and achievement.

2.5.2 Psychological Perspective

Sarason (1999) conceptualizes teaching as a form of performance art, delving into the intricacies of the “art of teaching” and underscoring the pivotal role of teacher-student relationships in cultivating a conducive learning environment. He contends that following World War II, there has been a shift in teacher training, with education increasingly prioritizing subject matter over pedagogy. This shift, according to Sarason, neglects the essential responsibility of teachers to comprehend students’ needs and render the subject matter engaging, motivating, and compelling to them (p. 97). Such an individual would possess the ability to comprehend, motivate, and guide students’ intellectual and socio-personal development. Sarason asserts that a lack of understanding of students’ minds and emotions undermines effective learning, emphasizing that this comprehension forms the foundation of all educational endeavors.

Sarason posits that productive learning is characterized by three overarching principles. Firstly, it involves recognizing and respecting the individuality of each learner. Secondly, teachers must possess a thorough understanding of the subject matter to anticipate potential challenges students may face and intervene effectively to prevent such difficulties. Thirdly, teachers should consistently explore methods to engage and motivate students, igniting their passion for learning. Through the establishment of meaningful relationships with students, teachers can fulfil what Sarason contends is the primary objective of education: to inspire learners to undergo personal and cognitive growth. Moreover, Sarason identifies the absence of a systematic framework for evaluating teacher-student interactions as a significant concern in the field of education. He argues that this deficiency will perpetually disadvantage future generations of students and teachers (p. 113). Teachers are urged to cultivate relationships with their students that foster trust, respect, and an understanding of their individual learning needs. Sarason deems this interpersonal aspect as a crucial component of the teaching and learning process, urging teachers to

embody the roles of both accomplished performers and insightful psychologists (p. 67).

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) conducted an examination into the motivational beliefs and values that shape students' learning processes, defining motivation as the study of action, particularly focusing on achievement motivation. They argue that individuals harbor expectations for achieving success along with values and motives that drive their engagement in activities. The anticipation of success and perceived control over outcomes are linked to beliefs that energize individuals when undertaking tasks, especially challenging ones, are more engaged. While some individuals possess a robust sense of self-efficacy, others exhibit a weaker sense of self-efficacy. Eccles and Wigfield assert that a lack of awareness regarding the factors influencing one's successes and failures undermines motivation to pursue related tasks (p. 111). They ascertain that possessing a strong sense of control and confidence in one's abilities is conducive to achieving success. Furthermore, a study by Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Connell (cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) tracked the development of students' perceptions over several academic years, comparing their perceived sense of control to their perceptions of teacher-student interactions. The study revealed that "students who perceived teachers as warm and supportive had a more positive perception of their control over outcomes" (p. 112). This finding underscores the significant impact of teacher-student relationships on students' motivational beliefs and highlights the importance of supportive teacher behaviors in fostering students' sense of control and confidence in their academic endeavors.

Hamre and Pianta (2006) along with Roorda et al. (2017) conducted studies on the importance of teacher-student relationships, asserting that robust connections between teachers and students serve as a vital resource, fostering students' sustained engagement in academic endeavors. Prolonged engagement in such activities correlates with enhanced academic performance. Hamre and Pianta reference the work of Gregory and Weinstein (2004), who found that the strength of the bond between students and their teachers is the most significant factor influencing academic progress from 8th to 12th grade (p. 50). Similarly, Sakellariou and Tsiara

(2020) discovered that students lacking positive connections with their teachers were less likely to participate in classroom activities and achieve academic success. The repercussions of these negative relationships persisted into first and second grade, affecting the quality of students' interactions, as observed by Pianta and Hamre (2006). A negative teacher-student relationship is considered predictive of "long-term academic issues" and indicative of potential future school-related challenges (p. 52), underscoring the imperative for teachers to establish strong connections that directly influence students' long-term academic achievements. Hamre and Pianta (2006) advocate for schools to actively encourage staff members to engage with students and understand their interests outside of academics to forge a more personal connection. They argue that robust teacher-student relationships are pivotal for academic success, and initiatives. Fostering such connections should be explicitly integrated into school intervention plans (p. 56). These supportive relationships empower students to feel capable of making academic progress. Furthermore, Hamre and Pianta acknowledge the growing body of research supporting the efficacy of cultivating teacher-student relationships and advocate for further empirical evidence to refine strategies for scaling up and sustaining initiatives targeting these relationships. They contend that this approach will enable schools to better address the diverse learning needs within classrooms.

2.5.3 Sociological Perspective

Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder (2004) delved into the repercussions of youth alienation from the school community on their academic and behavioral performance. They defined alienation as a sense of detachment or isolation from others and posited that students' feelings of alienation contribute to academic challenges that, in turn, manifest as broader societal issues (p. 60). Emphasizing the importance of considering the social dynamics within schools, including the quality of teacher-student relationships, the researchers investigated whether the affective dimension of these relationships could forecast academic progress and behavioral outcomes. A longitudinal study involving adolescents in grades 7-12 revealed a correlation between positive teacher-student relationships and enhanced student outcomes, encompassing both academic achievement and behavioral conduct. Crosnoe et al.

noted that students who held favorable perceptions of their teachers tended to perform better academically and exhibit fewer difficulties in school (p. 75). Drawing from these findings, the researchers advocate for a more nuanced exploration of teacher-student connections, with a particular focus on the affective elements of these relationships. They contend that fostering positive student-teacher relationships should be prioritized, given their potential as valuable resources for schools. Moreover, they suggest that students should be actively encouraged to develop such relationships, as promoting interpersonal connections from a sociological standpoint is deemed integral to sustaining students' commitment to the educational process.

Additionally, Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder (2004) highlight the need for further investigation into the multifaceted dynamics of teacher-student interactions. They propose that comprehensive research should delve deeper into the emotional dimensions of these relationships, recognizing their potential to significantly influence students' academic engagement and well-being. This approach aligns with the sociological perspective, which underscores the pivotal role of interpersonal connections in shaping individuals' educational experiences and overall educational outcomes.

2.5.4 Students' Perspectives

McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) conducted a study concentrating on "at-risk students," a categorization encompassing students deemed most susceptible to encountering adverse developmental or academic outcomes. McGrath and Van Bergen observed that these at-risk students frequently expressed sentiments of alienation and disengagement from the school milieu. According to student feedback, their contentment with school experiences was profoundly shaped by their perception of having a nurturing and supportive rapport with their teachers. McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) contend that the prevailing emphasis on teaching methods and curriculum has overshadowed the significance of fostering strong teacher-student relationships. They argue that the substantial amount of time elementary students spend under the guidance of a single teacher presents an opportune setting for cultivating robust bonds between students and teachers. McGrath and Van Bergen posit that students who exhibit withdrawal tendencies from school "appear to lack

interpersonal connections with adults within the school setting, which could potentially serve as a protective factor against encountering academic or life-related stressors.” They conclude that students’ interactions with their teachers and the quality thereof have the potential to significantly influence their academic attainment. While McGrath and Van Bergen’s study primarily focused on students deemed “at risk” for academic underachievement or behavioral challenges, her findings hold broader implications for the academic performance of all students.

Brekelmans and Wubbels (2005) undertook a study that revealed a correlation between students’ perceptions of teacher influence and cognitive outcomes. They observed that teachers who scored higher in terms of influence, as measured by interpersonal perception, were associated with higher student outcomes on a physics examination. Their research highlighted the significant impact of the teacher’s influence as a variable at the class level. The findings from their survey unveiled a positive correlation between students’ perceptions of teacher cooperativeness and their cognitive test scores. The report indicated that students who perceived their teachers as more cooperative tended to achieve higher scores on cognitive tests.

2.6 Relational Strategies

This section delineates how teachers’ caring attributes can manifest in practices through relational strategies, elucidating how teachers demonstrate care within the classroom. The concept of relational strategies, as delineated in the works of Jones and Deutsch (2011) and Pantić and Wubbels (2012), pertains to the methodologies teachers utilize to foster positive teacher-student relationships. Jones and Deutsch (2011) define relational strategies as “specific actions” undertaken by adults to establish rapport with young individuals in order to motivate them (p. 1930). A strategy, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2024c), denotes a plan of action devised to achieve a long-term or overarching goal. Therefore, the aim of this study was to unveil relational strategies that aid teachers in devising actions aimed at enhancing their interpersonal connections with students, with the ultimate goal of encouraging greater student engagement in the learning process.

2.6.1 Talking with Students and Getting to Know Them

According to Amerstorfer and Freiin von Münster-Kistner (2021), students value teachers who demonstrate understanding, effective communication, and active listening skills. Establishing robust relationships with students commences by comprehending their academic and personal requisites, alongside their interests and capabilities, achieved through meaningful dialogue (Cholewa et al., 2012; Gentry et al., 2011; Harvey et al., 2012; Ibrahim & Zaatari, 2020; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Uitto, 2012).

Acquainting oneself with students is imperative for teachers to transcend superficial categorizations solely based on external attributes. According to labelling theory, such labels can impact students' academic performance by aligning with teachers' expectations, whether positive or negative (Lauchlan & Boyle, 2020). For instance, Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) seminal study, "Pygmalion in the Classroom," underscored that teachers' beliefs regarding their students' capabilities, regardless of accuracy, shape their interactions. Consequently, students for whom teachers harbored high expectations tended to excel, exemplifying a self-fulfilling prophecy (Jong et al., 2012). Conversely, if teachers harbor misconceived and pessimistic expectations, there exists a risk of adversely affecting students' knowledge acquisition (Hattie, 2009), particularly if students internalize negative labeling (Lauchlan & Boyle, 2020). This is because students subjected to negative labels often experience feelings of alienation within the school milieu, leading to disengagement (Deakin, Fox, & Matos, 2022). Labelling theory finds support in research syntheses demonstrating the profound influence of teacher expectations and student labeling on academic achievement (Hattie, 2009). According to Hattie (2009), evidence suggests that when teachers possess limited insight into their students, the impact of labeling and stereotyping on learning becomes more pronounced.

This elucidates why positive teacher-student relationships serve as a protective factor for students vulnerable to academic underachievement, such as those grappling with learning disabilities or behavioral challenges (Roorda et al., 2011; Walker & Graham, 2021). For instance, teachers who grasp the challenging home circumstances of a disruptive student are more inclined to cultivate empathy towards them (Wink,

LaRusso, & Smith, 2021). Consequently, teachers exhibit heightened patience and a 'tolerance for frustration' (Driscoll & Pianta, 2010, p. 38). Nevertheless, familiarizing oneself with students and nurturing empathy is a gradual process (Aldrup, Carstensen & Klusmann, 2022; Cooper, 2010), and allocating time for individual conversations with students can be arduous in larger class settings, notwithstanding synthesized research detecting only a marginal impact of class size on learning outcomes (Hattie, 2009; Wang & Calvano, 2022). Conversely, supplementary research has found that smaller class sizes engender heightened teacher-student interactions, positively impacting student engagement (Blatchford et al., 2011; Hollo & Hirn, 2015).

When teachers initiate interactions with students, it is imperative for them to discern the disparity between one-way communication and two-way communication or between talking to versus conversing with students (Leenders et al., 2019; Tauber, 2007). In essence, teachers need to actively listen while conversing with students (Cholewa et al., 2012; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012) because students perceive attentive listening as a manifestation of respect (Johnson, 2008). In Davis's (2006) exploration of the dynamics of relationships between American middle-school students and teachers, students delineate conversing-with as a 'type of informal, personal, and meaningful form of conversation' (p. 214). Conversely, when teachers merely talked to them, students construed it as impersonal and sensed they were regarded as 'just another participant in the classroom' (p. 214). The latter was perceived by students as 'detrimental to the teacher-student relationship because it fostered a sense that the teacher lacked awareness of them or apprehension of their needs' (p. 214).

Hence, the nature of interactions that teachers engage in with students, which can be classified as academic or personal/non-academic (Fredricks et al., 2004; Hofkens, Pianta & Hamre, 2023; Newberry, 2008), holds significance. For instance, Gee (2010) observed that British teachers and students on a residential field trip experienced positive outcomes from participating in 'off-task discussions' and 'informal interactions', including 'sharing humour' (pp. 129-130). Engaging with teachers in non-academic conversations can foster closer bonds (Hofkens, Pianta & Hamre, 2023; Newberry, 2008). Consequently, students who lack personal, informal exchanges with teachers are more susceptible to drawbacks. For instance, Hargreaves (2014) observed

that a Grade 5 educator in Britain refrained from using humour when interacting with her underperforming students. This reluctance may stem from teachers' tendency to prioritize staying on task during interactions with academically challenged students, often due to concerns about the students' academic progress (Hargreaves, 2014; Newberry, 2008).

Furthermore, teachers possess the capacity to leverage physical and social contexts in teacher-student encounters and interactions within the educational milieu (Gee, 2015, 2010). However, teacher-student relationships can also evolve through interactions occurring beyond the formal school setting (Claessens et al., 2017; Gee, 2010; Gentry et al., 2011; Uitto, 2012). Engaging with teachers in informal settings can contribute to humanizing them for students (Gee, 2012, 2010; Miller, 2021; Uitto, 2012). This inclination may arise from teachers being more willing to divulge personal information about themselves in informal settings (Gee, 2010; Miller, 2021). Nevertheless, while some teachers share personal details to establish rapport with students, others believe that excessive self-disclosure may undermine their professional identity as teachers and the requisite level of authority needed to maintain students' respect (Aultman et al., 2009; Karaolis & Philippou, 2019). Teachers grapple with the dilemma of determining the appropriate extent of personal information to share (Carpenter et al., 2019; Uitto, 2012).

Lastly, teachers can establish connections with students by engaging with their cultural background or the popular culture of their generation. Research indicates that teachers who forge these cultural connections with students reduce the relational distance in their relationships (Chiu, Chow, McBride & Mol, 2016). The African-American teacher examined in Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, and Wright's (2012) study exemplifies a culturally responsive educator who employed instructional methods acknowledging students' communication styles and cultural identities, such as incorporating dance and storytelling (Cholewa et al., 2012).

2.6.2 Building Empathy

Teacher empathy refers to how the teacher strives to understand students' personal and social circumstances, experiences, care, and worry in response to students' positive and negative emotions and responds with compassion while prioritizing student learning (Meyers, Rowell, Wells, & Smith, 2019). Teacher empathy is an integral part of the role of teaching involves taking students' perspectives and understanding their personal and social situations. Further evidence is provided by a meta-analysis of teacher-student relationships, which encompassed studies involving students from pre-K-12 and postsecondary education levels. This analysis identified teacher empathy as one of the most influential factors in determining positive student outcomes. These outcomes encompassed various aspects, such as academic performance, emotional well-being, and behavioral outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 120). There are broader suggestions for building empathy (Meyers et al., 2019). It is recommended that teachers acquire a profound comprehension of students' social settings in order to offer non-pejorative reasons for unfavorable student behaviors. Additionally, it is recommended that instructors spend time to gain a deeper understanding of their students' circumstances. Moreover, teachers should create course policies that demonstrate a deep understanding of students' individual and societal circumstances.

2.6.3 Zippy's Friends

Zippy's Friends is a preventive programme that is universally implemented in schools and is designed to assist pre-school and first-grade children in managing the challenges they face on a daily basis. It's can be described as "students' social-emotional development focused" (Mishara & Ystgaard, 2006). This is to help them cope better with everyday adversities; it aims to avoid serious problems in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. It also teaches social and emotional skills that facilitate adaptive coping behavior. Transferring to real-life situations is an important program component (Monkeviciené, Mishara, & Dufour, 2006). The program typically consists of 24 weekly sessions lasting approximately 50 minutes. It comprises a collection of six illustrated stories about a group of children and a companion insect named Zippy. Several themes are addressed, including comprehending emotions,

communicating effectively, establishing and dissolving relationships, resolving conflicts, managing change and loss, and developing general coping mechanisms. Students engage in sketching, role acting, performing exercises, play, and conversation to work on these subjects (Dalgarno et al., 2016; Holen, Waaktaar, Lervag, & Ystgaard, 2012). Research findings since 2006 show that the programme has a notable impact on children's social skills and ability to cope with challenges. The programme has the potential to reduce problematic behavior in youngsters (Holen et al., 2012; Mishara & Ystgaard, 2006).

2.6.4 Managing Student Behavior

Scarlett et al. (2009) assert that the increasing focus on teacher-student relationships in recent decades reflects a response to the obedience-oriented approach to school discipline predominant in the 1960s and 1970s. As previously noted, student misbehavior frequently causes stress and burnout for teachers (Spilt et al., 2011). Similarly, interviews with students expelled from school indicate that their interactions with teachers significantly influence their overall school experience (Peguero & Bracy, 2015). Some theorists argue that cultivating positive relationships with students is the most effective strategy for mitigating problem behavior (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2015; Driscoll & Pianta, 2010), as expressed by Tauber (2007): 'If you solve relationship issues, you solve behavioral issues' (p. 199). Indeed, research suggests that students' lack of belongingness is a significant factor contributing to behavioral problems (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 511), aligning with the importance of belonging emphasized in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, a study conducted by Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003, as cited in Jennings and Greenberg, 2009) found that teachers with strong relationships with their students experienced a 31 percent reduction in misbehavior over one academic year compared to teachers with lower-quality relationships.

Ultimately, classroom management revolves around power: who wields it, the teacher, the students, or both? Relationship-based discipline to some extent alters the power dynamic between teachers and students (Macleod et al., 2012). Tauber's (2007) work delves into the theories and models of discipline in education that have emerged

over the past 40 years, presenting Wolfgang and Glickman's (Tauber, 2007) theoretical framework, which categorizes discipline approaches into interventionist, non-interventionist, and interactionist approaches to provide a perspective on discipline that considers the distribution of power in the classroom. The conventional obedience-oriented approach discussed by Scarlett et al. (2009) pertains to an interventionist concept of discipline, where the teacher retains full power and control over the classroom. In contrast, a non-interventionist teaching style grants students considerable autonomy, with the teacher assuming the role of guide or facilitator. Between these two extremes, an interactionist approach shares responsibility for managing conflicts between teacher and student (Tauber, 2007).

Tauber (2007) asserts that the discipline approach adopted by teachers reflects their belief in the presence of democracy within the classroom. Non-interventionist and interactionist teachers advocate for a certain degree of student influence on decision-making, which aligns with the principles of self-determination theory, positing that students have a fundamental need for autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to this theory, providing students with choices and responsibilities enhances their motivation, whereas interventionist strategies, such as threats of punishment or rewards, diminish feelings of autonomy and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Lewis, Romi, Katz, and Qui (2008) offer three comparable methods for managing classroom behavior: implementing rewards and punishments, encouraging group participation and decision-making, and fostering student self-regulation.

In the realm of teacher relational strategies, Tauber (2007) illustrates French and Raven's social bases of power as a useful framework for teachers to comprehend how they manage student behavior. This framework delineates five types of power (See Figure 1): coercive, legitimate, reward, expert, or referent power. Coercive power is wielded by interventionist teachers, wherein students perceive the teacher as capable of administering punishment and comply with behavioral expectations out of fear (Tauber, 2007). Consequently, this authoritarian approach regulates student behavior through intimidation (Affouneh & Hargreaves, 2015), disrupting students' ability to focus on learning (Spilt et al., 2012a). Legitimate power arises when students obey the

teacher because they respect the teacher's position (Tauber, 2007). Reward power entails teachers influencing student behavior by offering rewards. Expert power emerges when students respect the teacher due to their professional expertise (Tauber, 2007).

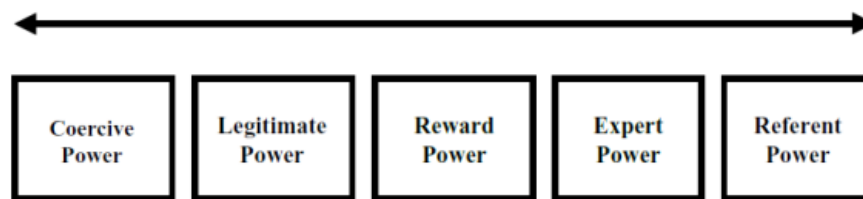


Figure 1 French and Raven's social bases of power Source: Tauber 2007, p. 40

Finally, a non-interventionist or interactionist teacher establishes referent power through conversation and displays care for students. Students cooperate with the teacher because they like and feel connected to the teacher (Tauber, 2007). Referent power can also be termed 'relationship power' (Lewis et al., 2005, p. 739). When a teacher holds referent power, it implies that the teacher's personal qualities influence students' cooperation (Macleod et al., 2012). Therefore, approaches to discipline that recognize the importance of positive teacher-student relationships likely prioritize communication and employ interactionist or non-interventionist behavior strategies. This perspective envisions good schools as environments where people engage in conversation rather than simply delivering directives (Tauber, 2007, p. 175). Consequently, two-way communication between teachers and students is crucial for fostering mutual respect (Tauber, 2007).

However, basing discipline on cultivating positive relationships with students does not negate the need for teachers to establish and enforce rules. Students express a desire for warm and friendly teachers, yet they also value strict teachers who provide clear rules and routines (Newberry, 2010; Burden, 2020). However, if disciplinary actions are perceived as unfair by students, the teacher's authority may diminish (Uitto, 2011). Therefore, finding a balance between care and control in the classroom presents an ongoing challenge for teachers (Jong et al., 2012; Harvey et al., 2012; Owusu-Ansah, 2016). Developing a deeper understanding of students can aid teachers

in striking this balance by effectively managing and preempting student behavior (Burden, 2020; Flores & Day, 2006), thereby leveraging the power of relationships.

Lewis, Romi, and Roache (2012) demonstrate relationship-based discipline techniques that have proven effective in engaging misbehaving students in conversations, acknowledging appropriate behavior, and involving students in decision-making processes. Positive teacher-student relationships, characterized by mutual familiarity and understanding, likely lead students to adhere to the teacher's behavioral expectations as they internalize the teacher's values regarding academic conduct (Martin & Dowson, 2009; Martinez & Wighting, 2024). In contrast, coercive disciplinary strategies can detrimentally impact students by disrupting their workflow, failing to foster a sense of responsibility for their behavior, and eliciting hostile responses from students (Lewis et al., 2008), thereby contributing to teacher stress (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Relationship-based and coercive disciplinary approaches can be categorized into proactive and reactive strategies (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The proactive classroom management strategy aims to prevent disruptive behavior primarily by assisting students with behavioral challenges in regulating their emotions (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). According to Makhwathana, Mudzielwana, Mulovhedzi, & Mudau (2017), a student described how a teacher could understand his temper and assist him in controlling his anger through personalized discussions and modified tasks. Proactive approaches necessitate teachers' thorough understanding of their students (Larson, Pas, Bradshaw, Rosenberg & Day-Vines, 2018). Another form of proactive strategy that can be viewed as a long-term approach is restorative discipline, where individuals involved in an incident, including the offender, come together to discuss the impact of their actions (Gregory et al., 2016). They collaboratively determine how to address the harm caused and restore relationships (Gregory et al., 2016). A key element in the effectiveness of this approach is ensuring that all parties involved have the opportunity to share their perspectives, which fosters student empowerment (Alasmari & Althaqafi, 2021). Gregory, Clawson, Davis, and

Gerewitz (2016) found that implementing restorative practices to address problematic behavior was associated with higher-quality teacher-student relationships.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study utilized the application of teacher-student relationship theory, which provided a framework for understanding how teachers employed relational strategies to foster a supportive and effective learning environment. Grounded in the principles of social and educational psychology, this theory emphasizes the importance of positive interactions, mutual respect, and emotional support in enhancing students' academic and personal development. By examining how a teacher utilizes relational strategies—such as personalized feedback, active listening, and empathy—this study aims to explore their impact on student engagement, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. Understanding these dynamics can offer valuable insights into best practices for strengthening teacher-student relationships and improving educational experiences.

2.7.1 Teacher-Student Relationship Theory

The teacher-student relationship theory explores the dynamic interactions between teachers and learners, emphasizing the role of these relationships in shaping students' academic, social, and emotional development (Rusticus, Pashootan, & Mah, 2023). Rooted in educational psychology and pedagogy, this theory highlights the importance of trust, respect, communication, and emotional support in fostering an effective learning environment (Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Shochet et al., 2013). One significant framework that informs this theory is Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1988), which suggests that children form emotional bonds with caregivers that later influence their interactions with authority figures, including teachers. Secure attachments foster confidence, engagement, and a willingness to take academic risks, whereas insecure attachments may result in anxiety, reluctance to participate, and disengagement from learning. Understanding these attachment dynamics helps educators create supportive environments that enhance both academic performance and emotional well-being.

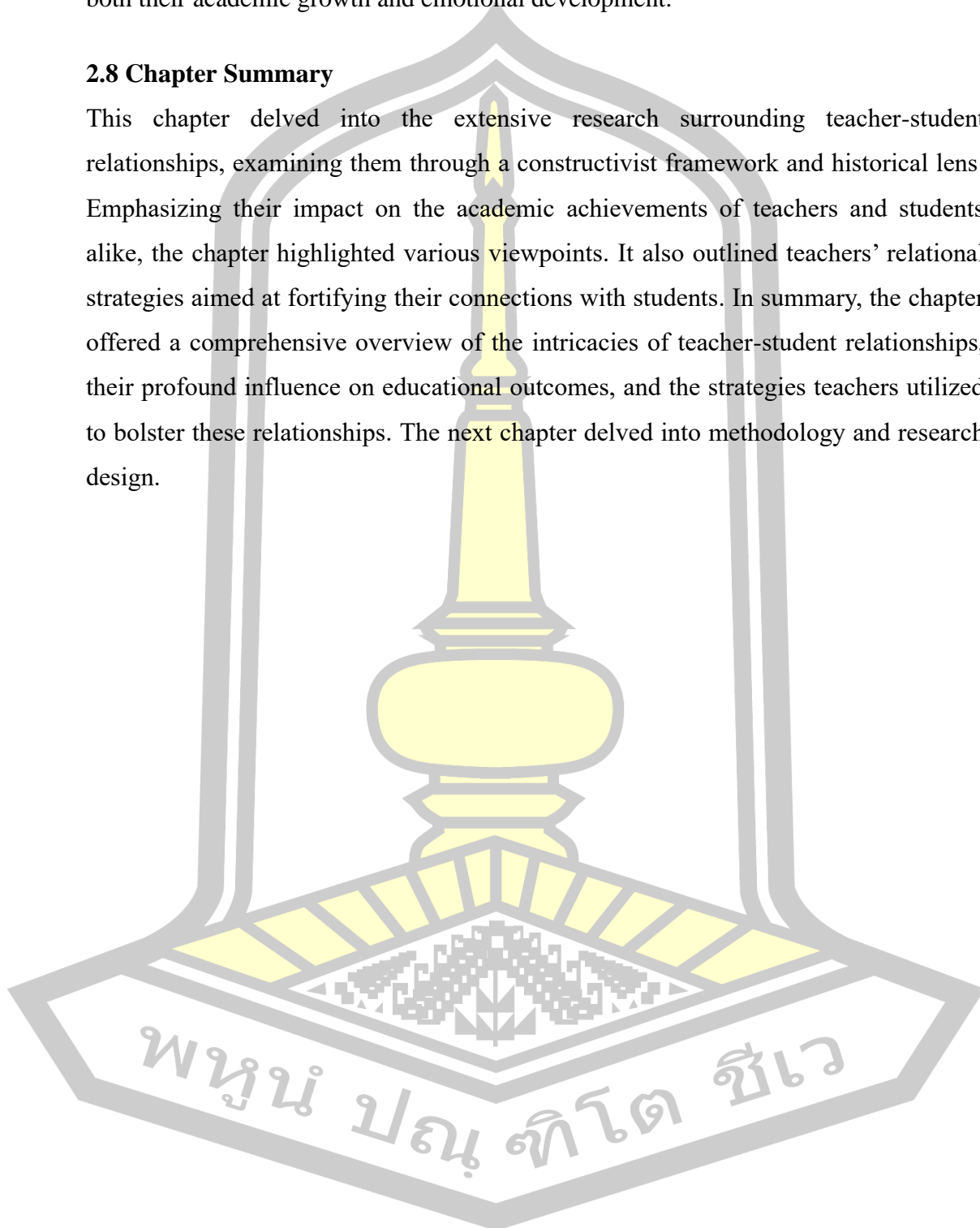
Building on Bowlby's foundational work, Adult Attachment Theory (1982) extends these concepts to relationships in adulthood, including those within educational settings. While Bowlby focused on the parent-child bond, Hazan and Shaver (1987) demonstrated that attachment patterns continue to shape relationships throughout life, including those between teachers and students. A key advancement in this field is Bartholomew's (1990) four-category model, which refines Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) original classification and identifies four distinct attachment styles that influence how teachers interact with students. Teachers with a secure attachment style create trusting environments where open communication thrives, balancing emotional support with student autonomy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Those with a preoccupied attachment style seek excessive validation from others, potentially becoming overly involved in students' lives and struggling to maintain professional boundaries (Allen et al., 2005). A dismissing attachment style is marked by emotional detachment, leading teachers to avoid forming deep connections with students, which can result in an authoritarian approach to classroom management and limited emotional engagement (Brennan et al., 1998). Lastly, teachers with a fearful attachment style desire close relationships but fear rejection, leading to inconsistent behavior that creates an unpredictable learning environment (Fraley et al., 2000).

In educational settings, the application of Attachment Theory is evident in how teacher-student relationships influence motivation, persistence, and social competence. Students who experience secure relationships with their teachers tend to perform better academically and socially, demonstrating higher confidence and engagement in learning. Additionally, teachers who provide consistent emotional support can help mitigate the negative effects of insecure attachments formed in early childhood, fostering resilience and self-efficacy in their students. Emotional attunement—where teachers recognize and respond to students' emotional and psychological needs—creates an environment of trust and safety, enhancing learning readiness and overall academic success. Understanding their own attachment tendencies allows educators to adopt strategies that strengthen relational quality, ultimately promoting a more supportive and effective learning environment (Sroufe, 2003; Edelstein & Shaver, 2004). By integrating these insights into classroom

practice, teachers can build meaningful connections with students, contributing to both their academic growth and emotional development.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter delved into the extensive research surrounding teacher-student relationships, examining them through a constructivist framework and historical lens. Emphasizing their impact on the academic achievements of teachers and students alike, the chapter highlighted various viewpoints. It also outlined teachers' relational strategies aimed at fortifying their connections with students. In summary, the chapter offered a comprehensive overview of the intricacies of teacher-student relationships, their profound influence on educational outcomes, and the strategies teachers utilized to bolster these relationships. The next chapter delved into methodology and research design.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter delineates the methodology employed in the research. It elucidates the qualitative case study research design (see 3.1), research context and classroom setting (see 3.2), research participants (see 3.3), research instruments (see section 3.4), and data collection and procedures (see 3.5), data analysis (see 3.6). Additionally, the chapter addresses trustworthiness of the study (see 3.7), ethical consideration (see 3.8) and concludes with a summary (see 3.9).

3.1 Qualitative Case Study Research Design

As articulated by Creswell (2013), case study research represents a qualitative investigative approach wherein the researcher immerses themselves in a contemporary real-life scenario, termed as a case, over a specified period, utilizing meticulous and comprehensive data collection methods. Yin (2009) highlights the unique strength of case studies in their ability to integrate various sources of evidence, such as documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations, thereby exceeding the scope of other qualitative methodologies. He emphasizes that the case study approach confers a distinct advantage when exploring ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions concerning contemporary events beyond the researcher's control, facilitating the preservation of the holistic and meaningful essence of real-life occurrences (Yin, 2009). Characterizing case study research as the investigation of a genuine real-life context or setting, Yin underscores its grounding in authentic, lived experiences (p. 9).

According to Stake (2013), qualitative researchers strive to comprehend the intricacies and uniqueness of a case, recognizing its interaction with its surrounding contexts. Stake contends that the essence of case study research lies in particularization rather than generalization, as researchers immerse themselves in comprehensively understanding specific cases, drawing upon the ordinary ways through which meaning is constructed (p. 16, 72). Moreover, Stake suggests that cases seldom exist in isolation; the presence of certain phenomena in one case often implies their existence elsewhere. Creswell (2009) emphasizes the traditional distinction between qualitative and quantitative research, outlining the former as focusing on words rather than numbers (p. 3). In this context, employing qualitative research

methods to assess a teacher's affective skills, rather than solely relying on student test scores, appears to be the most appropriate approach, aligning with the qualitative emphasis on gaining rich, nuanced understanding rather than numerical metrics.

Qualitative research is sometimes referred to as interpretive research, a method that heavily relies on researchers defining and redefining the meanings of observed phenomena (Stake, 1995, 2010). Stake suggests that researchers should provide an opportunity for vicarious experience by adopting a narrative reporting style that incorporates significant elements to enrich this experience. Employing triangulation of collected data through interviews, observations, and fieldnotes can increase the certainty that interviews and observations have been accurately interpreted. This study utilized data triangulation, which involved conducting interviews with the teacher, validating interview data through classroom observations, examining student work samples after teacher intervention, and observing and documenting teacher-student relationships.

This case study aimed to investigate the teacher-student relationships that played a role in shaping the learning environment for students. This study seeks answers to the following research questions: (1) How does a Thai university teacher foster a good learning environment with students in the classroom? (2) What are students' perceptions of the teacher's classroom relational strategies in promoting a good classroom learning environment? The outcomes of this case study were pragmatic, encompassing a depiction of the affective traits and strategies utilized by the teacher, which impact the learning atmosphere. Employing an illuminative case approach enables the researcher to observe how the teacher demonstrates the practice of cultivating relationships between students and teachers, providing an exemplary and information-rich case from which other teachers can glean insights. A case study design incorporating replication logic was compared to the findings of this study with previous research, aiming to describe the outcomes comprehensively. The goal was to capture the participant's viewpoint on the essential and foundational elements necessary for fostering robust teacher-student relationships.

3.2 Research Context and Classroom Setting

The research for this case study was conducted at a large public university in northeastern Thailand, specifically within an international program. The study focused on English-language classes, particularly those centered on communication and speaking skills. It examined various aspects of classroom interactions, including student-teacher relationships, peer communication, presentations, and class activities. A key focus was on a course such as *English Phonology for Communication*, which covered essential topics in English phonetics and phonology. These included phonemics, distinctive features, phoneme sequencing, syllable structures, pronunciation variations, vowel reduction, strong and weak forms in connected speech, word and sentence stress, rhythm, intonation, and phonological processes in English.

Within this academic setting, the student population in the international program demonstrates significant diversity, comprising individuals from a range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, originating not only from Thailand but also from other countries. Importantly, the student cohort includes individuals with individualized education plans designed to address particular learning challenges, as well as individual literacy plans aimed at improving language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Considering these variables, a classroom consisting of a diverse group of students enrolled in an English program has been specifically selected to yield a comprehensive dataset for analysis and interpretation.

3.3 Research Participants

Participants were focused on both the teacher and students. The teacher was a female Thai university lecturer who was tasked with guiding undergraduate students majoring in English at a designated university in Northeast Thailand. Teachers in this position had undergone specialized training and mentorship in their respective subject areas, with a primary goal of fostering an inclusive learning environment that catered to the needs of both Thai and international students. The teaching methods utilized by this specific instructor had been personally observed by both the researcher and thesis supervisor and were deemed worthy of further examination. The selection of this teacher aligned with the criteria outlined for an illuminative case study, as explicit

protocols for validating case studies and leveraging their insights beyond the specific case they were conducted on, such as interview excerpts, observational notes, and documentary evidence (Elliott, 2008; Rawson, 2018), hold promise for generating data rich in insights pertinent to the current investigation. Additionally, the teacher was chosen based on her extensive teaching experience and outstanding professional track record. She had been teaching for a considerable period and had maintained a strong reputation for instructional excellence. Notably, she had received multiple teaching awards recognizing her contributions to education, particularly for teaching excellence. Furthermore, among all faculty members in the English for International Communication program, she was considered the most frequently invited lecturer to conduct workshops and deliver academic talks at other universities and educational institutions. These accolades and invitations reflected her expertise and influence in the field, further justifying her selection as the focal case for this study.

Regarding the student participants, all twenty students in the teacher's class were observed during lessons (see Table 1).

Table 1 Overall students in class

Participants	Age	Gender	Nationality
S-1	20	Female	Thai
S-2	20	Female	Thai
S-3	20	Female	Thai
S-4	21	Female	Thai
S-5	21	Male	Cameroon
S-6	19	Male	Thai
S-7	20	Male	Thai
S-8	20	Female	Thai
S-9	21	Male	Cambodia
S-10	19	Male	Myanmar
S-11	19	Female	Thai
S-12	20	Female	Thai
S-13	20	Male	Thai

S-14	20	Female	Thai
S-15	20	Male	Thai
S-16	20	Male	Thai
S-17	20	Female	Thai
S-18	20	Female	Thai
S-19	20	Male	Thai
S-20	20	Female	Thai

However, only ten were purposively selected at the end of the semester for a semi-structured interview to explore their perceptions of the teacher's relational strategies. The selection of these students was based on their willingness to participate. Many students were unable to take part due to their demanding schedules, heavy coursework, upcoming exams, and numerous academic tasks throughout the semester. As a result, only ten students indicated their willingness to participate. These ten students were further selected based on observations conducted at different points in the semester at the beginning, middle, and end to ensure a well-rounded representation of classroom engagement. Five of the selected students demonstrated high engagement during lessons, while the other five displayed lower levels of engagement. To validate this selection, discussions were held with the teacher, who confirmed the researcher's observations, agreeing that the five highly engaged students were indeed more actively involved in classroom interactions, while the other five exhibited lower engagement levels.

The classroom context in this study was an English International Communication program, the only international program within the faculty at the university. All students in this program had passed an English proficiency test, ensuring a high level of English language competence. This context was particularly significant as it shaped the dynamics of teacher-student interactions, instructional strategies, and classroom discourse. The high proficiency level of students allowed for a more nuanced exploration of relational strategies in a linguistically diverse setting, contributing valuable insights into fostering an engaging and supportive learning environment.

Specific criteria, such as student English proficiency level and class type, may be used to refine the student selection process. The teacher's cooperation was crucial in recruiting students who were comfortable being observed during lessons. Prior to any observations, informed consent was obtained from both the teacher and students, ensuring transparency and protecting their privacy. Through this focused approach, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of this under-researched area.

3.3.1 Teacher

The participant was a teacher who was a lecturer responsible for teaching undergraduate students majoring in English. She was 50 years old and had been teaching for 28 years. Throughout her career, she taught English major courses and English for communication in an international program. Most of her classes were composed of Thai and foreign students. For the context of this research, the focus was on her experience teaching in the international program, specifically in a speaking class that included the English Phonology for Communication course and Phonetics and Pronunciation for Teachers. This course explored English phonemics, syllable structures, pronunciation variations, vowel reduction, word stress, rhythm, intonation, and phonological processes, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of effective communication.

The selection process for the teacher participant was guided by specific criteria. She was teaching in an international program with a diverse student population from Asia, Africa, and Europe. Additionally, she had been informally observed as having a strong rapport with her students and was widely recognized by her peers as an outstanding teacher. Furthermore, she had reported that her students expressed their appreciation for her teaching style and interactions in class. She maintained a warm and friendly relationship with students even outside the classroom, and her positive teaching approach was reflected in high student evaluation scores and feedback at the end of each semester, indicating that her relationships with students contributed to optimal learning outcomes.

3.3.2 Students

The participants selected for this research, comprising students from the observed classes at the end of the semester, were considered. The context of students enrolled in an English major in an international program included Thai and foreign students with diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The study included ten student participants (see Table 2) selected based on their willingness to participate. Five students who were more engaged in the classroom were interviewed, as well as five who were less engaged.

Table 2 Demographic information about the participants for a semi-structure interview

Participants	Age	Gender	Nationality
S-1	20	Female	Thai
S-2	20	Female	Thai
S-3	20	Female	Thai
S-4	20	Female	Thai
S-5	21	Male	Thai
S-6	19	Male	Thai
S-7	20	Male	Thai
S-8	20	Female	Thai
S-9	20	Male	Cambodian
S-10	19	Male	Myanmar

3.4 Research Instruments

This study utilized semi-structured interviews to collect information by posing questions to the interviewees, while classroom observations concentrated on real-time performance during visits. Detailed documentation was maintained through fieldnotes, noting the date, time, and setting, to gather data and acquire responses to the research questions through discussions with the research participants. Following the interviews, observations and field notes were conducted as part of the study protocol.

3.4.1 Interviews

Qualitative interviews involve a researcher adeptly guiding a conversation with a participant to collect comprehensive and detailed information about a research topic through probing follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2012). Different qualitative interview structures are explored based on the research question. In this study, a semi-structured (or focused) format was chosen, wherein questions are formulated and employed to delve deeper into the research topic as emerging patterns become apparent. The interviewer determined the subsequent question by skillfully probing and attentively listening to the preceding response. A proficient qualitative researcher can swiftly adapt to entirely unforeseen circumstances (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

This study conducted interviews with the teacher to gather data on her relational strategies for fostering relationships with students. Additionally, students were interviewed to obtain their opinions on the instructor's relational strategies.

Interview protocols were developed in alignment with the theme of the case study, utilizing the responsive interviewing model to aid the researcher in grasping experiences through the narratives of participants, thereby generating meaning. The model encompasses three types of questions: main questions, follow-up questions, and probes, as delineated by Rubin and Rubin (2005). The responsive interviewing approach aims to attain a comprehensive and insightful understanding of the subject under investigation. Achieving this depth of comprehension necessitates the researcher's active involvement in follow-up inquiries, delving deeper into the initial information gathered (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview questions were semi-structured, guiding the inquiry process, with responses diligently documented on the interview protocol form alongside any emerging follow-up queries. Special attention was given to maintaining objectivity and impartiality in formulating the questions.

3.4.2 Classroom Observation

A protocol for classroom observation was developed to focus on real-time events during observations. Detailed notes, along with photographs and observations, were recorded on the observation protocol sheet for each classroom observation, meticulously noting the date, time, and setting. These methods of data collection were

selected for their capacity to offer comprehensive insights into the research subject, aligning with the principles of case study research advocated by Yin (2009) and Stake (2010).

The observation was conducted after the interview by observing the classroom directly. These observations helped confirm or verify what the teacher said about using techniques to build relationships with students (relational strategies). By looking at the classroom environment itself, including how engaged the students were, the study found other strategies the teacher used that they forgot to mention.

Utilizing the responsive interviewing model during interviews, the researcher aimed to delve deeply into the perspectives and experiences of the participants, capturing nuanced insights that were not readily apparent through other data collection methods, such as observation and field notes. Moreover, direct observation enabled the examination of real-life events in the natural classroom context, providing valuable first-hand observations that enhanced the understanding of the case study.

By employing these rigorous data collection techniques, the researcher aimed to gather a robust dataset conducive to a nuanced analysis of the case study topic. Through meticulous documentation and analysis of the collected data, the researcher endeavored to uncover key insights and patterns contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research subject.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

To ensure the reliability of this case study research, a formal case study protocol was established. Ethical approval was sought from the teacher, who underwent an initial audio-recorded interview, followed by subsequent interviews for clarification purposes. Following the guidance of Seidman (2006), interviews employed primary, open-ended questions to elicit and explore the participant's responses. The objective was to facilitate the participant in reconstructing their experience relevant to the research questions. This methodology was informed by Seidman's recommendation of three in-depth interviews, each serving a distinct purpose: the initial interview aimed to grasp the participant's experience, the subsequent interview aimed to extract additional details about her experience, and the final interview aimed to delve into the

meaning of the participant's experience. The teacher engaged in interviews conducted in three rounds throughout the semester to ensure comprehensive data collection.

During the first round (at the beginning of the semester, aimed at introducing the class and inviting the teacher to share her experience), semi-structured interviews were conducted utilizing predetermined questions, supplemented by clarifying or probing questions from the interviewer (see Appendix A). The initial interview was then transcribed for analysis, with notes taken on key points requiring further clarification. Subsequently, the second round of interviews (at midterm, focused on addressing any ambiguous data from the initial interview) was conducted (see Appendix B). In the third round (at the semester's end), the teacher was questioned regarding her experiences in fostering positive teacher-student relationships in the classroom (see Appendix C). The interviews were conducted in English and/or Thai language, depending on the teacher's language preference, in a comfortable setting, and at a convenient time for the teacher.

A comprehensive interview guide spanning the first, second, and third interviews, was employed, incorporating semi-structured questions within an emergent design framework to elicit information from the interviewee. Follow-up questions were formulated to elucidate and refine the analysis, tailored to the specific responses of the participant. These questions were interpretive in nature, drawn from a thorough review of the literature.

Subsequent to the interviews, classroom observations were conducted utilizing the Marzano Observational Protocol (1999), structured to delineate three categories comprising nine elements of observable behaviors and relationships (see Appendix D). These observations encompassed various content teachings throughout the classroom and were conducted at different intervals throughout the semester.

Follow-up interviews (in the third round) were conducted to address any researcher inquiries arising from the observations that necessitated further clarification. Each interview was expected to last approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Through the implementation of this structured approach to data collection (see Figure 2), the researcher endeavored to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, thereby fostering a thorough comprehension of the dynamics within teacher-student relationships in the classroom. This rigorous methodology empowered the researcher to amass a wealth of detailed data, thereby enriching the depth of understanding regarding the research topic.

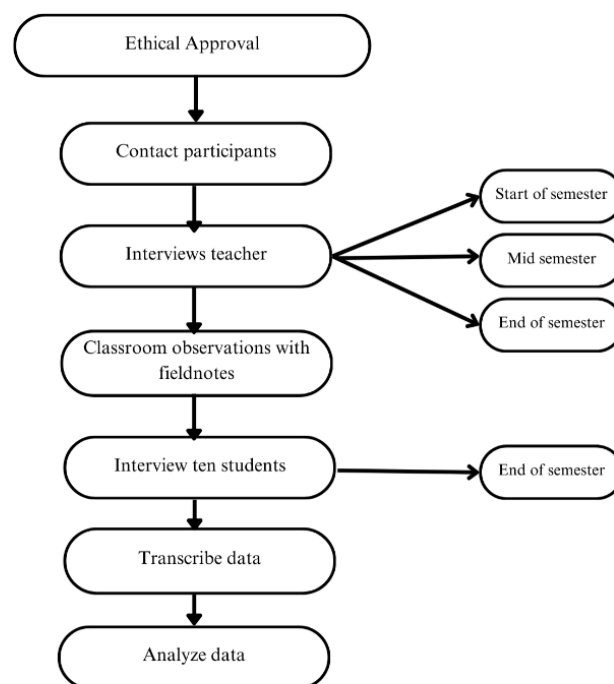


Figure 2 Data collection procedure

3.5.1 Interview Guide

A comprehensive interview guide, structured in a semi-structured format, was developed to facilitate the acquisition of information from the interviewee. These questions, derived from the literature review (see Appendices A, B, and C), were intentionally interpretive in nature, aiming to elicit nuanced insights.

The researcher employed a responsive interviewing protocol, which amalgamated interpretive constructionist philosophy, critical theory, and pragmatic considerations, and sought to attain profound understanding by addressing contextual nuances, complexities, and specific meanings. Through the integration of follow-up questions

and probes, the researcher could delve deeper into the themes, concepts, and ideas introduced during the initial interview. Probes served as a pivotal component of the responsive interviewing protocol, serving to sustain the conversation, elucidate incomplete notions, or solicit clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 2012).

3.5.2 Observer's Paradox

The observer's paradox referred to the concept that the actions or measurements taken by an observer could directly influence or align with the behavior of the system under investigation. Despite the presence of accurate measuring equipment or theoretical instruments to gather impartial behavioral data, there was still an inevitable influence from the observer's viewpoint.

The concept that the presence of a fieldworker or recording equipment paradoxically hindered researchers from investigating the way people speak when they are not being observed, as described by Labov (1972: 97), had a significant impact on the data collection and analysis methods employed by scholars interested in studying spontaneous human interaction. Scholars in the social sciences were influenced by the observer's paradox and related concepts such as "researcher effects," "observer effects," and "tape-affected speech." They had aimed to obtain a discourse that is relatively "naturalistic" and closely resembles how it would have been if it had not been recorded (Johnstone, 2000: 104). Therefore, the existence of a recorder was perceived as a constraint, as it hindered the gathering of authentic speech.

In this context, which encompassed semi-structured interviews and classroom observation, it was possible for both the teacher and the student to modify their language usage once they became aware that they were being observed. This had the potential to influence the genuineness of their conversations. Similarly, when conducting participant interviews, individuals had a tendency to give answers that were socially desirable, which affected the accuracy of data pertaining to interactional pragmatics. Moreover, in semi-structured interviews, the presence of the researcher caused participants to change their behavior, which created difficulties in ensuring the accuracy of the study and raised ethical issues related to openness and consent. In this study, the researcher adopted the role of an observer and integrated themselves into the community to minimize their impact on the behavior of the subjects. Furthermore,

the research assured the participants that their responses remained anonymous and confidential, thereby reducing the pressure to conform to societal expectations.

3.6 Data Analysis

Patton (2002) underscored the idiosyncratic nature of the analytical process in qualitative studies, emphasizing its reliance on the researcher's unique skill set, training, insights, and capabilities. Consequently, qualitative analysis was inherently influenced by the analytical acumen and stylistic approach of the researcher. In this study, data analysis adhered to qualitative content analysis, following the methodological framework delineated by Rubin and Rubin (2005) for Responsive Interviewing analysis techniques.

- 1) Recognition: The initial phase involves identifying concepts, themes, events, and topical markers present in the interviews. This step entails a thorough examination of the interview data to identify recurring patterns and salient points.
- 2) Clarify and Synthesize: Subsequently, the researcher systematically examines the different interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the overall narrative. This process entails synthesizing the data to discern underlying meanings and themes.
- 3) Elaboration: Building upon the insights gained from clarification and synthesis, the researcher generated new concepts and ideas to further enrich the analysis. This phase involves delving deeper into the data to uncover nuanced insights and perspectives.
- 4) Coding: Systematic coding was applied to the identified concepts, themes, events, and topical markers. Each element is assigned a label and annotated in the interview text to denote its location and context within the dataset.
- 5) Sort: The data units are organized, ranked, and categorized to establish relationships and patterns. This sorting process aids in the development of a coherent theoretical framework that encapsulates the findings of the study.

By meticulously following these methodological steps, the researcher endeavored to undertake a thorough and methodical examination of the qualitative data acquired through the interviews. This meticulous approach guaranteed that the findings are firmly rooted in the data and provide valuable insights into the research subject.

Furthermore, it facilitated the exploration of various viewpoints and the emergence of novel theoretical perspectives that enriched the wider scholarly discourse in the field.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, which can introduce bias into the research process. As Patton (2002) emphasizes, “the human factor is both a significant asset and a fundamental flaw in qualitative inquiry and analysis – a scientific double-edged sword” (p. 433). Patton advises researchers to “employ their full intellectual capacity to accurately represent the data and communicate its revelations in line with the study’s objectives” (p. 433). Stake (2010) characterizes qualitative case study research as deeply personal, implying that researchers should incorporate their own perspectives in the interpretation process since all research inherently involves interpretation. According to Stake, one of the primary qualifications of a qualitative researcher is experience. He emphasizes that leveraging this experience entails understanding the factors that lead to profound insights, identifying reliable sources of data, and assessing the validity of interpretations.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the study

Credibility and authenticity were significant components of validity in qualitative research. In the context of this study, which examined teacher-student relationships in a Thai classroom, ensuring validity meant accurately representing the lived experiences of both the teacher and students. Qualitative validity involved an ongoing process of checking and refining interpretations to best reflect participants’ realities, while reliability ensured consistency in the research approach. This study focused on understanding how the teacher’s relational strategies influenced students’ perceptions of the classroom learning environment, making reliability and trustworthiness essential components in establishing credible findings.

Regarding validity in qualitative research, Stake (1995) created a list of “Things to Assist in the Validation of Naturalistic Generalizations” (p. 87).

1. Include accounts of matters the readers are already familiar with. This allows them to assess the validity, completeness, and potential bias in reports of other findings.

2. Provide adequate raw data prior to interpretation. Readers should be able to consider their own alternative interpretations before being presented with the researcher's analysis.
3. Describe the methods of the case study in common language. This includes clearly explaining how triangulation was conducted to enhance validity.
4. Make available information about the researcher and other sources of input. Transparency about the researcher's background and methodological choices helps readers assess credibility.

Stake (2010) emphasized that it is the responsibility of the researcher to assist readers in reaching a high-quality understanding of the findings. This was achieved by triangulating different sources of data to ensure that interpretations aligned with both the teacher's and students' perspectives. Triangulating multiple data sources interviews with the teacher and students, classroom observations, and researcher field notes enhanced the validity of this study, reinforcing Stake's concept of achieving a "high quality of understanding" (p. 88).

This study employed multiple data collection instruments, including interviews, classroom observations, and field notes. A model teacher was selected based on her experience and reputation for effective relationship-building strategies, ensuring that the study captured meaningful insights. The interpretation of findings was guided by triangulation, ensuring that data were cross-verified before conclusions were drawn. To ensure the reliability of the research, intercoder reliability was employed to enhance the consistency of the coding process. Additionally, member checking was conducted to validate the findings with participants, ensuring that their perspectives were accurately represented.

Intercoder reliability (ICR) is essential when multiple coders are involved in deductive data analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Burla, Knierim, Barth, Duetz, and Abel (2008), as cited in Elo et al. (2014), showcased how ICR assessment enhances coding accuracy in qualitative content analysis. This is particularly valuable when using a categorization or coding scheme in deductive analysis. Pyett (2003) argues that skilled qualitative researchers must dedicate significant time to repeatedly

reviewing the data to ensure that patterns emerging from interviews align with the actual data. Face validity was also employed to assess credibility. Cavanagh (1997), Downe-Wamboldt (1992), and Hickey & Kipping (1996) suggest that findings should be presented to individuals knowledgeable about the research subject to verify whether they reflect real-world conditions. This study implemented double-coding to ensure accuracy in categorization. To further enhance consistency, interview transcripts and observation notes were systematically checked, reinforcing a rigorous and replicable coding process.

Member checking refers to the process of returning transcribed interviews or completed analyses to participants for verification or additional insights. While Morse (2015) questions the necessity of allowing participants to change their opinions post-interview, this study prioritized participant validation to enhance credibility. To validate the findings, interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations were returned to participants (both the teacher and students). This ensured that their perspectives were accurately represented and allowed them to confirm, clarify, or contest interpretations.

Triangulation is a widely recognized qualitative research strategy for enhancing validity by combining information from multiple independent sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014, p. 545). In this study, triangulation was applied to cross-verify insights from different methods to strengthen validity. Interviews (teacher and students), classroom observations, and researcher field notes were examined to develop a coherent and well-supported interpretation of how relational strategies influence the classroom learning environment. Patton (1999) describes triangulation as a technique to detect inconsistencies in emerging research patterns. Discrepancies were not seen as weaknesses but rather as opportunities to deepen understanding of teacher-student interactions. By integrating triangulation, intercoder reliability, and member checking, this study ensured that its findings were valid, reliable, and reflective of real classroom dynamics in a Thai context setting.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) delineate four primary ethical domains, encompassing informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the role of the researcher. Informed consent entails furnishing research participants with comprehensive information concerning the study's overarching objectives, key design elements, and potential risks and benefits associated with their involvement (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Given the fluid and dynamic nature of teacher-student relationships, this study meticulously addressed all aspects of data collection and procedures.

In this study, the teacher and students were informed about the research process and were given autonomy in decision-making. Before participating, individuals had to provide written informed permission. They received a detailed description of the study's objectives and the methods used to gather data. Additionally, participants were given ample opportunity to ask questions and express any concerns they had. Before participating in the interview, participants received an information sheet and were required to sign the informed consent form. Participants had the freedom to withdraw their participation at any time, and their authorization to document the interview was also requested. To safeguard the well-being of both teachers and students, the study explicitly outlined the purpose of investigating the participants. While qualitative researchers, as noted by Yin (2009), were cognizant of the absence of rigid ethical rules for qualitative inquiry, it is widely acknowledged that ethical practices should be central to the study design. Therefore, the researcher's interaction with study participants prioritized opportunities for questions, clarification of procedures, and assurance of confidentiality regarding the shared information.

3.8.1 Voluntary informed consent

To ensure the participant's comprehensive understanding of the study's purpose, utilization of gathered information, and the intended recipients, in accordance with the guidelines outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), the study furnished the research participant with an information leaflet detailing the requirements for participation. The researcher elucidated this information to the teacher and students at the outset of the initial interview, discussing expectations regarding confidentiality and collaborative measures to safeguard the anonymity of

the teacher and students. Additionally, the researcher underscored the teacher's and students' prerogative to withdraw from participation at any juncture, regardless of reason, as articulated by Gary (2020). To affirm comprehension, the teacher and students signed a consent form prior to engagement in the study.

3.8.2 The Relationship with the Research Participant

The researcher lacks prior acquaintance with the research participant but acknowledges the potential implications of perceived relationships, especially considering that participants are sourced through connections. In this instance, the researcher's connection, acting as the gatekeeper facilitating access to the participant, could inadvertently induce pressure for participation, potentially impeding the participant's ability to withdraw, as noted by Klykken (2022). Malone (2003) and Milligan (2016) delve into this issue extensively, illustrating it with insider research involving a single teacher and his students, who perceived minimal risk due to the organization's detachment from their employment circumstances. Consequently, the teacher viewed the researcher as an outsider within their workplace milieu, fostering a sense of comfort that facilitated candid self-reflection.

However, this aspect of rapport-building also suggests that the teacher may become more forthcoming about her experiences with students over time. For instance, she may be frequently prompted to share her opinions and experiences. Teachers even remarked after one interview that it felt like "a free therapy session" (Glesne, 1999, cited in Malone, 2003), indicating that the relationship between the researcher and the participant can sometimes resemble a therapist-client dynamic because "when others trust you, you invariably receive the privilege and burden of learning things that are problematic at best and dangerous at worst" (p. 807).

Consequently, as trust develops through multiple meetings, the teacher may inadvertently disclose unfavorable personal details, such as admitting to harboring prejudices towards students or engaging in practices that others might view as unprofessional. Furthermore, the research participant may share sensitive descriptions. Therefore, this study took full responsibility for censoring sensitive information in the report, erring on the side of caution regarding the level of detail

included in the case study, even if it compromised the stories' authenticity and interest.

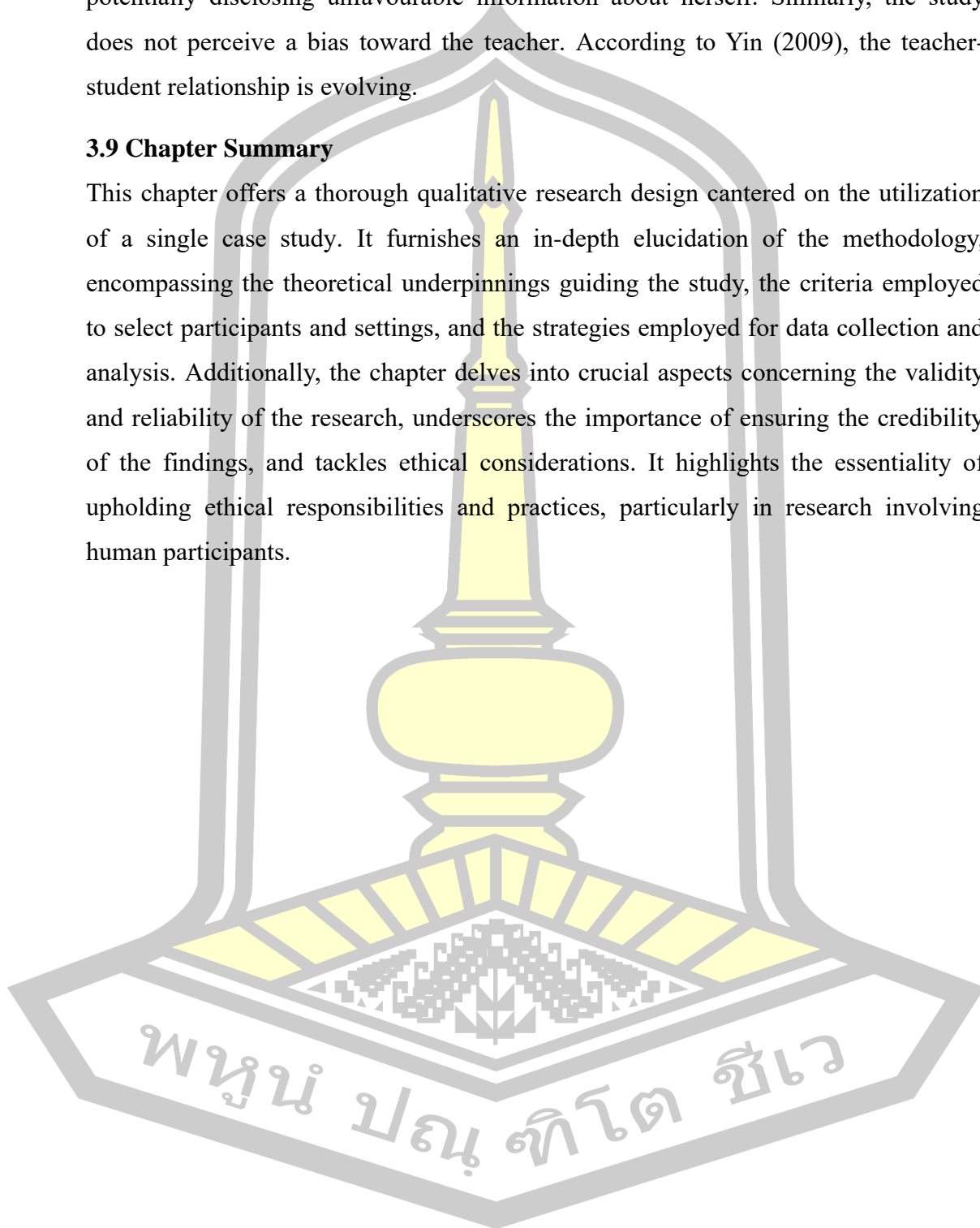
Furthermore, another ethical quandary stemming from the teacher's inclination towards uncritical openness in her disclosures is that she occasionally offers opinions and advice on how to navigate challenging situations. In doing so, the teacher engages in discussions that heighten the risk of these opinions influencing the data, thus potentially introducing researcher bias (Robson, 2011). A pragmatic approach to the study acknowledges that the researcher's values naturally shape the study's direction (Robson, 2011). However, the study was cautious not to furnish the teacher with prescriptive answers but rather to facilitate her discovery of solutions based on her own experiences. Nevertheless, the study was obligated to respond to the research participant with empathy, particularly as it may have evoked emotions about sensitive issues, and attentively and respectfully listened to the information provided by the interviewee (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The researcher adopted the role of a listener and, when directly asked for opinions, demonstrated empathy by sharing anecdotes (Chang, 2009).

The study posited that fostering positive rapport with the teacher served to mitigate the risk of social desirability bias (Spector, 2004; Bergen & Labonté, 2020), wherein the teacher, whether consciously or unconsciously, strove to present favorable information about herself (Mortel, 2008). It was plausible that the teacher perceived it as socially unacceptable for teachers to admit to having strained relationships with students, preferring instead to attribute any issues to students or the educational system itself. For instance, Hattie (2009) contended that he places the onus entirely on teachers for students' academic success and asserted that "there are no limits to what teachers can do to overcome (student) disadvantage and enhance learning outcomes" (Skourdoumbis, 2014, p. 113). However, Spector (2004) contends that "there is little evidence to suggest that social desirability is a universal problem in research that relies on self-reports" (p. 3). Nevertheless, in a sample of 31 health-related studies assessing social desirability bias, Mortel (2008) discovered that 43 percent of responses were influenced by social desirability. The study does not posit that the data was impacted by social desirability bias because, as indicated, the teacher under

observation in this study might have been highly self-critical during the discussions, potentially disclosing unfavourable information about herself. Similarly, the study does not perceive a bias toward the teacher. According to Yin (2009), the teacher-student relationship is evolving.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter offers a thorough qualitative research design centered on the utilization of a single case study. It furnishes an in-depth elucidation of the methodology, encompassing the theoretical underpinnings guiding the study, the criteria employed to select participants and settings, and the strategies employed for data collection and analysis. Additionally, the chapter delves into crucial aspects concerning the validity and reliability of the research, underscores the importance of ensuring the credibility of the findings, and tackles ethical considerations. It highlights the essentiality of upholding ethical responsibilities and practices, particularly in research involving human participants.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study, addressing the research questions. It provides an overview of the context of the classroom (see 4.1), the teacher's relational strategies (see 4.2), students' perceptions of the teacher's relational strategies (see 4.3), and concludes with a summary of the chapter (see 4.4).

4.1 The Classroom Context

The observed class was a one class of phonology course for English for International Communication major, typically consisting of 20 students. The course was taught by a highly experienced instructor with 28 years of teaching experience in the English language. The students came from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which presented both challenges and opportunities for the teacher. While some students demonstrated strong language skills, others struggled with pronunciation and phonetic transcription.

The typical class structure combined lectures, group work, and practical collaborative exercises. Students were expected to actively participate in class activities and complete regular assignments. The teacher's expertise in phonology and phonetics was evident in the well-structured lessons and engaging teaching methods (see sample lesson notes in Appendix E).

4.2. The Teacher's Relational Strategies

This section addresses the first research question: "How does a Thai female university teacher foster a good learning environment with students in the classroom?" The data were collected through three rounds of interviews conducted at the beginning, midterm, and end of the semester. In addition to the interviews, multiple classroom observations were conducted throughout the semester, with detailed fieldnotes recorded after each session. By triangulating these data sources, a comprehensive understanding of the teacher's relational strategies emerges, highlighting how these strategies foster student relationships and engagement in the classroom. The findings are structured around the following overarching theme.

4.2.1 Talking with Students and Getting to Know Them

Talking with students and getting to know them refers to a relational strategy that involves open communication, active listening, and personal engagement to build trust and rapport. By being approachable, empathetic, and attentive to students' emotions and experiences both inside and outside the classroom, the teacher creates a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and understood. This practice fosters mutual respect, reduces barriers to learning, and enhances student motivation and participation, ultimately contributing to a more positive and effective educational experience.

The findings indicated that the teacher prioritized building strong, supportive relationships with students, emphasizing that understanding their nature helped create a smooth learning environment. Teaching, in this context, extended beyond academics to include emotional support. See Excerpts 1-3 for the teacher's responses.

Excerpt 1

"I think the teachers should be friendly first, be open-minded, and take the students as their own kids. You know what I mean? And try to understand the nature of teenagers." (Start of the semester, the first interview)

Excerpt 2

"Every time I see them, you know, like worried about anything, I will ask them. And, you know, like, ask them to, okay, come here. I will give you a hug. Yeah, even outside of class, when I see their post on their Facebook, I will go and, you know, try to encourage them. And then ask them, if you come to my office, I will give you a big hug, for example" (Mid semester, second interview)

Excerpt 3

"I think if the teacher and students understand each other and each other's nature, teaching and learning will flow. We don't put up barriers against them getting to know us, and we want to understand their nature as well. If we understand each other's nature, everything will go more smoothly. One reason is that I might have to teach them again." (End of the semester, third interview)

These findings highlighted the teacher's emphasis on relational strategies. The teacher prioritized being friendly, open-minded, and treating students as if they were their own children. A key focus was understanding the nature of teenagers, recognizing the challenges they faced and their emotional needs.

At the start of the semester, the teacher set the tone for the learning environment by emphasizing the importance of friendliness, open-mindedness, and treating students as their own children. This relational strategy aimed to establish a warm and approachable atmosphere from the outset. The teacher's focus on understanding the nature of teenagers reflected an awareness of students' developmental and emotional needs. By prioritizing these qualities early on, the teacher laid the foundation for trust and comfort, which were essential for encouraging students to feel safe and supported in the classroom. This aligns with Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988), which suggests that secure relationships with caregivers or authority figures foster confidence and engagement. In an educational context, teachers who provide emotional security enable students to take academic risks and participate actively (Sroufe, 2003). Research indicates that students thrive in learning environments where they experience a strong sense of emotional security and belonging (Hamre & Pianta, 2012; Roorda et al., 2011). Moreover, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasizes that a sense of relatedness and belonging enhances students' motivation and engagement in school. Establishing early trust in teacher-student relationships not only encourages active participation in learning but also reduces feelings of academic stress or intimidation (Cornelius-White, 2007).

By mid-semester, the teacher's relational strategies became more personal and involved. They actively monitored students' emotional states, providing direct comfort, such as offering hugs when students appeared worried. Additionally, the teacher extended care beyond the classroom by engaging with students on social media and offering emotional encouragement. This shift to a more hands-on, proactive approach reflected a deepening commitment to students' emotional well-being. Research supports the idea that teachers who actively engage in students' personal well-being through emotional support and informal interactions foster stronger relationships and enhance students' learning experiences (Newberry & Davis,

2008; Roorda et al., 2017). However, attachment theory also suggests that while secure attachment fosters balanced emotional closeness, preoccupied attachment may lead to excessive personal involvement, which could blur professional boundaries (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Furthermore, emotional engagement with students outside formal academic contexts has been shown to improve student motivation, self-esteem, and classroom behavior (Fredricks et al., 2004). The concept of referent power, as described by French and Raven (1959), suggests that teachers who cultivate personal bonds with students gain greater cooperation and respect from them (Tauber, 2007). By going beyond academic concerns and demonstrating genuine care for students' personal lives, the teacher strengthens relationships with students, fostering a supportive environment where they feel valued as individuals, not just learners (Hargreaves, 2014; Cholewa et al., 2012).

By the end of the semester, the teacher emphasized the significance of mutual understanding between themselves and their students. The relational strategy evolved into a continuous, two-way process in which both the teacher and students strived to learn about and respect each other's nature. The teacher reflected on the necessity of understanding students not only to teach them effectively but also to remove potential barriers to communication and learning. Research suggests that mutual respect between teachers and students leads to higher academic engagement, reduced behavioral issues, and a more cooperative learning environment (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). This process aligns with Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, which highlights that effective learning occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where student growth is maximized through interactions with knowledgeable and supportive individuals (Margolis, 2020). By fostering mutual respect and understanding, the teacher created a classroom culture that encouraged open communication, emotional support, and active student participation (Osterman, 2023; Cornelius-White, 2007). Ultimately, this strategy ensures that teaching and learning become more fluid and cooperative, reinforcing the idea that education is not just about content delivery but also about cultivating strong and respectful relationships between teachers and students (Hattie, 2009).

The observation fieldnotes (see Appendix E: Sample Observation Lesson Fieldnotes) highlighted the teacher's use of informal conversations and personal interactions as relational strategies to foster a positive and supportive learning environment. By engaging in casual discussions and encouraging students to share personal stories, the teacher built emotional connections and trust, reinforcing a classroom dynamic that extended beyond academics. This aligned with her reflections in Excerpts 1-3, where she emphasized the importance of friendliness, understanding students' nature, and offering emotional support. Research suggests that strong teacher-student relationships enhance student engagement, reduce anxiety, and improve motivation (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This also aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which highlights that teachers who show empathy and support foster stronger academic and emotional development in students (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020).

At the beginning of the semester, the teacher articulated her belief that teachers should be friendly, open-minded, and treat students as their own children (Excerpt 1). This belief was reflected in the fieldnotes, where she actively engaged in informal conversations, creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Studies indicated that when teachers established trust and rapport early, students felt more comfortable participating and engaging in learning activities (Cornelius-White, 2007; Hagenauer et al., 2023). Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) further supports this, emphasizing that students are more motivated when they feel emotionally connected and supported by their teachers (Osterman, 2023).

By mid-semester, the teacher continued to prioritize emotional support, offering reassurance and encouragement to students facing challenges (Excerpt 2). Her willingness to reach out both in person and through social media illustrated her investment in students' well-being beyond academics. The fieldnotes confirmed this, showing that she engaged students during break sessions, reinforcing her accessibility and approachability. Research indicates that when teachers demonstrate care and take an interest in students' personal lives, students develop a stronger sense of connection and commitment to learning (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017).

By the end of the semester, the teacher emphasized the importance of mutual understanding between teachers and students, stating that when both parties appreciated each other's nature, learning became more fluid and effective (Excerpt 3). The fieldnotes highlighted how her informal conversations contributed to a relaxed and open classroom atmosphere, allowing students to express themselves freely and feel emotionally secure. Studies suggest that classrooms where students experience a sense of belonging and emotional safety promote deeper engagement and a smoother learning experience (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Hagenauer et al., 2023). By integrating elements of trust, emotional support, and open communication, the teacher reinforced students' sense of belonging, motivation, and engagement, highlighting the vital role of secure teacher-student relationships in promoting both academic success and social-emotional development. Overall, the fieldnotes, supported by the teacher's reflections, illustrated how informal conversations and emotional support served as key relational strategies in fostering a positive learning environment. By prioritizing connection, understanding, and approachability, the teacher enhanced student engagement and created a classroom atmosphere that supported both academic success and personal growth (Marzano, 2003; Wubbels, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011).

4.2.2 Off-Topics Content

Off-topic content refers to the strategies teachers use to foster relational communication throughout classroom instruction. The teacher intentionally incorporates humor and light-hearted discussions to reduce stress and create a more relaxed learning environment.

The findings illustrated how the teacher cultivated a supportive atmosphere that enhanced student engagement and learning. The excerpts revealed a consistent approach to balancing academic rigor with emotional support at different points in the semester. See Excerpts 4-6 for the teacher's responses.

Excerpt 4

"I do not get into the content all the time. Sometimes we play jokes, sometimes we play games. So, I let them relax more." (Start of the semester, first interview)

Excerpt 5

“Actually, it helps to make the atmosphere more relaxed. As you can see, the subject I teach is quite detailed, and the students interpret it as difficult. It can be overwhelming if I get too serious or stressed without giving them a break. Sometimes, I go off-topic a bit, you know, to let them relax. I do not want them to feel like the subject is hard and then have to deal with a strict teacher. I think it helps at least a little. When they relax, their learning might improve. That is my guess. It is better than having a tense, stressful environment all the time. If the teacher and the subject are stressed, I think it would be too much for them. At least this way, they feel like I am on their side.” (Mid semester, second interview)

Excerpt 6

“I believe that when we’re happy, and our minds are clear, it’s easier to absorb information. Learning should be enjoyable rather than stressful. Sometimes, I’ve wanted to be strict, but I don’t want to create a negative atmosphere. I just want everyone to be happy in the classroom. I tend to accommodate the students, but I don’t compromise on the content—it’s still taught the same.” (End of the semester, third interview)

These findings showed that the teacher intentionally cultivated a positive classroom environment by strategically incorporating off-topic elements, such as humor, storytelling, casual conversation, and games. This approach helped mitigate the perceived rigor of the subject matter and fostered a more relaxed atmosphere.

At the start, the teacher employed relational strategies to create a positive classroom environment by offering students a break from the content. She used off-topic discussions, which were not relevant to the lesson, to reduce tension and shift the focus to a more general conversation. In the first interview (Excerpt 4), the teacher explained her intention to accommodate students’ need for a break and alleviate the tension while studying in her classroom. This strategy aligns with the concept of relational pedagogy, which emphasizes the role of interpersonal connections in facilitating learning (Aspelin, 2017). This approach aligns with research suggesting that teachers who incorporate relational strategies, such as informal conversations and

humor, foster stronger teacher-student relationships and create a more engaging learning environment (Cholewa et al., 2012; Hargreaves, 2014). Studies indicated that allowing students moments of informal interaction reduces stress and enhances cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Hofkens, Pianta, & Hamre, 2023). Furthermore, Tauber (2007) suggests that off-topic discussions and humor humanize teachers in the eyes of students, fostering mutual respect and strengthening classroom rapport. This strategy is also consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of relatedness and belonging in student motivation. By addressing students' need for breaks, the teacher not only reduces stress but also promotes a more dynamic and effective learning experience. In terms of Attachment Theory, this behavior indicates a secure attachment style, where the teacher prioritizes the students' emotional needs, creating a sense of security and trust, which is fundamental for effective learning (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

In the second interview (Excerpt 5), conducted mid-semester, the teacher reflected on her relational strategies, acknowledged the difficulty of the subject and the potential stress it might have caused students. To mitigate this, she intentionally created a more relaxed environment by incorporating off-topic discussions and taking breaks from serious content. This approach aligns with research suggesting that reducing anxiety in the classroom improves student performance, engagement, and overall well-being (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). The studies further support the idea that when teachers acknowledge student stress and provide emotional support, they enhance student motivation and persistence in learning (Cornelius-White, 2007; Quin, 2017). Additionally, the teacher emphasized her role as a supportive figure rather than an authoritative one, reinforced a sense of belonging, which was essential for student engagement and emotional security (Hagenauer et al., 2023; Osterman, 2023). Research shown that when students feel emotionally supported by their teachers, they are more likely to take academic risks and remain engaged in challenging subjects (Newberry & Davis, 2008). By fostering a relaxed and inclusive classroom environment, the teacher ensured that students associated learning with positive experiences rather than stress. This aligns with the secure attachment style, where the teacher acts as a reliable and supportive figure, helping students to feel safe and

secure, which can mitigate the negative impact of any insecure attachment patterns students might have developed earlier in life (Sroufe, 2003).

In the third interview (excerpt 6), by the end of the semester, the teacher reinforced their belief that a positive emotional state facilitated learning. They maintained a balance between being accommodating and upholding academic standards. While recognizing the importance of structure, they prioritized student well-being and happiness, avoiding a stressful atmosphere in the classroom. This strategy reflects the ethics of care approach (Noddings, 2013), which suggests that teachers who demonstrate empathy and care create stronger relationships with their students, leading to better academic outcomes and enhanced motivation (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). Research also supports that maintaining a structured yet flexible classroom environment improves student engagement and reduces behavioral conflicts (Marzano, 2003; Wubbels, 2013). Furthermore, the teacher's approach aligned with French and Raven's (1959) theory of referent power, which suggests that teachers who gain student cooperation through respect and relational connections are more effective than those who rely solely on authority (Tauber, 2007). Ultimately, the teacher's strategy of balancing academic rigor with emotional support ensures a positive, cooperative, and productive learning environment (Roorda et al., 2017; Cornelius-White, 2007).

The observation fieldnotes (see Appendix E: Sample Observation Lesson Fieldnotes) highlighted how the teacher employed relational strategies to foster a positive learning environment by integrating humor, casual conversations, and interactive elements into classroom interactions. These strategies aligned with the teacher's reflections in Excerpts 4-6, where she emphasized the importance of creating a relaxed and engaging atmosphere to facilitate learning. Research suggests that when teachers establish a warm, supportive environment, students feel more comfortable participating and engaging in classroom activities (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This is consistent with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which highlights that teachers who prioritize emotional well-being enhance student motivation and academic success (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). Before class, the teacher engaged in casual conversations, storytelling, and humor, helping to build

rapport with students and creating a sense of connection and comfort. This observation was directly supported by Excerpt 4, where the teacher explained that she did not strictly adhere to content at all times but integrated games and jokes to allow students to relax. Research supports that humor in the classroom reduces anxiety, improves student engagement, and fosters positive teacher-student relationships (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). From an Attachment Theory lens, these interactions are crucial for establishing a secure attachment, as they create a sense of safety and belonging. The teacher's use of humor and casual conversation helps students feel connected and supported, which is essential for fostering a secure base (Bowlby, 1988).

The teacher's strategy of incorporating short breaks and off-topic discussions aligned with Excerpt 5, where she acknowledged that without these moments of relaxation, the subject matter could become overwhelming. Studies suggest that providing brief mental breaks improves cognitive processing and information retention (Hagenauer et al., 2023; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). The belief that learning should be enjoyable rather than stressful was further reinforced in Excerpt 6, where the teacher expressed her belief that a positive emotional state enhanced information retention. This aligned with Vygotsky's social development theory (Margolis, 2020), which suggests that students learn best when they are emotionally engaged and supported by trusted teachers. Moreover, the Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) emphasizes that teachers who balance friendliness and structure foster higher levels of student motivation and participation.

The teacher's ability to maintain a relaxed classroom atmosphere while ensuring content coverage demonstrated a balance between structure and flexibility. She recognized that being overly strict or creating a tense environment could negatively impact student engagement and motivation. Research indicates that teachers who establish structured yet relaxed classroom environments enhance student confidence and willingness to participate (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). By fostering an atmosphere where students felt comfortable, supported, and entertained, the teacher strengthened her relational bond with students, ultimately contributing to a positive and productive learning experience (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). This

observation, supported by the interview excerpts, illustrated how relational strategies such as humor, flexibility, and a student-centered approach played a critical role in reducing stress, enhancing engagement, and promoting effective learning in the classroom (Cornelius-White, 2007; Wubbels, 2013). The observed behaviors suggest the teacher likely has a secure attachment style, which enables her to create a safe and supportive learning environment. This aligns with Bowlby's (1988) and Bartholomew's (1990) frameworks, where a secure teacher-student relationship fosters confidence and engagement. The teacher's ability to balance structure with emotional support highlights a secure attachment pattern, leading to a more effective and positive learning experience (Sroufe, 2003; Edelman & Shaver, 2004).

4.2.3 Maintain a Positive Atmosphere

Maintaining a positive atmosphere involves the deliberate use of supportive communication, relationship-building techniques, and classroom management approaches that promote psychological safety, mutual respect, and student engagement. Teachers achieve this by demonstrating care, using positive reinforcement, encouraging student voice, and addressing classroom challenges in a constructive manner, all of which contribute to a conducive learning environment.

These findings highlighted the teacher's intention to be friendly and lively, aiming to create a positive environment. The excerpts revealed a consistent approach to maintaining a relaxing atmosphere. See excerpts 7-9 for examples of the teacher's responses.

Excerpt 7

"I try to be very kind, energetic, friendly, and lively. That is the start of a good environment in the class. Even though I may have problems, I may be sad. I may be angry at something before I get into the class. But when I am there, I always smile first. Yeah, try to create a friendly and relaxing environment in class." (Start of semester, first interview)

Excerpt 8

“I try to be friendly, you know, smiling and cheerful, to help them relax. My intention behind being in a good mood is that no matter what mood I am in, I have to stay positive all the time so they can feel relaxed. Once they are relaxed and their minds are clear, they might be able to learn more, something like that. That is the reason, the intention. Even when I am really tired or something like that, I still have to be friendly, keep smiling, something like that.” (Mid semester, second interview)

Excerpt 9

“Maybe, because I am quite friendly with them, they might not be as respectful. By “not respectful,” I mean, for instance, they come in whenever they want, or they might act a little fussy. But I do not see it as a serious problem. My real intention is for them to feel relaxed in the classroom so things flow together. If they are stressed, it can make them tense, and learning does not happen. Is it a problem? I actually enjoy the atmosphere as it is. I like it when they are brave and open, like when they say, “I am hungry; let us go.” It is better than when they are so tense that I do not know what they think. At least now I know how they feel.” (End of semester, third interview)

According to the excerpts, the teacher’s relational strategies consistently aimed to create a positive, relaxed, and open learning environment by emphasizing friendliness, energy, and emotional openness. These strategies evolved in response to classroom dynamics and the teacher’s understanding of how different approaches impacted students’ well-being and learning.

At the start of the semester, the teacher emphasized the importance of fostering a friendly, energetic, and lively classroom atmosphere. To achieve this, she made a deliberate effort to smile and set a positive tone upon entering the classroom, regardless of personal challenges or emotions. This approach ensured that students felt welcomed and at ease from the outset, creating an environment where they could engage without fear or tension. Research suggests that a teacher’s emotional expression and demeanor significantly influence student engagement and motivation (Hagenauer et al., 2023; Roorda et al., 2011). By consciously setting aside personal issues to maintain a warm and positive presence, the teacher fostered a supportive and

psychologically safe learning environment (Osterman, 2023). This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which highlights the role of relatedness in promoting student motivation and academic success. Additionally, French and Raven's (1959) referent power theory suggests that teachers who project friendliness and approachability build stronger relationships with students, increasing their willingness to engage in learning (Tauber, 2007). By emphasizing the creation of a welcoming and low-stress classroom atmosphere, the teacher established a foundation that promoted open communication, student engagement, and overall classroom harmony (Cornelius-White, 2007).

At mid-semester, the teacher reinforced the importance of maintaining a positive mood, regardless of personal circumstances. She emphasized that staying friendly, smiling, and cheerful helped students relax and clear their minds, which was believed to enhance their ability to learn. This relational strategy reflected the teacher's awareness of how emotional states influenced the classroom environment. Research has shown that a teacher's mood and emotional regulation directly affect student emotions, engagement, and classroom behavior (Fredricks et al., 2004; Hattie, 2009). When teachers modeled positive emotional regulation, students were more likely to develop resilience and maintain focus in the learning process (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Additionally, studies on classroom climate (Marzano, 2003; Wubbels, 2013) suggest that maintaining a relaxed and emotionally stable environment fosters higher academic performance and student participation. By consciously staying positive, even when feeling tired or stressed, the teacher ensured that students remained comfortable and focused—an essential factor in creating an effective learning environment.

By the end of the semester, the teacher reflected on the balance between maintaining a friendly atmosphere and managing classroom behavior. While she acknowledged that being too friendly might sometimes have led to students being less respectful or adhering less strictly to rules, she did not view this as a serious issue. Instead, the teacher prioritized creating a relaxed and open environment where students felt comfortable expressing themselves, even if it resulted in a more casual or informal dynamic. Research indicates that fostering an emotionally secure environment

enhances student motivation, but teachers must balance warmth with structure to maintain classroom discipline (Roorda et al., 2017; Quin, 2017). The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) suggests that while teachers perceived as highly friendly but low in control may encounter occasional classroom management challenges, they also foster stronger student engagement and trust. This aligns with Tauber's (2007) discussion on interactionalist discipline, which emphasizes that teachers who rely on mutual respect and positive communication—rather than rigid authority experience fewer classroom conflicts and greater student cooperation. Additionally, French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power highlights that referent power, which is gained through trust and emotional connection, is more effective in maintaining student engagement than coercive or authoritative power (Tauber, 2007). The teacher recognized that a tense, stressful classroom hindered learning and believed that fostering an environment where students felt at ease, were encouraged to express themselves, and engaged openly was essential for effective learning. This relational strategy demonstrated the teacher's understanding that emotional comfort, mutual respect, and open communication were essential components for fostering a productive learning environment (Hagenauer et al., 2023; Roorda et al., 2011). This reflection reveals the teacher's understanding of the importance of balancing warmth and structure, a key aspect of secure attachment. Even when faced with challenges, she prioritized emotional security, indicating a secure attachment approach (Sroufe, 2003).

The observation fieldnotes (see Appendix E: Sample Observation Lesson Fieldnotes) highlighted the teacher's relational strategies in fostering a positive and engaging learning environment through friendliness, humor, and a consistently cheerful demeanor. By smiling, telling stories, and incorporating humor, the teacher created a relaxed atmosphere, reinforcing her reflections in Excerpts 7–9, where she emphasized that a stress-free environment enhanced student engagement. Research supported the idea that teacher warmth and emotional support reduced anxiety and improved student participation (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which emphasizes that

empathetic teaching fosters student motivation and emotional well-being (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020).

At the start of the semester, the teacher prioritized kindness and energy (Excerpt 7), making a deliberate effort to smile and create a welcoming environment. The fieldnotes reflected this, showing how her cheerful demeanor helped reduce student anxiety. Nonverbal cues like smiling strengthened teacher-student rapport and enhanced classroom participation (Cornelius-White, 2007; Hagenauer et al., 2023). Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) further suggests that students are more motivated when they feel emotionally connected to their teacher (Osterman, 2023).

In Excerpt 8, the teacher acknowledged that despite personal stress, she remained cheerful to help students feel at ease and focused. The fieldnotes confirmed this, highlighting how her use of humor, jokes, and storytelling enhanced student engagement. Research indicates that teachers who express enthusiasm and positivity boost student motivation and academic persistence (Fredricks et al., 2004; Roorda et al., 2017). This aligns with the Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013), which suggests that balancing warmth with structured interaction strengthens classroom trust and cooperation.

By the end of the semester, the teacher reflected on the challenges of maintaining a relaxed atmosphere (Excerpt 9), noting that while students might have become too comfortable, affecting discipline, she valued openness and self-expression over strict control. The fieldnotes illustrated how shared laughter and active discussions defined her classroom, supporting research that positive teacher-student relationships promoted trust and encouraged participation (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Newberry & Davis, 2008). Overall, the fieldnotes and interview excerpts demonstrated how the teacher's relational strategies—humor, friendliness, and emotional consistency—created a supportive and engaging learning environment. By ensuring students felt comfortable and valued, she enhanced participation, motivation, and a sense of belonging (Marzano, 2003; Wubbels, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011). This reflection highlights the teacher's secure attachment approach, where she prioritizes emotional connection and open communication, even when facing classroom management

challenges. Her focus on creating a supportive and engaging environment aligns with the principles of secure attachment, which fosters confidence and motivation (Sroufe, 2003).

4.2.4 Avoid Singling Out Students

Avoiding the singling out of students is a deliberate teaching strategy designed to ensure that all students feel included, respected, and supported in terms of their well-being within the classroom. This approach involves using group-based participation methods, encouraging voluntary contributions, and being sensitive to individual student preferences to prevent discomfort or anxiety. By considering students' confidence levels, knowledge gaps, and personal comfort, teachers create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters engagement without fear of embarrassment or undue pressure.

These findings highlighted the teacher's relational strategy in strengthening teacher-student relationships through empathy, respect for diverse learning needs, and a commitment to student well-being. See Excerpts 10-12 for illustrations of the teacher's responses.

Excerpt 10

"I ask them to volunteer, work in groups, discuss in groups, and ask the representative to present their work in front of the class because not every student likes to be in front of the class." (Start of semester, first interview)

Excerpt 11

"I don't want them to feel like they're being singled out, which could make them lose confidence. Sometimes, when they don't answer, it might be because they don't know, not necessarily because they're not paying attention or anything like that. So, I might ask the whole group to give them a chance to participate in answering" (Mid semester, second interview)

Excerpt 12

"I do, however, call on students individually if I know they're comfortable with it. If I've established that rapport with a student and I remember their name, I'll call on

them directly. It really depends on the individual student and what I know about their preferences and comfort levels.” (End of semester, third interview)

These excerpts illustrated how the teacher’s relational strategies were designed to create an inclusive and psychologically safe classroom environment where all students felt valued and comfortable participating.

At the start of the semester, the teacher set a positive tone by emphasizing inclusion and collective engagement. To avoid putting any student on the spot, the teacher incorporated group work and voluntary participation. By encouraging students to work and discuss in groups, with a representative presenting their ideas, the teacher ensured that participation remained collaborative and that no single student was forced into an uncomfortable spotlight. Research suggests that collaborative learning environments enhance student engagement, reduce anxiety, and foster a sense of belonging (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). By allowing students to contribute through group discussions, the teacher created a psychologically safe environment where students felt more confident to share their thoughts (Osterman, 2023). This approach aligns with Vygotsky’s theory of social development, which posits that learning occurs through peer interaction and guided participation. Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) highlights that providing autonomy in participation enhances student motivation, as students feel a greater sense of control over their learning experiences. By emphasizing collaborative engagement rather than forced individual responses, the teacher reduced performance pressure, enabling students to participate comfortably (Cornelius-White, 2007).

At mid-semester, the teacher reinforced these strategies by explaining the rationale behind not singling out students. Recognizing that a lack of individual response might have stemmed from uncertainty rather than disengagement, the teacher often called on the whole group to participate. This approach prevented students from feeling isolated or embarrassed while also building confidence by encouraging shared responsibility in classroom discussions. Research indicates that when students perceive participation as a collective effort rather than an individual burden, they are more likely to engage actively and develop confidence (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) suggests that teachers who

foster an inclusive participation approach develop stronger relationships with students, increasing classroom cooperation and reducing anxiety. Additionally, Tauber (2007) discusses interactionist teaching, which emphasizes balancing structure with student autonomy to maintain both engagement and respect. By recognizing that student hesitation might have stemmed from uncertainty rather than disengagement, the teacher ensured that participation was encouraging rather than punitive, further reinforcing a positive classroom climate (Hagenauer et al., 2023). This reinforcement of inclusive participation highlights the teacher's secure attachment style, as she demonstrates sensitivity to students' emotional needs and avoids creating situations that could trigger anxiety or fear of rejection (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991)

By the end of the semester, the teacher demonstrated a nuanced understanding of individual student needs. Once a strong rapport had been established, the teacher called on students individually while respecting their comfort levels and preferences. This tailored approach reflected the teacher's commitment to understanding and adapting to each student's needs, ensuring that participation methods aligned with individual comfort while still maintaining an inclusive classroom atmosphere. This approach aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which suggests that teachers who develop personalized relationships with students foster deeper trust and higher academic engagement (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). Furthermore, research indicated that teachers who adjusted participation strategies based on student rapport and comfort improved student confidence and willingness to contribute (Quin, 2017; Cornelius-White, 2007). This also aligns with French and Raven's (1959) referent power theory, which suggests that teachers who gain student cooperation through relational trust rather than authority achieve greater engagement and classroom harmony (Tauber, 2007). These relational strategies, ranging from group activities to carefully considered individual participation, highlighted the teacher's empathy, respect for diverse learning preferences, and commitment to fostering a supportive, engaging, and positive learning environment (Roorda et al., 2011; Wubbels, 2013).

The classroom observation fieldnotes (see Appendix E: Sample Observation Lesson Fieldnotes) supported the teacher's responses in Excerpts 10–12, demonstrating her

relational strategies in fostering a positive and engaging learning environment. Her use of smiles, humor, and storytelling established a relaxed atmosphere, reducing student anxiety and promoting participation. Research highlights that humor and positive teacher interactions enhance student engagement and emotional security (Cholewa et al., 2012; Hargreaves, 2014). This aligns with the ethics of care approach (Noddings, 2013), which emphasizes that teacher warmth fosters student trust and motivation (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). These observations reinforce the teacher's secure attachment behaviors, as she consistently uses warmth and positive interactions to create a safe and engaging learning environment, reducing anxiety and promoting participation (Edelstein & Shaver, 2004).

In addition to humor and storytelling, the teacher employed interactive strategies such as posing questions, encouraging volunteers, and addressing students by name, reinforcing inclusion and personal connection. Studies suggest that personalized teacher-student interactions improve engagement and academic outcomes (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). Furthermore, Vygotsky's social development theory (Margolis, 2020) supports the use of scaffolding, which is evident in her writing exercises and guided reading activities. These strategies helped hesitant students participate while building confidence (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Another key strategy was positive reinforcement, as she frequently used affirmations like "good" or "well done" to boost confidence and encourage future participation. Research indicates that consistent positive feedback fosters student motivation and self-efficacy (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). Additionally, her integration of collective reading activities promoted peer collaboration and active learning, contributing to an inclusive classroom culture (Roorda et al., 2011; Hagenauer et al., 2023). Through these strategies, the teacher removed barriers to learning, enhanced student engagement, and fostered a supportive educational environment (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). By combining warmth, encouragement, and structured engagement techniques, she ensured that students felt both supported and academically challenged (Wubbels, 2013; Cornelius-White, 2007). The teacher's varied strategies, including positive reinforcement and collaborative activities, align

with a secure attachment approach, as they provide both emotional support and structured guidance, fostering confidence and engagement (Bowlby, 1988).

4.2.5 Promoting Collaborative Learning

Promoting collaborative learning involves implementing relational strategies that create a supportive and interactive classroom environment where students engage in shared learning experiences. Teachers facilitate collaboration by fostering trust, encouraging respectful dialogue, enhancing communication, and structuring activities that require cooperative problem-solving.

These findings highlighted the teacher's relational strategies, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and group work in fostering a positive learning environment. The excerpts demonstrated a consistent approach to encouraging students to work with their peers. See Excerpts 13-15 for illustrations of the teacher's responses.

Excerpt 13

"I have provided students collaborate on tasks. Because in these subjects, you need people to discuss things with. When they discuss things, they seem more confident about speaking and expressing themselves. If they're working alone, they are less likely to answer. But in a group, if one is wrong, others can help. If they are right, they feel validated by their discussion. But if they're working alone, they hesitate to respond." (Start of semester, first interview)

Excerpt 14

"I think the most effective strategy was encouraging them to work together. Because with this subject, it's essential to have others to consult with so they can say, "Hey, I think this," and "You think that." They seemed more confident speaking and expressing themselves than working alone. If they are wrong, at least they are wrong together, and if they are right, they discuss it as a group. But working alone made them hesitant to answer." (Mid semester, second interview)

Excerpt 15

“I have them work in pairs or groups, it’s because I want friends to help friends, I let them choose their own partners, so I didn’t know who was doing well or not. But now, based on some of their work, I can see clearly which pairs aren’t working well together. So, now whoever arrives first gets assigned a partner, whether they are at the same level or not, and it’s been satisfactory so far based on their progress.” (End of semester; third interview)

These excerpts from each interview illustrated how the teacher’s relational strategies evolved to increasingly focus on fostering collaboration and teamwork among students, with the goal of building confidence, improving communication, and ensuring a productive learning environment.

At the start of the semester, the teacher introduced collaborative tasks to encourage discussion among students. The primary relational strategy here was to promote group work as a way to boost students’ confidence in speaking and expressing themselves. The teacher recognized that students were more likely to participate and share their thoughts when they collaborated with peers. In group settings, students felt supported—whether through validation when they were correct or assistance when they were uncertain. This approach created an environment where students felt more comfortable taking risks and engaging in discussions, reducing hesitation to participate (Excerpt 13). This strategy is consistent with Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (Margolis, 2020), which highlights the role of peer interactions in enhancing cognitive growth. Amerstorfer & Frein von Münster-Kistner (2021) also argue that students become more confident when engaging in discussions with their peers, as collaboration reduces anxiety and encourages knowledge sharing. By fostering a space for open dialogue, the teacher implemented a constructivist approach that emphasized active learning rather than passive knowledge reception (Stetsenko, 2017).

By the middle of the semester, the teacher reinforced the importance of group work in helping students express their ideas more confidently. The teacher noted that students performed better when they had the opportunity to consult with peers, sharing and

validating their thoughts within the group. This strategy strengthened the classroom's relational atmosphere by fostering a sense of community where students felt safe to make mistakes together and celebrate successes collectively. The emphasis on group work reflected the teacher's commitment to building a supportive and collaborative environment that encouraged student engagement and confidence in their learning (Excerpt 14). These findings support research by Roorda et al. (2017), which highlights that students thrive in environments where they feel emotionally and academically supported. The teacher's focus on peer collaboration aligns with studies by Dörnyei & Ushioda (2021), who emphasize that social interactions in classrooms enhance motivation and language acquisition. Additionally, fostering a sense of community within the classroom reflects Hamre & Pianta's (2006) findings that strong teacher-student and peer relationships lead to higher academic engagement.

By the end of the semester, the teacher fine-tuned the collaborative strategy by allowing students to choose their partners for group work and then reassessing the effectiveness of those partnerships based on student progress. Recognizing that some groups may not have worked well together, the teacher made adjustments by pairing students based on their individual levels and learning needs. This approach maintained the collaborative focus while ensuring that students worked with peers who could provide both support and challenge. By making these adjustments, the teacher created a more tailored and effective learning environment, ensuring that all students benefited from collaboration and achieved better learning outcomes (Excerpt 15). The teacher's adaptive strategy aligns with research on differentiated instruction (Li, Bergin, & Olsen, 2022), which highlights the importance of modifying teaching methods to meet students' diverse needs. Initially allowing students to choose their partners aligns with self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which suggests that giving students autonomy can increase motivation. However, the teacher's later decision to adjust group assignments reflects research on guided learning (Cornelius-White, 2007), which shows that strategic pairing enhances student learning by balancing peer support with appropriate academic challenges (Tao et al., 2022).

The classroom observation fieldnotes (see Appendix E: Sample Observation Lesson Fieldnotes) supported the teacher's relational strategies (Excerpts 13–15),

demonstrating her commitment to fostering a positive and collaborative learning environment. By conducting a makeup class centered on group projects instead of traditional lectures, the teacher prioritized student engagement and active learning. This approach aligns with research indicating that student-centered methods enhance motivation and participation (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). It also reflects Vygotsky's social development theory (Margolis, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of peer interaction and guided learning in cognitive development. By encouraging collaborative, hands-on learning, the teacher fostered a dynamic and interactive classroom atmosphere, ensuring students felt actively involved in their education (Wubbels, 2013).

The teacher's decision to schedule group consultations and individual feedback sessions further highlighted her relational approach, demonstrating a commitment to personalized support and student success. Research suggests that teachers who provide individualized feedback cultivate stronger relationships with students, increasing their confidence and academic persistence (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Quin, 2017). This approach also aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which underscores the role of teacher attentiveness in fostering trust and academic resilience (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). Additionally, by correcting students' pronunciation errors during consultations, the teacher created a supportive space where students felt safe making mistakes and improving. This reinforced positive reinforcement as a key relational strategy (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). Research indicates that teachers who provide constructive guidance rather than punitive corrections enhance student self-efficacy and long-term learning outcomes (Roorda et al., 2017). Overall, this relational strategy highlighted the teacher's focus on creating a safe and encouraging space for student growth, where academic progress and personal development were equally valued. By actively engaging with students, providing tailored support, and fostering collaborative learning, the teacher enhanced student trust, motivation, and classroom engagement (Marzano, 2003; Wubbels, 2013). This approach ultimately ensured a more positive, respectful, and effective learning experience, where students felt supported, confident, and motivated to participate (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Cornelius-White, 2007).

4.2.6 Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a relational strategy in which teachers acknowledge and reward students' efforts, progress, and achievements to encourage desirable behaviors and active participation. By using verbal praise, encouragement, and constructive feedback, teachers create a supportive learning environment that fosters student motivation, confidence, and engagement.

These findings highlighted the teacher's use of positive reinforcement and encouragement to cultivate a positive learning environment. The excerpts demonstrated how the teacher consistently supported students by providing emotional encouragement, boosting their confidence, and using incentives to promote participation. See Excerpts 16–18 for illustrations of these relational strategies.

Excerpt 16

“Even though outside of class, when I see their post on their Facebook, I will go and, you know, like try to encourage them. And then ask them, if you come to my office, I will give you a big hug.” (Start of semester, first interview)

Excerpt 17

“I had given them little boosts of confidence, saying things like good or you can do it, because I think it would help the shy students participate more.” (Mid semester, second interview)

Excerpt 18

“I will ask them for volunteers to answer the question, sometimes I will give them a bonus point to boost them to active in class and sometimes I will call their name to answer question, if I remember their name” (End of semester, third interview)

These findings highlighted the teacher's use of relational strategies such as emotional support, verbal encouragement, and personalized engagement to boost student motivation, participation, and learning. By prioritizing student well-being and fostering an inclusive classroom, the teacher created a positive and supportive learning environment.

At the start of the semester (Excerpt 16), the teacher made a strong effort to connect with students beyond the classroom. By engaging with students on social media and offering words of encouragement, she extended relational strategies beyond academic interactions. Gestures such as comforting words and symbolic acts of support, like hugs, contributed to an atmosphere of warmth and inclusivity. Research suggests that when teachers establish personal connections with students, it enhances their motivation, engagement, and overall sense of belonging (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which emphasizes that students are more likely to feel valued and motivated when teachers show genuine emotional investment in their well-being (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). From an Attachment Theory perspective, this behavior reflects the teacher's attempt to establish a secure attachment bond by extending emotional support beyond the classroom, fostering a sense of safety and availability (Bowlby, 1988).

By mid-semester (Excerpt 17), the teacher had implemented verbal encouragement as a strategy to support student participation. Phrases such as “good” and “you can do it” were intentionally used to build confidence, particularly for shy students. This aligns with research showing that positive reinforcement reduces student anxiety, encourages active participation, and improves classroom engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) suggests that teachers who provide positive feedback foster a supportive classroom climate where students feel safe to take academic risks. Furthermore, French and Raven’s (1959) referent power theory highlights that teachers who gain student cooperation through encouragement and relational trust create more inclusive and engaging learning environments (Tauber, 2007).

Toward the end of the semester (Excerpt 18), the teacher adopted a more structured approach to increasing student engagement. Strategies such as calling on students by name, offering bonus points, and actively encouraging participation reflected an evolving teaching style aimed at fostering interaction. Research suggested that addressing students by name strengthened teacher-student relationships and reinforced a sense of belonging, leading to higher classroom engagement (Newberry & Davis,

2008; Roorda et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies indicate that reward systems, such as bonus points, serve as motivational tools that sustain student engagement and classroom participation (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). Overall, the fieldnotes, supported by the teacher's reflections, illustrated how relational strategies such as emotional support, verbal encouragement, and personalized engagement enhanced student motivation, participation, and overall learning experiences. By prioritizing student well-being and fostering an inclusive classroom atmosphere, the teacher strengthened student engagement and contributed to a positive, supportive learning environment (Cornelius-White, 2007; Wubbels, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011).

The classroom observation fieldnotes (see Appendix E: Sample Observation Lesson Fieldnotes) supported the teacher's relational strategies from the start of the semester. In Excerpt 16, the teacher emphasized emotional support and encouragement beyond the classroom by engaging with students on social media and offering words of reassurance. This demonstrated a commitment to building strong relationships, fostering a foundation of trust and support that likely made students feel more comfortable seeking guidance during the makeup class consultation. Research suggests that when students perceive their teacher as approachable and supportive, they are more likely to engage in learning activities without fear of judgment (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which highlights that emotional investment in students enhances motivation and academic persistence (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020).

During the makeup class, the teacher's approach to correcting pronunciation errors involved positive reinforcement, using phrases like "excellent!" or "very good" with a smile. This aligned with the relational strategy described in Excerpt 17, where the teacher provided verbal encouragement such as "good" or "you can do it" to boost student confidence. Research supports that positive reinforcement reduces anxiety, fosters student motivation, and enhances learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). This is particularly relevant in language learning, where students may feel self-conscious about making mistakes. The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) highlights that teachers who balance warmth and

structure create supportive learning spaces where students feel safe to participate and take academic risks.

The teacher's strategy of asking for volunteers, calling students by name, and offering incentives like bonus points (Excerpt 18) was also reflected in the makeup class session, where students were actively guided through pronunciation corrections. Recognizing students by name fostered a sense of belonging, increasing classroom engagement and participation (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). Furthermore, Vygotsky's social development theory (Margolis, 2020) highlights the importance of interactive learning and scaffolding, as seen in the teacher's repetitive pronunciation practice, which allowed students to correct their mistakes in a supportive setting. Studies indicate that interactive, student-centered approaches enhance engagement and reinforce learning (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). Overall, the fieldnotes and interview excerpts illustrated how the teacher's relational strategies—providing emotional support, using positive reinforcement, and structuring engagement—enhanced student confidence, participation, and learning. By creating an inclusive and supportive environment, the teacher ensured that students felt valued, motivated, and comfortable engaging in the learning process (Cornelius-White, 2007; Wubbels, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011).

4.2.7 Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a relational strategy in which teachers acknowledge and reward students' efforts, progress, and achievements to encourage desirable behaviors and active participation. By using verbal praise, encouragement, and constructive feedback, teachers create a supportive learning environment that fosters student motivation, confidence, and engagement.

These findings highlight the teacher's use of positive reinforcement and encouragement to cultivate a positive learning environment. The excerpts demonstrate how the teacher consistently supports students by providing emotional encouragement, boosting their confidence, and using incentives to promote participation. See Excerpts 16–18 for illustrations of these relational strategies.

Excerpt 16

“Even though outside of class, when I see their post on their Facebook, I will go and, you know, like try to encourage them. And then ask them, if you come to my office, I will give you a big hug.” (Start of semester, first interview)

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These findings highlighted the teacher’s use of relational strategies such as emotional support, verbal encouragement, and personalized engagement to boost student motivation, participation, and learning. By prioritizing student well-being and fostering an inclusive classroom, the teacher created a positive and supportive learning environment.

At the start of the semester (Excerpt 16), the teacher made a strong effort to connect with students beyond the classroom. By engaging with students on social media and offering words of encouragement, she extended relational strategies beyond academic interactions. Gestures such as comforting words and symbolic acts of support, like hugs, contributed to an atmosphere of warmth and inclusivity. Research suggests that when teachers establish personal connections with students, it enhances their motivation, engagement, and overall sense of belonging (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which emphasizes that students are more likely to feel valued and motivated when teachers show genuine emotional investment in their well-being (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). From an Attachment Theory perspective, this behavior signifies the

teacher's effort to create a secure attachment base by extending emotional support beyond the classroom, fostering a sense of safety and belonging (Bowlby, 1988).

By mid-semester (Excerpt 17), the teacher had implemented verbal encouragement as a strategy to support student participation. Phrases such as “good” and “you can do it” were intentionally used to build confidence, particularly for shy students. This aligns with research showing that positive reinforcement reduces student anxiety, encourages active participation, and improves classroom engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) suggests that teachers who provide positive feedback foster a supportive classroom climate where students feel safe to take academic risks. Furthermore, French and Raven’s (1959) referent power theory highlights that teachers who gain student cooperation through encouragement and relational trust create more inclusive and engaging learning environments (Tauber, 2007). This use of verbal encouragement reflects a secure attachment style, where the teacher provides consistent support and reassurance, helping students build confidence and overcome anxiety (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Toward the end of the semester (Excerpt 18), the teacher adopted a more structured approach to increasing student engagement. Strategies such as calling on students by name, offering bonus points, and actively encouraging participation reflect an evolving teaching style aimed at fostering interaction. Research suggests that addressing students by name strengthens teacher-student relationships and reinforces a sense of belonging, leading to higher classroom engagement (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies indicate that reward systems, such as bonus points, serve as motivational tools that sustain student engagement and classroom participation (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). Overall, the fieldnotes, supported by the teacher’s reflections, illustrate how relational strategies such as emotional support, verbal encouragement, and personalized engagement enhance student motivation, participation, and overall learning experiences. By prioritizing student well-being and fostering an inclusive classroom atmosphere, the teacher strengthens student engagement and contributes to a positive, supportive learning environment (Cornelius-White, 2007; Wubbels, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011). The

structured approach, combined with personalized engagement, demonstrates the teacher's ability to balance emotional support with clear expectations, a hallmark of secure attachment (Sroufe, 2003).

The classroom observation fieldnotes (see Appendix E: Sample Observation Lesson Fieldnotes) support the teacher's relational strategies from the start of the semester. In Excerpt 16, the teacher emphasized emotional support and encouragement beyond the classroom by engaging with students on social media and offering words of reassurance. This demonstrated a commitment to building strong relationships, fostering a foundation of trust and support that likely made students feel more comfortable seeking guidance during the makeup class consultation. Research suggests that when students perceive their teacher as approachable and supportive, they are more likely to engage in learning activities without fear of judgment (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which highlights that emotional investment in students enhances motivation and academic persistence (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). This extension of support beyond the classroom reinforces the teacher's role as a secure attachment figure, providing consistent emotional availability and support (Edelstein & Shaver, 2004).

During the makeup class, the teacher's approach to correcting pronunciation errors involved positive reinforcement, using phrases like "excellent!" or "very good" with a smile. This aligns with the relational strategy described in Excerpt 17, where the teacher provided verbal encouragement such as "good" or "you can do it" to boost student confidence. Research supports that positive reinforcement reduces anxiety, fosters student motivation, and enhances learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). This is particularly relevant in language learning, where students may feel self-conscious about making mistakes. The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) highlights that teachers who balance warmth and structure create supportive learning spaces where students feel safe to participate and take academic risks. The teacher's use of positive reinforcement in the makeup class illustrates a secure attachment approach, where she provides encouragement and

support, creating a safe environment for students to practice and improve (Bowlby, 1988).

The teacher's strategy of asking for volunteers, calling students by name, and offering incentives like bonus points (Excerpt 18) was also reflected in the makeup class session, where students were actively guided through pronunciation corrections. Recognizing students by name fosters a sense of belonging, increasing classroom engagement and participation (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). Furthermore, Vygotsky's social development theory (Margolis, 2020) highlights the importance of interactive learning and scaffolding, as seen in the teacher's repetitive pronunciation practice, which allowed students to correct their mistakes in a supportive setting. Studies indicate that interactive, student-centered approaches enhance engagement and reinforce learning (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). Overall, the fieldnotes and interview excerpts illustrate how the teacher's relational strategies providing emotional support, using positive reinforcement, and structuring engagement enhance student confidence, participation, and learning. By creating an inclusive and supportive environment, the teacher ensures that students feel valued, motivated, and comfortable engaging in the learning process (Cornelius-White, 2007; Wubbels, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011). The combination of personalized engagement and structured support further reinforces the teacher's secure attachment style, where she provides both emotional support and clear guidance, fostering a positive learning experience (Bartholomew, 1990).

4.3 Students' Perceptions of Teacher's Relational Strategies

This section is based on interviews conducted with ten students throughout the semester, with additional interviews at the end. It explores students' perceptions of their teacher's relational strategies. The majority of students (seven) had positive perceptions, while three expressed neutral perceptions. The following discussion highlights these mixed views on the teacher's relational strategies in the classroom.

The second research question, "What are students' perceptions of the teacher's classroom relational strategies in promoting a positive learning environment?" was addressed through interviews with ten students from observed phonology classes at the end of the semester. These interviews focused on students' perspectives regarding

the teacher's relational strategies and their impact on the classroom environment. The questions specifically examined how the teacher's strategies such as building relationships, fostering mutual respect, and creating a supportive learning atmosphere affected students.

Students were invited to reflect on their experiences with the teacher's relational strategies and share their perceptions of the teacher-student relationship. Their responses provided valuable insights into how these strategies influenced their engagement, motivation, and overall classroom experience. The findings revealed two main perspectives: positive perceptions and neutral or negative perceptions.

4.3.1 Students' Positive Perceptions

These perceptions refer to students reflecting on their teacher on how teacher's foster relationships and create a good learning environment in the classroom. The findings show that seven students have positive perceptions of the teacher's relational strategies. The examples 18-24 demonstrate students' responses.

These perceptions reflected students' reflections on how their teacher fostered relationships and created a positive learning environment in the classroom. The findings indicated that seven students had positive perceptions of the teacher's relational strategies. Excerpts 18-24 illustrated the students' responses.

Excerpt 18

"I am quite close with the teacher. She is a very friendly person, not stressful at all. She does not create tension when teaching. She is funny and fun, and she makes the classroom atmosphere relaxed and stress-free. The teacher created a stress-free environment. There is no pressure to answer questions or learn. When I have questions, she helps us find the answers and explains things clearly, which makes me feel more comfortable engaging with her." (S-1)

Excerpt 19

"It is good. The teacher is very nice, approachable, and easy to talk to. I can consult her about anything, and she is easy to reach. When I am with her, it does not feel too stressful. Normally, I am quite shy and tense around teachers, but with the teacher

being approachable, I feel more comfortable speaking and engaging in conversation. I do not worry about the teacher being judged for not doing well or giving the wrong answer.” (S-2)

Excerpt 20

“I think my relationship with the teacher is good. She is very nice, kind, and flexible. She is not strict or harsh at all, and she is very reasonable. I can consult her about more than just academics, even about life in general.” (S-3)

Excerpt 21

“I think it’s good because she talks a lot and likes to joke. Her teaching style is relaxed and not too stressful, which makes us want to learn.” (S-5)

Excerpt 22

“I think they’re good. She teaches in a fun way. Even though the content is heavy and difficult, I can still understand it because she explains the material well, and she also makes it enjoyable, which motivates me to learn.” (S-7)

Excerpt 23

“She is a good speaker. She talks a lot about her studies or something. And she mostly talks, like, a speech. She likes to talk a lot. She asks some of her students to participate in their study, and she mostly gives us to raise our hands or call out names to get some attendance for the class.” (S-6)

Excerpt 24

“Since she is easy to talk to, I feel comfortable asking her questions when I’m confused, and I feel less afraid to approach her.” (S-9)

The students’ perceptions of the teacher’s relational strategies, as expressed in the interview excerpts, aligned with the teacher’s efforts to foster a positive and supportive learning environment. These perceptions emphasized the teacher’s intentional focus on creating a stress-free, approachable, and engaging classroom atmosphere.

Students expressed that the teacher's approachability and friendliness created a stress-free classroom environment (Excerpts 18, 19). The teacher's ability to establish a relaxed and tension-free learning space allowed students to feel at ease, reducing pressure when participating in discussions or answering questions. Research suggests that when teachers cultivate a warm and supportive atmosphere, students are more willing to engage in learning activities without fear of judgment (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This aligns with the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 2013), which emphasizes that students are more likely to feel motivated and emotionally secure in classrooms where they experience empathy and encouragement (Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020). Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) highlights that student engagement increases when they feel connected to their teachers and supported in their learning environment (Osterman, 2023). From an Attachment Theory perspective, this reflects the creation of a secure base, where the teacher's approachability reduces anxiety and fosters a sense of safety, allowing students to engage without fear of rejection (Bowlby, 1988).

Several students (Excerpts 19, 20, 24) emphasized that the teacher was approachable and easy to communicate with. This openness allowed students to seek clarification on academic matters and even consult the teacher on broader life issues. Research supports that students who perceived their teachers as accessible and willing to listen were more likely to seek help, leading to improved academic performance and emotional well-being (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). The Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) suggests that teachers who establish strong personal connections with students enhance classroom engagement and cooperation. Furthermore, French and Raven's (1959) referent power theory suggests that teachers who build respect and trust through positive interactions, rather than authority, create a more open and engaging learning environment (Tauber, 2007). This perception of approachability aligns with a secure attachment style, where the teacher is seen as a reliable and accessible figure, providing emotional support and fostering open communication (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

The teacher's use of humor and engaging teaching strategies (Excerpts 21, 22) contributed to a more enjoyable learning experience. Students appreciated how the

teacher incorporated jokes and maintained a relaxed teaching style, making even challenging content easier to grasp. Research has shown that humor in teaching reduces anxiety, increases attention, and enhances student retention of material (Fredricks et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007). This aligns with Vygotsky's social development theory (Margolis, 2020), which highlights the role of interactive and socially engaging learning methods in fostering deeper understanding and motivation. By making lessons more engaging and student-centered, the teacher ensured that students remained interested and actively involved in their learning (Hagenauer et al., 2023). The use of humor and engaging strategies contributes to a secure learning environment, as it reduces stress and promotes positive interactions, fostering a sense of connection and comfort (Sroufe, 2003).

A recurring theme in students' responses was the teacher's encouragement of active participation (Excerpt 23). The teacher frequently invited students to raise their hands, answer questions, and engage in class discussions, reinforcing a participatory and inclusive classroom culture. Studies indicate that student participation increases when teachers create structured yet flexible learning environments where students feel safe to contribute (Marzano, 2003; Quin, 2017). Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) suggests that providing students with autonomy in classroom discussions fosters intrinsic motivation and deeper engagement (Osterman, 2023). Encouraging active participation aligns with a secure attachment approach, where the teacher supports student autonomy and provides a safe space for them to express themselves, fostering confidence and engagement (Edelstein & Shaver, 2004).

Students also highlighted the teacher's ability to explain concepts clearly (Excerpts 18, 22), which helped them understand difficult content more effectively. The teacher's willingness to assist students in finding answers and breaking down complex topics contributed to a supportive learning environment where students felt comfortable seeking help when needed. Research supports that when teachers scaffold learning through clear explanations and guided practice, students develop better comprehension and confidence in their abilities (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Roorda et al., 2011). Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding (Margolis, 2020) emphasizes the importance of teachers providing step-by-step guidance to help students progress

from dependent to independent learning. Through these relational strategies—approachability, humor, encouragement of participation, and clear explanations—the teacher effectively created a positive, inclusive, and engaging learning environment. By ensuring that students felt comfortable, valued, and supported, the teacher fostered higher engagement, academic motivation, and meaningful learning experiences (Cornelius-White, 2007; Wubbels, 2013). Overall, these findings highlight the importance of teacher-student relationships in shaping learning outcomes. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988) provides a useful framework for understanding how positive relational dynamics contribute to students’ emotional and academic development. Teachers who exhibit secure attachment characteristics create classrooms where students feel safe, motivated, and engaged. In contrast, teachers who struggle with relational dynamics due to insecure attachment tendencies may face challenges in fostering similar levels of student participation and trust (Allen et al., 2005). Recognizing these attachment-based influences allows educators to refine their relational strategies, ultimately enhancing student well-being and academic success.

4.3.2 Students’ Neutral Perceptions

The findings indicated that three students had neutral perceptions of the teacher’s relational strategies, particularly regarding communication, friendliness, and off-topic lessons. Excerpts 25-27 illustrated these student responses.

Excerpt 25

“Her teaching style is relaxed and not too stressful, which makes us want to learn. The classroom atmosphere is relaxed and fun, which makes everyone want to learn. However, sometimes the teacher talks too much, and we do not get much chance to respond.” (S-4)

Excerpt 26

“Sometimes, she goes off-topic; it is okay sometimes, especially if I am tired and do not want to be overwhelmed with content. But if going off-topic causes the class to run late, then I am not okay with it, and since many students are in the class, she does not have a way to keep everyone engaged.” (S-8)

Excerpt 27

“There are times when she is about to start a new topic lesson, but then she goes off-topic. Since I have never studied this subject before, it is hard for me to refocus on the content and follow along with the off-topic discussion. It confuses me.” (S-10)

These excerpts from students with neutral or negative perceptions provided insight into how the teacher’s relational strategies may sometimes have unintended consequences that impacted the classroom learning environment. While the teacher’s overall approach aimed to foster a positive and engaging space, some students expressed discomfort or dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the teaching style.

The student in Excerpt 25 reported that the teacher’s tendency to dominate conversations led to fewer opportunities for student participation. Although the relaxed and stress-free teaching style was appreciated, excessive teacher talk may have limited active student engagement. Research suggests that classrooms where students have ample opportunities to contribute foster deeper learning and higher engagement (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2012). This aligns with Vygotsky’s social development theory (Margolis, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of student interaction and active participation in the learning process. Additionally, the Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (Wubbels, 2013) suggests that teachers who balance teacher-led instruction with student participation create more engaging and interactive learning environments. While the teacher’s conversational approach-built rapport and reduced anxiety, incorporating more student-led discussions, structured questioning, and peer interactions could have enhanced student involvement and retention of content (Cornelius-White, 2007).

Several students (Excerpts 26, 27) mentioned that the teacher frequently strayed off-topic, which had mixed effects on their learning experience. While some students found off-topic discussions refreshing, especially when they were tired, others found them distracting and disruptive to the lesson flow. Research supports that while flexible, student-centered teaching methods can foster engagement, excessive deviation from lesson objectives may hinder comprehension, particularly in complex subjects (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Roorda et al., 2017). This issue was particularly

challenging for students new to the subject (Excerpt 27), as they found it difficult to refocus after off-topic detours, leading to confusion. Studies on Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2011) suggest that when students are exposed to an unstructured flow of information, their ability to process and retain essential concepts may decrease. Maintaining a structured yet flexible teaching approach could have helped ensure that off-topic discussions enhanced rather than disrupted the learning experience (Marzano, 2003; Hagenauer et al., 2023). These findings align with Attachment Theory, which suggests that the way teachers regulate classroom interactions can reflect their underlying attachment styles and influence student engagement (Bowlby, 1988). The teacher's ability to create a comfortable and low-stress learning environment indicates a secure relational approach, which has been linked to increased student motivation and willingness to participate (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). However, the frequent off-topic discussions and excessive teacher talk may suggest a tendency toward a preoccupied attachment style, where the teacher seeks strong connections with students but inadvertently limits student autonomy (Allen et al., 2005). Research indicates that teachers who balance relational warmth with structured guidance foster greater student independence and academic engagement (Sroufe, 2003). Therefore, while the teacher's relational strategies helped ease anxiety, implementing clearer instructional boundaries could have further enhanced students' ability to process information and stay engaged (Edelstein & Shaver, 2004).

One student (Excerpt 26) noted that in a large class, the teacher struggled to keep everyone engaged. This suggested that while the teacher's relational strategies were effective overall, they might not have worked equally well for all students, particularly in larger class settings where maintaining attention and participation was more challenging. Research indicates that large classroom settings require strategic engagement techniques such as structured questioning, small group discussions, and interactive learning activities to sustain student participation (Fredricks et al., 2004; Quin, 2017). Additionally, Vygotsky's theory (Margolis, 2020) highlights the importance of scaffolding, providing interactive support systems to maintain student engagement. Implementing student-centered strategies—such as small group

discussions, peer collaboration, or structured questioning—could help ensure that all students remain engaged (Cornelius-White, 2007; Wubbels, 2013).

Overall, while the teacher's relational strategies fostered a positive and stress-free environment, these findings highlighted the importance of balancing teacher talk with student participation, maintaining structured discussions, and using interactive methods to engage all students effectively. By adapting teaching approaches based on class size and student needs, the teacher could have enhanced learning experiences while maintaining strong relational connections (Roorda et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the teacher's relational strategies and their influence on student learning. The findings indicate that the teacher fostered a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere through open communication, empathy, humor, and engagement. Strategies such as maintaining a positive environment, avoiding singling out students, and promoting collaborative learning contributed to student confidence and participation. The teacher's approachability and interactive teaching methods helped create an inclusive and relaxed learning environment. Students' perceptions of the teacher's relational strategies were largely positive, with many appreciating the stress-free atmosphere and the teacher's encouragement of active participation. However, some students noted minor concerns, such as excessive off-topic discussions and the challenge of keeping all students engaged in a larger class. Despite these concerns, the overall findings indicate that the teacher's relational strategies significantly enhanced student motivation, classroom engagement, and learning outcomes. The results suggest that the teacher's relational strategies play a crucial role in fostering close and supportive student-teacher relationships in the classroom. The next chapter (Chapter 5) presents the conclusion, limitations, implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study (see 5.1), a summary of findings (see 5.2), implications of the study (see 5.3), limitations and further research (see 5.4), and concludes with the conclusion (see 5.5).

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study explores the strategies in fostering relationships with her students in classrooms and students' perceptions of their teacher's relational strategies in promoting good learning environments. Focused on a female Thai English teacher with 28 years of teaching experience and her phonology course. The study uses a qualitative case study with content analysis involving semi-structured interviews and classroom observation fieldnotes. The findings aim to examine the teacher's relational strategies and students' perception of their teacher's relational strategies to contribute new knowledge about how these relationships function within a Thai-specific cultural and linguistic context.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study's findings emphasize the critical role of teacher relational strategies in fostering a positive and supportive classroom environment for a phonology course. The teacher employed multiple relational strategies to build strong relationships with students and create a relaxed learning atmosphere. Central to her approach was her friendly and approachable demeanor, characterized by kindness, humor, and energy. By maintaining a warm and supportive attitude, the teacher sought to reduce student stress and foster trust and a sense of belonging. She consistently smiled, engaged in casual conversations, and used humor to create a relaxed and welcoming classroom. Additionally, she provided emotional support through gestures such as verbal encouragement and personalized attention, contributing to a classroom environment that felt inclusive and familial. Beyond relationship-building, the teacher's strategies were also aimed at fostering student engagement and participation. She actively addressed students by name, posed questions to stimulate involvement, and encouraged collaborative learning through group and pair activities. These methods not only enhanced academic engagement but also built students' confidence and sense

of community. Verbal praise, such as “good” or “well done,” and occasional off-topic conversations helped to reduce anxiety, especially when dealing with challenging content. By balancing academic rigor with emotional support, the teacher created a relaxed yet structured learning environment that promoted active learning and mutual respect. The classroom environment reflected these relational strategies, emphasizing inclusivity and emotional safety. The teacher avoided practices that might embarrass students, such as singling them out, and instead encouraged voluntary participation. She fostered collaboration by using group work and bonus point incentives, ensuring that students felt comfortable engaging with the material and their peers. Her strategies promoted social connections and enhanced students’ motivation to participate in learning activities. These findings align with research highlighting the importance of teacher warmth and accessibility in creating positive classroom climates.

Students’ perceptions of the teacher’s relational strategies were largely positive. Many students appreciated her humor and support, which made learning enjoyable and reduced stress. They felt comfortable seeking help, engaging in discussions, and actively participating in class activities. Several students indicated that the teacher’s relational strategies increased their motivation, confidence, and willingness to learn. However, some students noted minor challenges, such as occasional distractions from off-topic discussions and less engaging instructional materials, including slides and handouts. Despite these concerns, the overall response indicated that the teacher’s relational strategies significantly enhanced students’ classroom experiences and contributed to a positive learning environment.

5.3 Implications of the Study

This study provided the opportunity to interview and observe an exemplary teacher, yielding a wealth of data for analysis and application to classroom practice. Implications of this case study for the field of education are to serve as further support for the inclusion of teacher-student interpersonal relationships strategies into teacher preparation programs as viable classroom strategies worthy of study.

Effective teaching encompasses various strategies that some teachers implement successfully and that others can adapt. The findings of this single case study presented

how the purposeful relational strategies of this teacher created a positive learning environment that students felt supported in and that guided students' learning. The purposeful establishment of her classroom learning environment served to enhance the learning and student engagement in her teaching. Students were able to expect their next steps in learning processes because this teacher deliberately created a positive atmosphere of her classroom, allowing for continual flow in the teaching process.

The study highlights the importance of teacher-student relationships, which are widely recognized by teachers as crucial for student success (Martin & Collie, 2019; Li, Bergin, & Olsen, 2022; Roorda et al., 2017). However, while teachers may understand the significance of these relationships and the practices that enhance them, the practical application of such strategies can often be challenging without clear, actionable guidance.

This case study addresses this gap by offering several practical strategies to build positive relationships with students in the Thailand context, providing a framework that can enhance their learning environment and overall academic experience. The findings of this study not only provide practical strategies for building effective teacher-student relationships but also highlight specific relational strategies that can enhance classroom dynamics. Teachers can apply strategies such as active listening, personalized feedback, and consistent encouragement to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, which are essential for fostering an inclusive and engaging learning environment. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to use humor and adapt their communication styles to address the diverse needs of their students, as demonstrated by the success of the teacher in this study. These strategies promote academic success and contribute to students' emotional well-being, further reinforcing the importance of relational practices in education (Cook et al., 2018).

Moreover, the implications extend to teacher training courses, where incorporating interpersonal relationship strategies into professional development programs can help equip teachers with the skills needed to establish positive learning environments. Teacher education programs should emphasize the development of relational skills alongside pedagogical techniques, ensuring that future teachers are prepared to

implement strategies that foster engagement and student success. Additionally, professional learning communities and engaged groups within schools can utilize these findings to develop collaborative approaches to relational teaching, fostering a culture of shared best practices. Schools and educational institutions should consider structured training sessions, mentorship programs, and peer discussions to help teachers refine and integrate these relational strategies into their classrooms. By embedding these principles into both initial teacher training and ongoing professional development, teachers can cultivate a more student-centered and effective teaching approach.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. It focused on a single Thai university English teacher. While this case study approach provided in-depth insights, the limited scope may not fully capture the diverse experiences and relational dynamics in other classroom contexts or subject areas. Furthermore, the study was conducted within the specific cultural and educational context of Thailand, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings to other settings where cultural norms, educational policies, and classroom practices differ. Additionally, the research relied on classroom observations conducted over a relatively short period, potentially overlooking the dynamic and evolving nature of teacher-student relationships over time. The lack of a longitudinal design also limited the ability to examine how relational strategies and influence on classroom environments develop over extended periods. Another limitation of this study was the absence of video recordings during classroom observations. Without video data, certain nuanced teacher-student interactions, non-verbal cues, and spontaneous classroom moments may not have been fully captured. Video recordings could have provided a more detailed and objective account of relational strategies and classroom dynamics, reducing potential biases in observational data.

Future research could address these limitations by including multiple teachers and students from diverse educational levels, subject areas, and cultural contexts. Comparative studies across different regions or countries could provide valuable insights into how cultural norms and institutional practices influence teacher-student

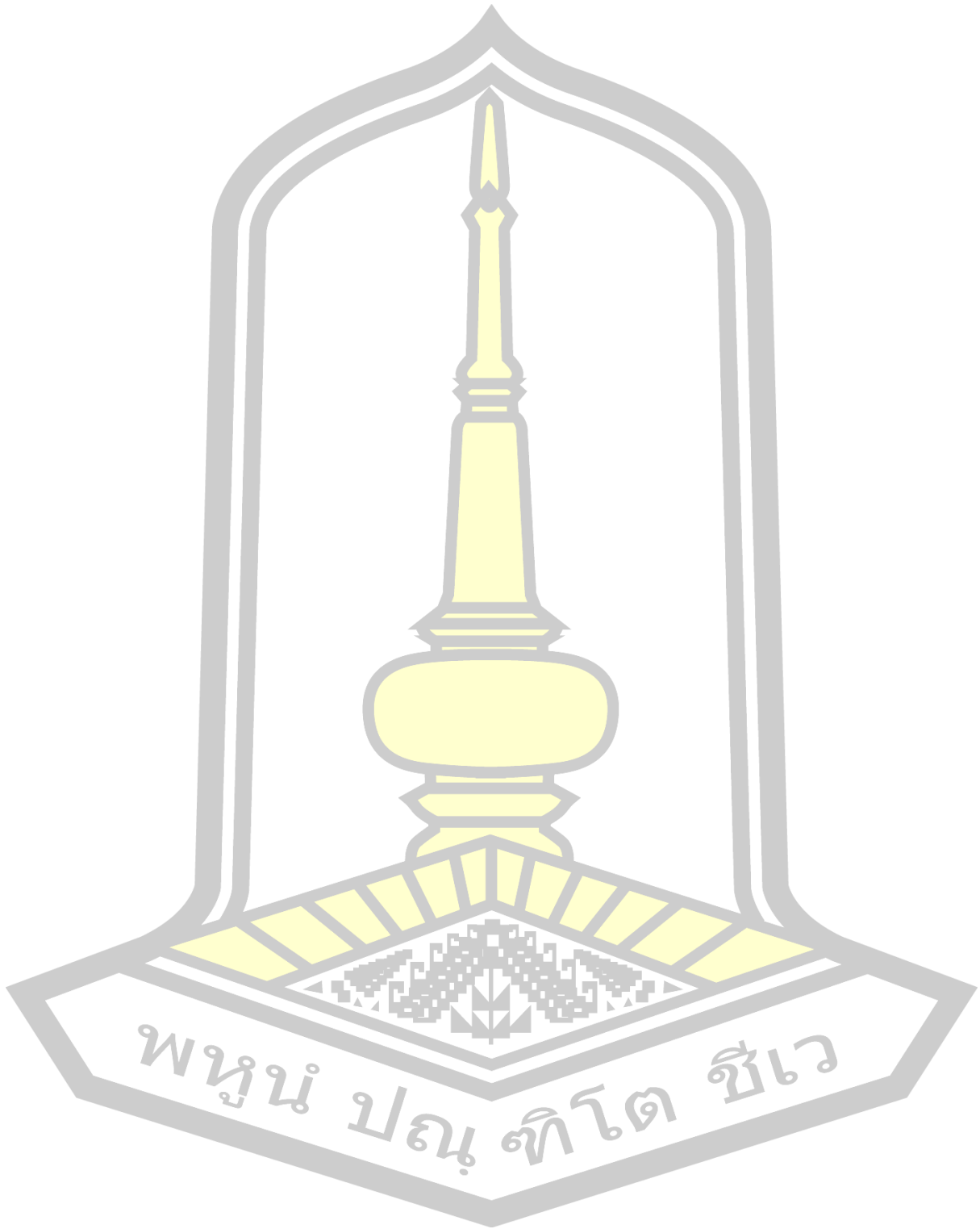
interactions. Longitudinal studies are particularly recommended to explore the evolution of teacher-student relationships and their long-term impact on classroom environments. Additionally, incorporating mixed-method approaches, such as combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys or experimental designs, could enhance the reliability and applicability of findings. Future studies should consider integrating video recordings into classroom observations to capture a more comprehensive view of teacher-student interactions. Video analysis could provide richer data for examining relational strategies, allowing researchers to review interactions multiple times and identify subtle behaviors that may be overlooked in real-time observations. Exploring specific factors such as the role of technology, teacher training programs, and individual student characteristics would further contribute to a comprehensive understanding of effective relational strategies in diverse educational settings.

5.5 Conclusion

This study highlights the essential role of teacher-student relationships in fostering a positive classroom environment that supports student learning and engagement. Focusing on a female Thai English teacher with 28 years of experience in a phonology course, the findings demonstrate how relational strategies, including humor, emotional support, and personalized interactions, create an inclusive and motivational learning space. By reducing student stress and fostering trust, the teacher enhanced confidence, participation, and a sense of belonging among students. This study provides insights into relational strategies within a Thai-specific cultural and linguistic context, offering practical applications for broader educational settings.

Despite the limitations of its scope, cultural specificity, and timeframe, this research offers valuable implications for teachers and researchers. It underscores the need for further exploration of teacher-student interactions in diverse contexts and encourages longitudinal studies to deepen understanding of these evolving dynamics. In conclusion, this research highlights the crucial role of relational strategies as essential for effective teaching and their ability to improve positive learning experiences.

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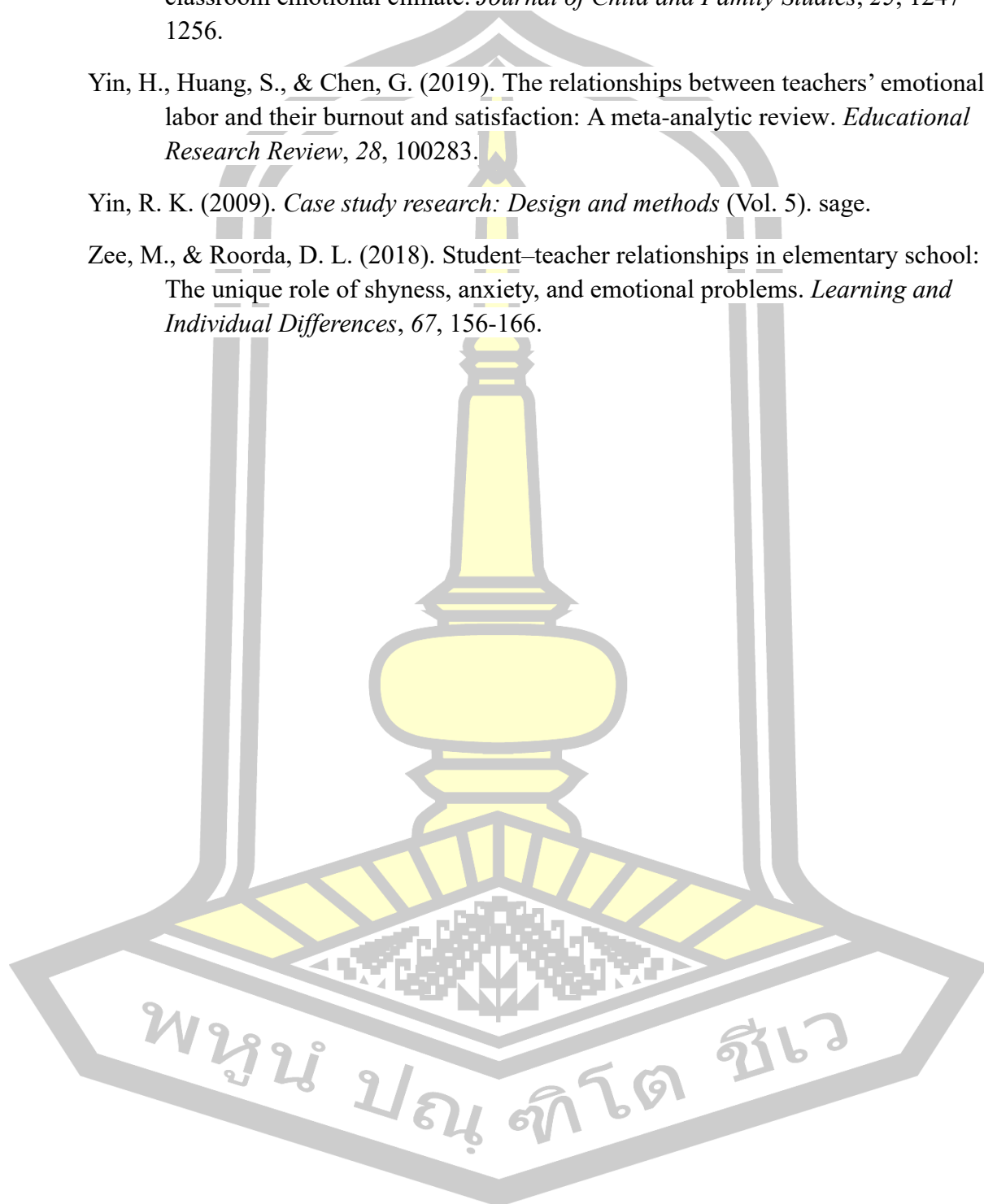
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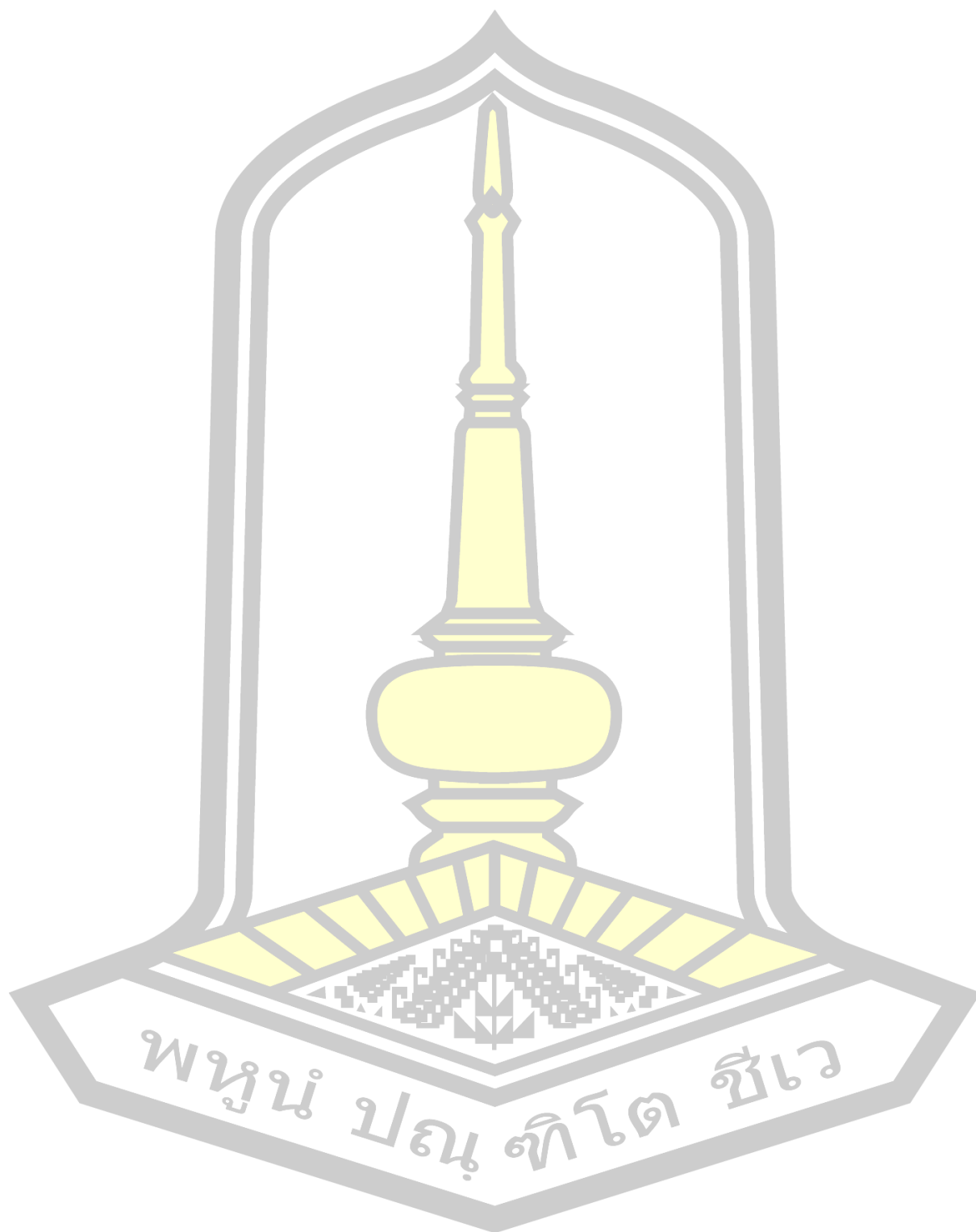
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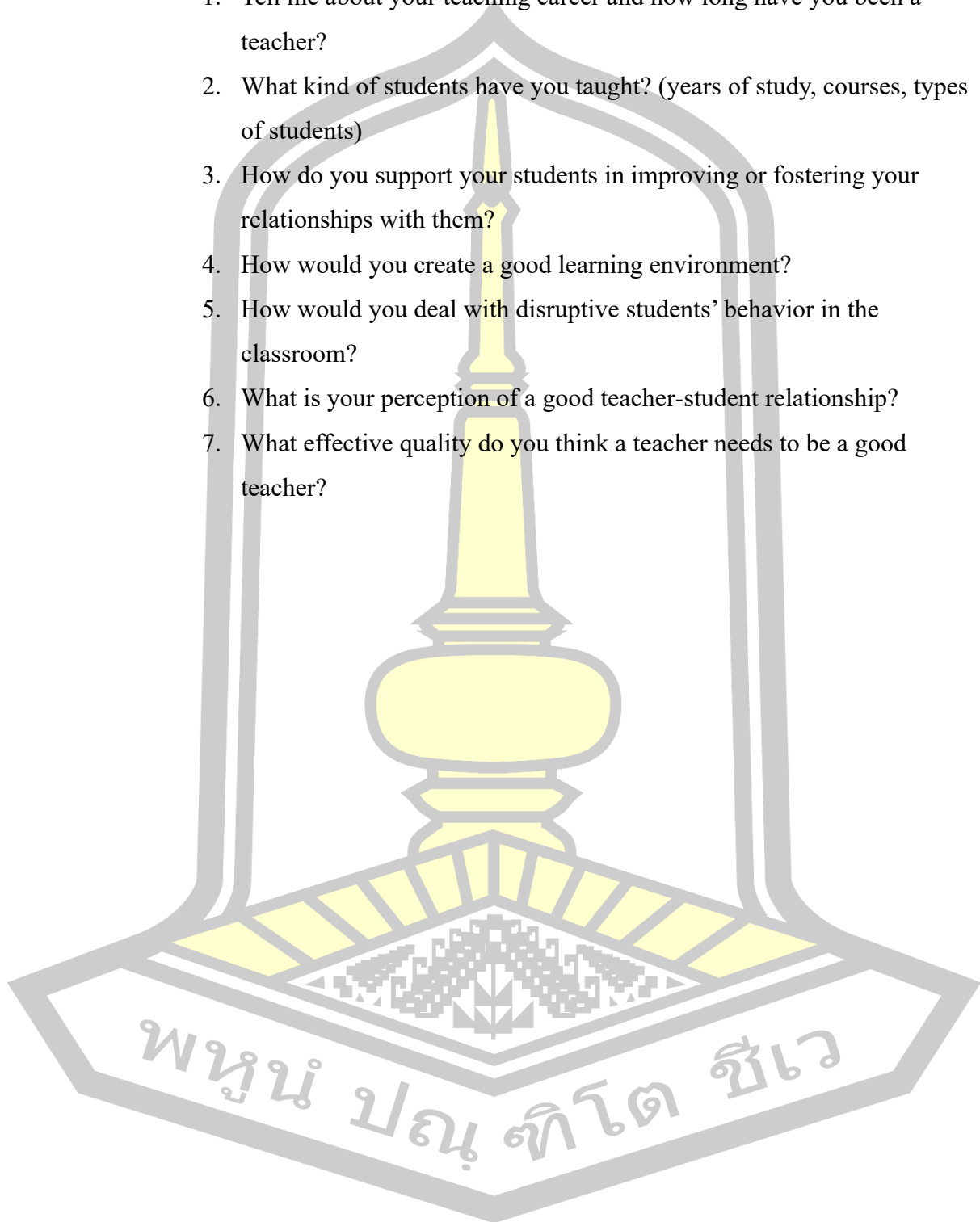


APPENDICES



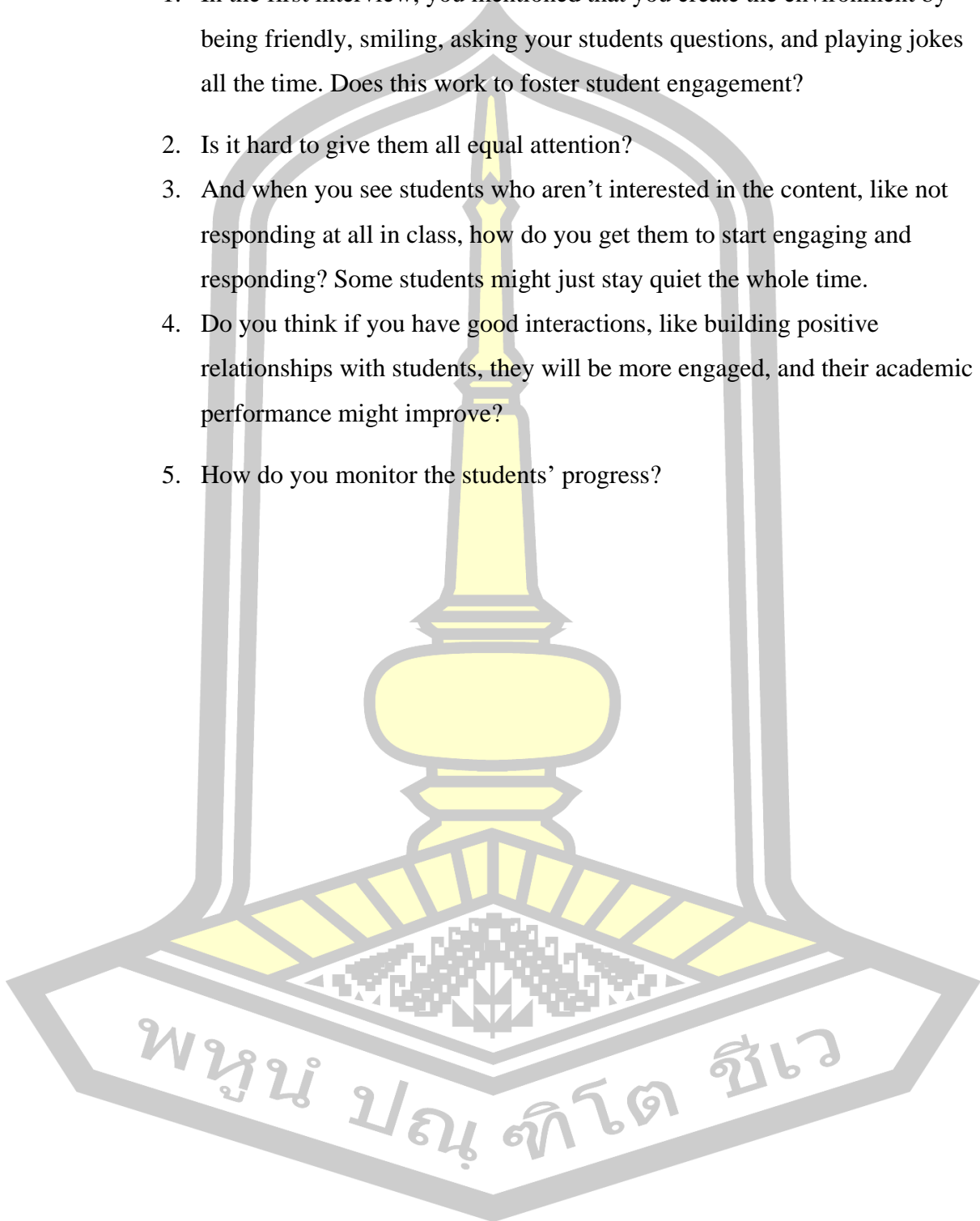
Appendix A: Start of semester: First interview questions

1. Tell me about your teaching career and how long have you been a teacher?
2. What kind of students have you taught? (years of study, courses, types of students)
3. How do you support your students in improving or fostering your relationships with them?
4. How would you create a good learning environment?
5. How would you deal with disruptive students' behavior in the classroom?
6. What is your perception of a good teacher-student relationship?
7. What effective quality do you think a teacher needs to be a good teacher?



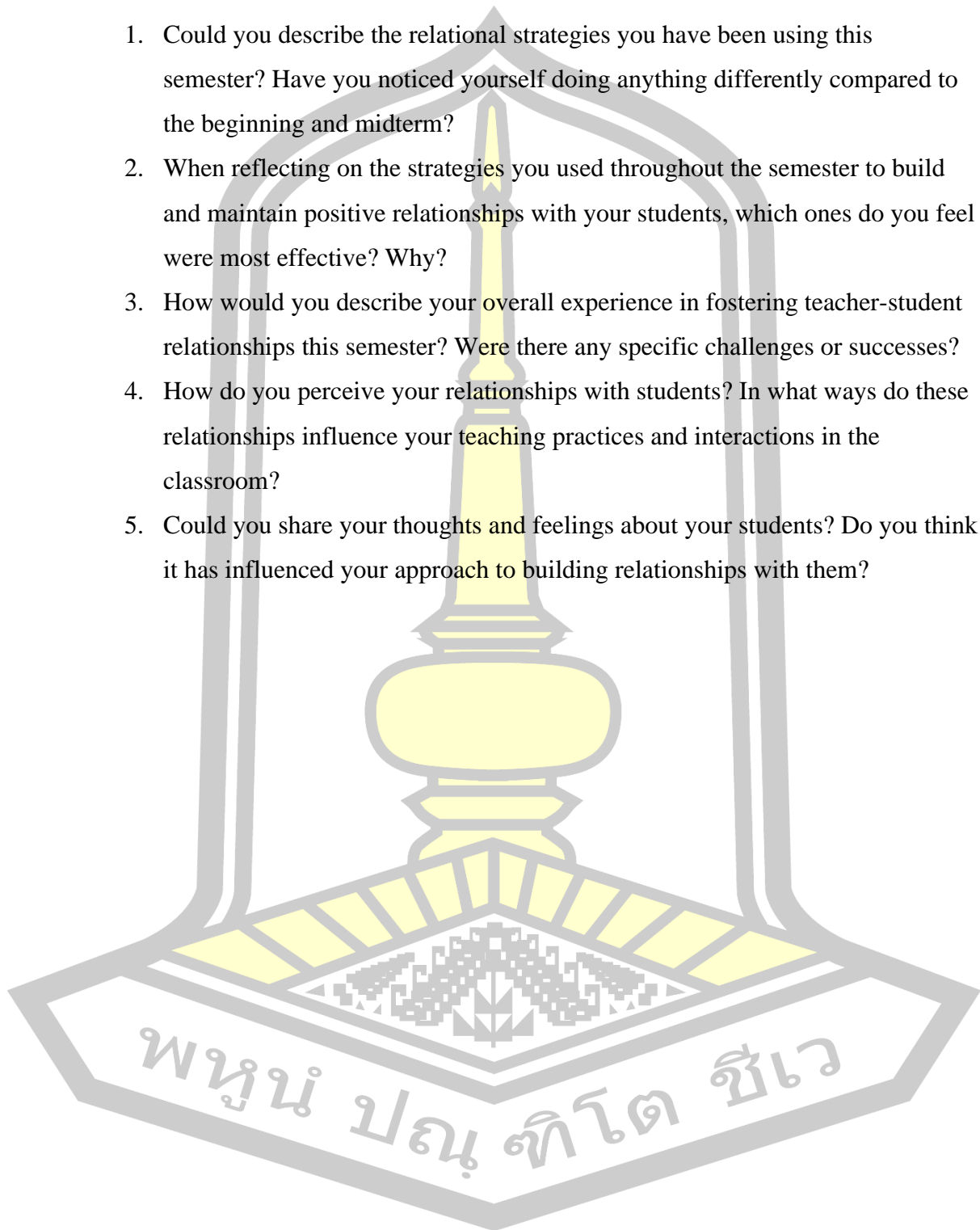
Appendix B: Mid semester: Second interview questions

1. In the first interview, you mentioned that you create the environment by being friendly, smiling, asking your students questions, and playing jokes all the time. Does this work to foster student engagement?
2. Is it hard to give them all equal attention?
3. And when you see students who aren't interested in the content, like not responding at all in class, how do you get them to start engaging and responding? Some students might just stay quiet the whole time.
4. Do you think if you have good interactions, like building positive relationships with students, they will be more engaged, and their academic performance might improve?
5. How do you monitor the students' progress?



Appendix C: End of semester: Third interview questions

1. Could you describe the relational strategies you have been using this semester? Have you noticed yourself doing anything differently compared to the beginning and midterm?
2. When reflecting on the strategies you used throughout the semester to build and maintain positive relationships with your students, which ones do you feel were most effective? Why?
3. How would you describe your overall experience in fostering teacher-student relationships this semester? Were there any specific challenges or successes?
4. How do you perceive your relationships with students? In what ways do these relationships influence your teaching practices and interactions in the classroom?
5. Could you share your thoughts and feelings about your students? Do you think it has influenced your approach to building relationships with them?



Appendix D: Sample observation lesson fieldnotes

Description of Observation Activity:
- Transcribe the word (IPA transcribe) - Count the VOW sound
- Guiding for quiz on Saturday

Physical Setting of Observation:
Large classroom students are 60.

Observation Notes: (Site)

- Teacher show the IPA transcribe and asked students to read the word like this → [vɪzərɪst]
- Teacher asked students transcribe the word and give a bonus point
- Teacher asked students open the books and provide assignments (Transcribe words) to submit to her at the end of semester.
- After finished transcribe word teacher provide Q and A Definition and make appointments on Saturday.

Reflective Notes: (Observer)

- Students seem actively response the question the most some students are response.
- This lesson teacher seem intend teaching and funny play jokes today.

Description of Observation Activity:
Lesson about stress sound
In exercise during the class

Physical Setting of Observation:
Small class today students in the class are 20. - Today teacher use microphone.
Students take a seat separate with their friend standing in front of classroom.

Observation Notes: (Site)

- Teacher give lecture to students and always smile during lecture.
- During lesson time teacher plays jokes with students.
- Give compliments when students response.
- Students asked question to teacher but their classmate had explain instead.
- Teacher asked students to do exercise of stress the sound by asked them to explain "why stress here?" if students couldn't answer she provide cues and explain later.
- During students do exercise teacher walked around class to assist them and chatting with students.
- Teacher asked students for volunteer and give a bonus points.

Reflective Notes: (Observer)

- Today teacher called students by their name and she could remember her student's name.
- Teacher very concern when she saw her students felt side and asked inhale to her students.
- Student seem very active when teacher provide bonus points to them.

Description of Observation Activity:
lecture lesson on the book about transcribe sentences
and Review previous knowledge

Physical Setting of Observation:
Small classroom students are 29. Teacher standing in front of
the class writing on the board to lecture students.

Observation Notes: (Site)

- The class started by teacher has conversation with students
- Teacher provide lesson chapter and explain and review knowledge (part of speech) to students
- Teacher ask question to student & stimulate response by give bonus points
- When students answer the question teacher give compliments (like very good!)
- Teacher divide students into group to do exercise (transcribe sentences & indicate part of speech word by hand)
- While students doing exercise teacher walk around the class and assist students
- After finished exercise teacher asked students to read the sentences together with the whole class

Reflective Notes: (Observer)

- At the beginning of lesson teacher & student were enjoy talking on their casual conversation.
- When teacher said she will give bonus points it's can stimulate student to try answer questions.
- Most of students actively participate and enjoy with teacher's jokes.
- Students seem comfortable to calling teacher to walk to their desk and ask question during exercise.

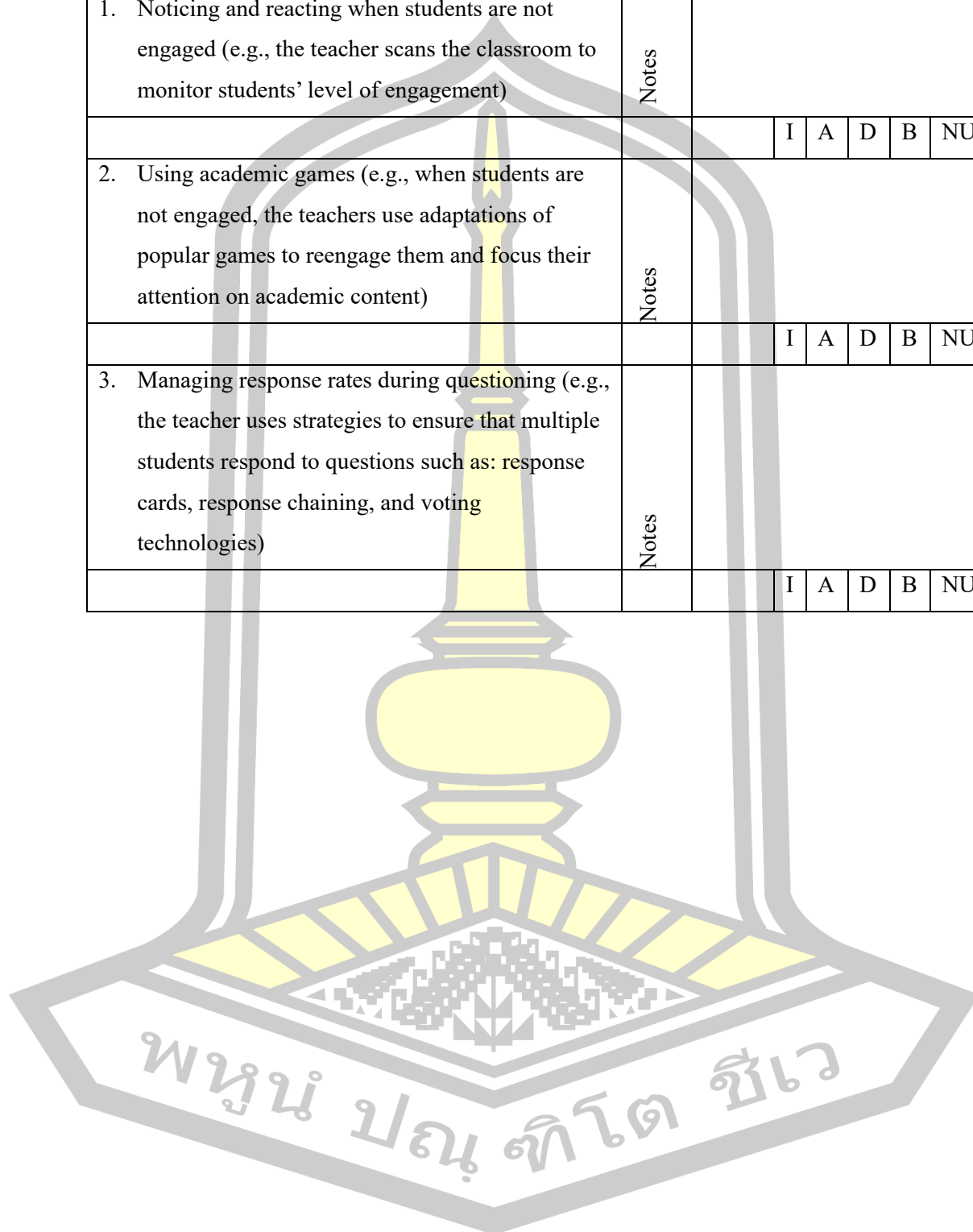
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Appendix E: Marzano Observational Protocol Observation Short form

I. Lesson segments Involving Routine Events					
Design Question #1: What will I do to establish and communicate learning goals, track student progress, and celebrate success?					
1. Providing clear learning goals and scales to measure those goals (e.g., the teacher provides or reminds students about a specific learning goal)	Notes				
			I	A	D B NU
2. Tracking students' progress (e.g., using formative assessment, the teacher helps students chart their individual and group progress on a learning goal)	Notes				
			I	A	D B NU
3. Celebrating student success (e.g., the teacher helps student acknowledge and celebrate current status on a learning goal as well as knowledge gain)	Notes				
			I	A	D B NU
Design Question #6: What will I do to establish and maintain classroom rules and procedures?					
4. Establishing classroom routines (e.g., the teacher reminds students of a rule or establish a new rule or procedure)	Notes				
			I	A	D B NU
5. Organizing the physical layout of the classroom for learning (e.g. the teacher organizes materials, traffic patterns, and displays to enhance learning)	Notes				
			I	A	D B NU
II. Lesson Segments Addressing Content					
Design Question #2: What will I do to help students effectively interact with new knowledge?					
1. Identifying critical information (e.g., the teacher provides cues as to which information is important)	Notes				
			I	A	D B NU

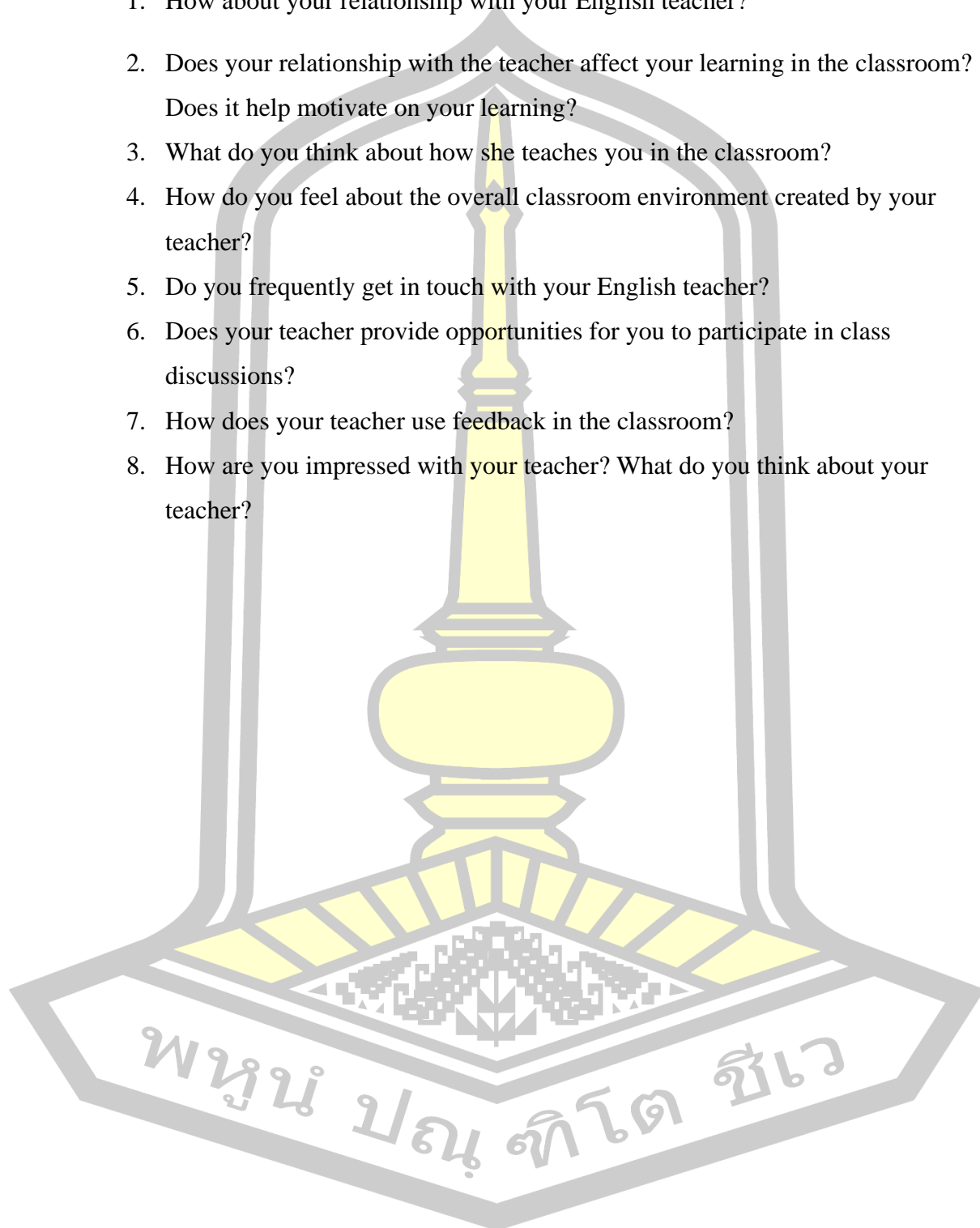
2. Organizing students to interact with new knowledge (e.g., the teacher organizes students into dyads or triads to discuss small chunks of content)	Notes		I	A	D	B	NU
13. Examining errors in reasoning (e.g. the teacher asks students to examine informal fallacies, propaganda, and bias)	Notes		I	A	D	B	NU
14. Practicing skills, strategies, and processes (the teacher uses massed and distributed practice)	Notes		I	A	D	B	NU
15. Revising knowledge (e.g., the teacher asks students to revise entries in notebooks to clarify and add to previous information)	Notes		I	A	D	B	NU
Design Question #4: What will I do to help students generate and test hypotheses about new knowledge?							
16. Organizing students for cognitively complex tasks (e.g., the teachers organize students into small groups to facilitate cognitively complex tasks)	Notes		I	A	D	B	NU
17. Engaging students in cognitively complex tasks involving hypothesis generating and testing (e.g., the teacher engages students in decision-making tasks, problem-solving tasks, experimental inquiry tasks, and investigation tasks)	Notes		I	A	D	B	NU
18. Providing resources and guidance (e.g., the teacher makes resources available that are specific to cognitively complex tasks and helps students execute such tasks)	Notes		I	A	D	B	NU

Design Question #5: What will I do to engage students?					
1. Noticing and reacting when students are not engaged (e.g., the teacher scans the classroom to monitor students' level of engagement)	Notes				
		I	A	D	B NU
2. Using academic games (e.g., when students are not engaged, the teachers use adaptations of popular games to reengage them and focus their attention on academic content)	Notes				
		I	A	D	B NU
3. Managing response rates during questioning (e.g., the teacher uses strategies to ensure that multiple students respond to questions such as: response cards, response chaining, and voting technologies)	Notes				
		I	A	D	B NU



Appendix F: Interview questions for students

1. How about your relationship with your English teacher?
2. Does your relationship with the teacher affect your learning in the classroom?
Does it help motivate on your learning?
3. What do you think about how she teaches you in the classroom?
4. How do you feel about the overall classroom environment created by your teacher?
5. Do you frequently get in touch with your English teacher?
6. Does your teacher provide opportunities for you to participate in class discussions?
7. How does your teacher use feedback in the classroom?
8. How are you impressed with your teacher? What do you think about your teacher?



Appendix G: Ethic Approval





MAHASARAKHAM UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR
RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Certificate of Approval

Approval number: 608-600/2024

Title : Teacher-Students Relationship and Influence on Classroom Learning Environment.

Principal Investigator : Miss. Watchareepun Pahanit

Responsible Department : Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences

Research site : The University situated in north eastern Thailand.

Review Method : Expedited Review

Date of Manufacture : 24 September 2024

expire : 23 September 2025

This research application has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects, Maharakham University, Thailand. Approval is dependent on local ethical approval having been received. Any subsequent changes to the consent form must be re-submitted to the Committee.

Ratree S.

(Assistant Professor Ratree Sawangjit)

Chairman

Approval is granted subject to the following conditions: (see back of this Certificate)



คณะกรรมการจริยธรรมการวิจัยในคน มหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม

เอกสารรับรองโครงการวิจัย

เลขที่การรับรอง : 608-600/2567

ชื่อโครงการวิจัย (ภาษาไทย) ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างครูกับนักเรียนและผลกระทบต่อสภาพแวดล้อมการเรียนรู้ในห้องเรียน

ชื่อโครงการวิจัย (ภาษาอังกฤษ) Teacher-Students Relationship and Influence on Classroom Learning Environment.

ผู้วิจัย : นางสาวชรีพรรณ พาทะนิตย์

หน่วยงานที่รับผิดชอบ : คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์

สถานที่ทำการวิจัย : มหาวิทยาลัยที่ตั้งอยู่ในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย

ประเภทการพิจารณาแบบ : แบบเร่งรัด

วันที่รับรอง : 24 กันยายน 2567

วันหมดอายุ : 23 กันยายน 2568

ข้อเสนอการวิจัยนี้ ได้รับการพิจารณาและให้ความเห็นชอบจากคณะกรรมการจริยธรรมการวิจัยในคน มหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคามแล้ว และอนุมัติในด้านจริยธรรมให้ดำเนินการศึกษาวิจัยเรื่องข้างต้นได้ บนพื้นฐานของโครงร่างงานวิจัยที่คณะกรรมการฯ ได้รับและพิจารณา เมื่อเสร็จสิ้นโครงการแล้วให้ผู้วิจัยส่งแบบฟอร์มการปิดโครงการและรายงานผลการดำเนินงานมายังคณะกรรมการจริยธรรมการวิจัยในคน มหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม หรือหากมีการเปลี่ยนแปลงใดๆ ในโครงการวิจัย ผู้วิจัยจักต้องยื่นขอรับการพิจารณาใหม่

กตริ์ สว่างจิตร์

(ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ เกษักรหญิงราตรี สว่างจิตร์)

ประธานคณะกรรมการจริยธรรมการวิจัยในคน

มหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม

ทั้งนี้ การรับรองนี้มีเงื่อนไขดังที่ระบุไว้ด้านหลังทุกข้อ (ดูด้านหลังของเอกสารรับรองโครงการวิจัย)

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