

Teachers' Perspectives on Seating Arrangements for English Language Learners

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Abstract

Students' learning quality in the classroom is influenced by the learning environment. The ability of teachers to control the seating arrangement is required. This study sought to understand how English teachers saw setting arrangements and what challenges they encountered while implementing them. A descriptive study using a qualitative methodology was used in this investigation. The study's findings showed how crucial the English teacher's opinion of the seating arrangement pattern is. The class arrangement that has been used is a separate table for solitary work and a seating pattern. In an effort to make learning enjoyable and not boring. One of the challenges that teachers frequently encountered was the state of the students, who frequently made noise when the sitting arrangement was altered. They were not only difficult to control, but they also objected to the change; b) The classroom's tight space also makes it difficult to implement the seating arrangement plan. In order to improve the quality of learning for students, this research study aims to motivate teachers to design the learning environment.

Keywords: teachers' perception, setting arrangement patterns, English language learners

Introduction

The teacher and students are two crucial components in the interaction process that is learning. A good learning process is bolstered by the relationship between the teacher and the students, which is evident from the frequent interactions that take place during the process. It is also encouraged by a welcoming and comfortable learning activities. According to Rutina (2016), effective classroom management by instructors determines both the positive learning environment and the teacher-student interaction.

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The goal of learning is for teachers to support their students in the classroom (Helingo: 2021). That is the process of developing one's knowledge, abilities, and character. It is also a process of developing attitudes. To accomplish those operations, numerous components are needed. The learning environment is one of them. One of the most crucial elements of an educational setting is this procedure, which will establish whether or not the learning goals are met. The majority of the educational activities were conducted in the classroom. As a result, educators are essential in establishing a learning environment (Helingo: 2022). Because a healthy learning environment can help students learn more effectively in the classroom, this can happen based on how well the teacher manages the class.

Classroom arrangement refers to the teacher's attempt to organize the classroom in a way that makes learning comfortable, enjoyable, and conducive for the pupils. Effective classroom management involves a variety of factors, according to Jeremy Harmer (2007). These include how the classroom is set up, whether students are working alone or in groups, and how we manage class time. Therefore, in addition to teaching, the teacher also helps to set up the classroom and develop an engaging and innovative learning environment for the students.

The teacher uses the seating arrangement as a way to organize the classroom according to the circumstances and state of the pupils. When designing seating arrangements, educators must consider the classroom environment, the needs of the students during the learning process, and the conditions and learning objectives they hope to accomplish. The effectiveness of the teacher's classroom arrangement is demonstrated by the students' engagement during the learning process. Talib (2013) found that students seated in the front had significantly higher educational statistics (26.467) than those seated in the back (22,500).

Therefore, seating arrangements are crucial for all teachers, particularly when teaching material that is thought to be difficult for students to understand. In this instance, every student believes that English is one of the most challenging subjects (Hasan et al., 2019). Therefore, creating a welcoming environment for students to learn English is a duty for all English teachers, and two-way communication between teachers and students is necessary to boost self-esteem, learning motivation, engagement, and even student performance in the classroom.

However, instructors frequently lament the challenges they face in managing or creating class arrangements, such as classroom seating configurations that align with existing activities, which affects how the seating arrangement is implemented. According to an English teacher, one of the things that prevents students from changing their seating arrangements is their discipline. Some students are reluctant to do so for a variety of reasons, such as discomfort with their current sitting positions or unfamiliar classmates (Habibie, 2020). The state of a small classroom and immobile student chairs or tables also become major issues when it comes to organizing student sitting because of the need to change the conditions and placement of items in the space.

Rutina (2016) even contends that while organizing classroom seating, it is important to take into account the attitudes and traits of the pupils. As stated by Arsyad et al. (2021), there are undoubtedly certain kids who are challenging to control and who refuse to pay attention to their teachers. Learning English is one of the subjects that is regarded as quite challenging in other contexts. English as a foreign language is the root cause. As a result, a study on seating arrangements is required. It has to do with how the learning environment influences students' English language acquisition. Additionally, this study attempts to investigate how teachers

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perceive seating arrangements. Because the arrangements in the classroom are made by the teachers.

Methodology

Descriptive and qualitative methods were employed in this study's data collection process. According to J.R. Raco (2010), the qualitative research approach refers to the general or overarching train of thinking (general logic) and theoretical ideas (theoretical perspectives). The purpose of this study is to ascertain how the teacher views seating arrangements, what strategies the instructor employs when teaching English, and how much of an impact the teacher has on the classroom seating arrangements of the students.

This study was carried out at North Sumatera's English Course, namely at English Junction Course in Panyabungan, Mandailing Natal. The authors employed a semi-structured interview to get the data. It sought to investigate how educators view seating arrangements. Documentation is also necessary to provide a comprehensive image of the classroom environment so that seating arrangements can be considered. Due to their experience arranging seating arrangements and the fact that they are the only English teachers in this research environment, two English teachers were specifically selected as participants. Four key components of analysis were used to examine the research data in this study. They are verification, display data, data reduction, and data collecting.

Results and Discussion

The statistics from the teacher's observations regarding the pattern of student seating arrangements for English language learning in the classroom are as follows.

Teachers' opinions about how students are seated when learning English

Teachers' Knowledge on How to Use Seating Arrangements to Help Students Learn English, first, an explanation of the design of seating arrangements. One tactic used by teachers to enhance student learning and create a comfortable learning environment, particularly while teaching English in the classroom, is the pattern of seating arrangements. The teacher, who serves as a facilitator and bears complete responsibility for making accommodations and establishing a comfortable learning environment, is the foundation of this arrangement type.

Second, The significance or goal of the seating arrangement. The goal of altering the student seating arrangement is to establish a welcoming environment that will promote productive and pleasant learning. In addition to the continuous teaching and learning process in the classroom, the purpose of seat changes is to foster greater intimacy among students so that friendships are not repetitive to the same individual.

Third, Factors that need to be taken into account when choosing seats. There are several factors to take into account when planning the student seating arrangement. In order to avoid feeling rushed and distracted while studying, students with timid and closed personalities prefer to be seated in the middle or behind, rather than in the front. This is the first step in understanding their personalities. The teacher not only modifies the seating arrangement but also switches up the students' seatmates, so students who typically struggle with English are paired with more capable peers.

Besides, to assess each student's level of proficiency; A well-thought-out seating arrangement strategy is applied, where the teacher not only reorganizes the seating layout but also

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deliberately pairs students differently. Learners with lower English proficiency are seated alongside peers who demonstrate stronger language skills. This approach is intended to foster mutual acceptance among students and to encourage positive peer influence, allowing those with greater abilities to support the development of others.

Furthermore, the advantages and disadvantages of sitting arrangement. In this instance, the authors gathered identical information from two sources, specifically two teachers who used just two patterns for seating arrangements. They are independent and detachable. These are the benefits and drawbacks of the patterns that have been used:

First, solo work. Solo work has the advantage of allowing the teacher to quickly evaluate and observe the students' comprehension of the English-language content they are teaching. This is because pupils work alone or without assistance while they are trying to grasp and solve an English challenge. One of the drawbacks of solo work is that teachers often tend to overlook students seated at the back. Additionally, these students may struggle to concentrate fully, as they often feel less engaged and believe they are not receiving adequate attention from the teacher, which affects their focus during learning activities.

Second, separable. One of the strengths of the separable seating arrangement is its ability to cultivate students' collaboration skills. By encouraging them to set aside their individual egos, students become more accustomed to discussing and finding solutions collectively through group deliberation. However, the downside of this method is that students perceived as the most capable in English often end up carrying the entire burden of completing tasks. As a result, what is intended to be a team effort turns into individual work. This benefits only the active student, while others may remain passive and miss out on valuable learning opportunities.

Teachers' Responses to Students Reaction after Changes in Seating Arrangement

Student responses to changes in seating arrangements varied. The two teachers who participated as sources in this study expressed differing views regarding these reactions. According to the first resource person, the majority of students are content, as evidenced by their excitement when the teacher gives them instructions to rearrange their seating arrangements. They believe that this adds a fresh perspective to the English language learning process, so they do not object or refuse when their seats are moved. According to the second resource person, the majority of students expressed dissatisfaction with the teacher's changes to their seating arrangement by protesting and refusing to move (Habibie, 2017). They cited their inability to be with friends they knew or their unfamiliarity with friends who would sit next to them as reasons for their displeasure.

The seat patterns most students like. In this instance, the authors gathered the findings of the two teachers' divergent perspectives. According to the first teachers, pupils prefer the circular seating arrangement, but because of the classroom conditions that make it impossible to implement, this design is rarely used. Additionally, the second teacher reported that the students' favorite pattern was the separable pattern because they wanted to collaborate and share ideas when learning English.

Effect of seating arrangement on student motivation. The seating arrangement has a beneficial effect on students' motivation to learn English in this class, as evidenced by the improvements in students' behavior, such as their persistence in completing assignments and their increased focus on attendance during class instruction.

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How involvement is affected by seating arrangements. Student participation in class is increased by seating arrangements, as evidenced by the students' active participation in asking questions about material they do not understand, responding to the teacher's questions, and voicing their disagreements with the teacher's points to other students.

The teachers constrain of applying seating arrangement pattern in learning English. First, Problems faced by the teacher when doing seating arrangements. It involves room conditions and Students' conditions. Room conditions issue is one of the common obstacles that prevents teachers from rearranging seating. The limited size of the classroom is a major contributing factor. For instance, implementing a circular seating arrangement can be challenging, especially when the class consists of many students, as it requires ample space. Even though students generally favor this pattern during English lessons, its practicality becomes limited due to space constraints, making it hard to implement effectively.

Students' conditions first issue is that every student will alter the seating arrangement, and they frequently cause a commotion and noise in the classroom. Both students who are pleased with their new seats and those who are not always cause a commotion that eventually interferes with the next class's ability to learn. Second, students frequently demonstrate against groups and coworkers who will be their study partners; this can even take up to fifteen minutes only to make sure that seats are available, which ultimately makes class time less effective.

Besides, teachers' Assessment of the Proper seating arrangement when Learning English. The best seating arrangement pattern, according to an English teacher at English Junction Course, is a separable with a U-shaped position. This is a group arrangement pattern in which each student is split up into multiple groups based on the number of students in a class. Since our school typically has 15 pupils, the arrangements are 5-5 on the left and right and 5-5 in the middle, meaning that each group has five members. With information about five individuals in the center and five on the left and right. The reason this pattern is appropriate is because it has a flawless composition and can be tailored to the current curriculum and material, this seating arrangement offers an ideal setup, especially since many student practice activities throughout the lessons require collaboration in pairs or small groups. Moreover, the separable layout helps foster teamwork, encouraging students to support one another in enhancing their English skills.

The teacher's view that seating arrangements are part of a strategy to build an effective and comfortable classroom atmosphere reflects a highly positive perception of student seating patterns. This aligns with Germmen (2016), who emphasized the teacher's crucial role in shaping a conducive and effective learning environment. Similarly, Despa (2020) found that seating arrangements can increase student motivation in thematic learning, which ultimately contributes to better learning outcomes. According to the teacher, several important factors should be taken into account when modifying student seating. First, it is essential to recognize the personality traits of students—those who are introverted or shy often feel more at ease sitting toward the back or middle of the room, where they don't feel overwhelmed or under pressure. Second, understanding each student's academic ability is equally important. A good seating plan doesn't just alter the arrangement of desks but also reassigns seatmates—students who struggle with English are paired with those who are more proficient. This approach aims to encourage mutual support among students and promote positive peer influence. As Istiqoma & Prihatmi (2018) have noted, the seating layout can significantly affect the quality of students' learning experiences.

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The seating arrangement pattern is also based on the material requirements in the 2013 curriculum, if the material to be taught at that time instructs students to learn in groups the seating arrangement pattern to be applied is in the form of separable, according to Jeremy Harmer, Separate table, is a pattern of group sitting arrangement, this pattern is made by dividing students into several small groups. The teacher will divide students into small groups according to the number of students in the class, as well as other forms of instruction such as pairs or individuals which naturally follow the instructions to the required pattern. Istiqoma (2017) also adds that seating arrangements should provide student freedom to interact with each other so that it does not only focus on individuals to listen to the teacher in one direction and do the assignment individually and separately-separate. Because it is very contrary to the focus of learning English that seeks to improve student communication skills with each other.

In addition to the challenges related to student reactions, all English teachers agreed that adjusting seating arrangements positively affects students' motivation, engagement, and academic performance during English lessons. This impact is evident through various improvements in student behavior, including increased activity, better focus, greater perseverance, and more consistent class attendance (Despa, 2020). This finding is further supported by Roxanna Correa's theory, which states that variations in seating arrangements can influence student interaction and encourage greater participation in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms. Likewise, Carena (2010) emphasized that the physical placement of students in the classroom affects their motivation levels—evident in students' preference to sit closer to the front, which is often linked to a higher level of interest and engagement. Based on these insights, researchers conclude that seating arrangement plays a vital role in boosting students' motivation, participation, and achievement, particularly in the context of the learning process.

Conclusion

In this context, the researcher develops insights based on understanding, research, and conclusions, which can then serve as a solution when faced with similar issues in seating arrangements. The initial problem arises from a lack of preparation. A teacher must carefully consider and prepare the fundamental aspects of classroom seating arrangements. The teacher's understanding of the classroom environment and the students' conditions is crucial in designing an effective seating arrangement.

As stated by McLeod et al. (2003), teachers can efficiently arrange classroom seating by drafting a plan, noting important details about students and classroom conditions, and determining the most appropriate seating patterns for the learning process. Once the plan is created, the teacher should communicate the changes to the students, explaining the purpose behind the new seating arrangement.

This approach is vital as it aligns with the observation that students generally feel more comfortable and accept seating changes when they understand the rationale behind them. Providing this explanation fosters open communication and trust between the teacher and students, ensuring that the changes are perceived as beneficial for the learning process and the students' overall experience.

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