

# An Analysis of Seating Arrangement on Students' Learning Attention

Ahmad Syaifullah, Munir Munir\*, Amra Ariyani

English Department, State University of Makassar, Indonesia

\*Corresponding E-mail: [munir@unm.ac.id](mailto:munir@unm.ac.id)

## Abstract

The objective of this research was to find out how row and U-shaped seating arrangements affect the students' learning attention. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The subject of this research was class VIII A consisted of 25 students taken by using purposive sampling. The instruments in collecting data were observation checklist and interview. The data were obtained through observation to see the Row and U-shaped seating arrangements and kinds of students' learning attention. The data from the interview were analyzed by recording and transcribing them. The result of this research showed that the U-Shaped seating arrangement is a better form to apply in the class than the Row form. The classroom needs a lot of communication and communication is exchanging information with each other. The information exchange happened by giving attention. Students learning engagement is formed by eye contact with the teacher or among the students themselves because eye contact stimulates external factors to get maximum attention. A u-shaped form is the best form to facilitate eye contact.

Keywords: *Seating Arrangement, Students' Learning Attention*

## 1. Introduction

In the teaching and learning process in the classroom, many issues and problems could occur in many ways. The problems could happen in teacher, student, materials or time and place itself. In this case, location is one of the primary things to carry out the teaching process. That is why the teacher should have the capacity to manage the classroom.

Meanwhile, classroom management refers to an instructional technique to ensure an effective learning environment. Classroom management refers to the variety of skills and strategies used by teachers to keep

learners organized, orderly, focused, and academically productive throughout the class. When teachers use successful classroom management methods, they decrease the behaviors that impede learning for both individual students and groups of students, while emphasizing the behaviors that support or improve learning. In general, competent teachers have great classroom-management abilities, whereas an inexperienced teacher has a disorganized classroom full of students who are not working or paying attention.

In line with classroom management, Harmer (2010) states that class management skills are crucial since they help guarantee the teacher's success and the teaching and learning process activities. The activities in the classroom impact success in the classroom that make the students directly communicate and interact with the teacher. The teacher in a foreign language classroom should take into account factors that exist in the learning and teaching process such as managing time, implementing effective instructional strategies, and seating arrangement. One of those existing factors above is the seating arrangement. Rahman (2003) states that some possible arrangements of students' seats are (1) pattern of rows, (2) pattern of grouping, (3) pattern of horseshoe or U-shape, (4) pattern of radian or square. They are essential in teaching. A suitable seating arrangement may contribute to teaching goals and influence the students' attention in the teaching and learning process. The teachers' goal is one of the important things to succeed in the teaching and learning process. The teaching goals will be reached if the students' seating is arranged well because most students are more active if they directly look at the teacher.

Therefore, a well-planned seating arrangement may influence the students' attention. Because seating arrangement is about the management of classroom and place or situation is also discussed in the context of teaching and learning in educational psychology. Students learning may be increased after they sit comfortably. And their seats help them to concentrate on an object with intensive attention. The researcher has his own experience about

seating arrangements back when the researcher was in the highschool. The researcher believes that seating arrangement impacts the learning process. Most of the students in Front Row are the ones who generally answer questions asked in the class. Meanwhile, when it comes to using U-Shaped seating arrangements, the students tend to focus on the learning process in the classroom.

The purpose of this research is to analyze seating arrangement (row and u-shaped) on students' learning attention at SMPN 3 Polongbangkeng Utara so that the teacher can know precisely how to arrange the seating and the students' attention. So, the researcher is motivated to conduct a research entitled – An Analysis Of Seating Arrangement On Students' Learning Attention.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2. 1. Classroom Management**

Hue Ming-tak and Li Wai-Shing (2008) state that classroom management involves teachers setting up their authority by providing interesting lessons. Teachers need to gain students' esteem and trust by showing concern for their requirements, and this is reflected and realized in their preparation of lessons that actively involve the students. An effective classroom manager knows how to operate and uses praise to encourage good etiquette and appropriate measures to prevent misbehavior.

Damara and Zain (2013) argue that classroom management is an attempt to empower the possibilities of class as optimal

as possible to support the teaching and learning process in order to reach the learning objectives.

Lotfy (2012), in his thesis about EFL classroom seating arrangements and their influence on students' involvement while working cooperative learning activities in the Egyptian context, states that his study was a qualitative method using a simple sample. He found that classroom seating arrangements could influence students' on-task or off-task participation when working on group activities. He also suggests further research to search for more seating arrangements.

Simmons et al. (2015), in their study entitled *Exploration of Classroom Seating Arrangement and Student Behavior in a Second Grade Classroom*, found that row seating is best applied for independent assignments after studying a second-grade classroom. Off-task behaviors occur the least in it. However, it doesn't foster collaborative work among the students. They recommend u-shaped seating or cluster seating for cooperative learning groups. The similarity of this research with Simmons's is in the seating arrangement. The difference of this research with Simons et al.'s is the dependent variable. His dependent variable is students' behavior, but this research focuses on students' attention.

Cece Wijaya, in 1991 added a few purposes of classroom management. Two of them state that the teaching and learning process could be finished appropriately so that

teaching objectives could be efficiently and effectively accomplished; with classroom management, the teacher could be safe to observe and pay attention to the student's progress, especially students classified as slow. Also, it provides an easiness to raise important issues that need further discussion to improve the teaching and learning process.

Therefore, a well-planned seating arrangement may influence the students' attention. Because seating arrangement is about the Management of classroom and place or situation is also discussed in the context of teaching and learning in educational psychology. Students learning may be increased after they sit comfortably. And their seats help them to concentrate on an object with intensive attention. The researcher has his own experience about seating arrangements back when the researcher was in the highschool. The researcher believes that seating arrangement impacts the learning process. Most of the students in Front Row are the ones who generally answer questions asked in the class. Meanwhile, when it comes to using U-Shaped seating arrangements, the students tend to focus on the learning process in the classroom.

From those opinions that occur above, the researcher decides that classroom management is about organizing and keeping the classroom environment stayed its positive vibes so the teaching and learning process could be effective and joyful.

## **2. 2. Seating Arrangement**

The seating arrangement is a physical configuration of a classroom that has more options than the instructor's organizational or stylistic choice. In-person classroom seating arrangements affect student learning, motivation, participation, and teacher-student and student-student relationships stated by Fernandez, Huang, and Rinaldo (2011). It is claimed that spatial arrangements in classrooms that provide students lots of space to move and work on their tasks have a favorable influence on students' on-task conduct and social involvement, stated by Kaya & Burgess (2007).

The important part of arranging students' seats is that it allows eye contact between teacher and students to control and supervise their activities. Furthermore, the seating arrangements will greatly affect the learning process in the class. There are three seating arrangements that Harmer stated in 2010; those are row, u-shaped, circle, and separate tables.

It can be summarized from the statements above that the seating arrangement can impact the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Seating arrangement works with a connection between the teacher and the students so that teaching can happen as proficiently as expected.

## **2. 3. Learning Attention**

Lachman (1997) stated that most textbook definitions of learning mention learning as a change in behavior due to experience. This is a fundamentally functional definition of learning in that learning is seen as a function

that maps experience onto behavior. In other words, the definition of learning is affecting behavior based on behavior. Meanwhile, Merriam in 2004 explains a theory about learning as leading to learners' growth and development. Finally, John K. Kruschke (2003) states that learning attention is a phenomenon of learning called highlighting seems especially to demand further description in terms of learned attention. Highlighting complements the classic phenomenon of conditioned blocking requires learned inattention.

Danarjati et al. (2014) attention is a reaction from a person to the concentration of activity. It focuses on an object and its conscious process of a bit of information from many information. Attention is needed when teaching students in the classroom in any subject, including English. The materials delivered may be understood and absorbed in students' minds only if they thoroughly pay attention. Therefore, students must be aware of their attention in learning.

Some factors can impact attention in the classroom. Character, Practice, and Obligation are a few to mention. Seating arrangements may also be a factor disturbing student from following the explanation given by the teacher. In this section, the teacher says important things, and students must listen attentively to get the important points. From the definition of attention above, it can be concluded that it is a behavior of human beings which is made people more concentrated on doing something.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research applied the descriptive qualitative research method. A descriptive qualitative study collects, analyzes, and interprets comprehensive, narrative, and visual data to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest (Gay et al., 2012). This research aimed at finding out how seating arrangements affect the students' learning attention in the teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language.

This research has two operational definitions: seating arrangement and students' learning attention. The seating arrangement is a physical configuration of a classroom that has more options than an organizational or stylistic choice by the teacher. It is also claimed that spatial arrangements in classrooms that provide students lots of space to move freely in doing their tasks have a favorable influence on students' on-task conduct and social involvement according to Kaya & Burgess (2007). Students' learning attention has a fundamental part in every step of life. Definitely, it could show more interest to students, approach them positively and use many teaching methods depending on their level. According to Posner & Peterson (1990), Attention is a state of mental alertness and focusing activity. When individuals focus on a particular stimulus, they easily realize the fit-for-purpose features. A feature that is paid attention to is placed in the consciousness.

The observation was an activity in the classroom action research used to gather information about the teaching and learning process and collect data by monitoring the students' activities using an observation checklist. This research was to find out patterns of seating arrangement and students' learning attention by observation checklist, for more specific, the researcher observed the students of SMP Negeri 3 Polongbangkeng Utara by using a video recorder to get which students had different attention during the beginning to the end of learning in the classroom.

This study used in-depth interviews and an interview guide to collect systematic information about a set of central topics, while also allowing for some exploration when new issues or issues emerged stated by Wilson (2014). The researcher used this to deliver reliable information with an in-depth interview by using a voice recorder and writing it down in a transcript.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### **4. 1. Findings**

#### **4. 1. 1. Row Seating Arrangement**

The research findings related to the data analysis obtained from the research instrument consisting of observation and interview. From the results of observations of the row, students that sitting on row models are divided into two types including students at the Back Row and students at the Front Row during the teaching and learning process takes place:

Table 1 Row Observation

Row Seating Arrangements		Information
Students at the Back Row	Students at the Front Row	
S10, S12, S8 and S7	S6 S1, S2, S4 and S5	S10, S12, S8, S7, S1, S2, S4, S5, S6 were the students who tended to pay attention from the beginning to the end even though they sometimes got distracted for a short time.
S9	S3	S9 and S3 were the students that often did something else, got distracted, and only occasionally paid attention to the teacher.
S11	-	S11 was the only student who hardly paid attention to the teacher and got distracted many times by other things that irrelevant to teaching and learning process.

Second, from the results of interviews, students that sitting on row models are divided into two types including students at the Back Row and students at the Front Row during the teaching and learning process takes place:

In the back row seating arrangement, observational data showed that six students were sitting in the back row showed that, based on the observation results, four students tended to pay attention only to the teacher from the beginning to the end of learning even though they sometimes paid attention to other things for a short time as necessary. Also, one student often did other things, paid attention to other things, and only occasionally paid attention to the teacher. One student who sat in the Back Row rarely paid attention to the teacher and instead paid attention to other things that had

nothing to do with the learning process, even though he was sleepy.

In the front row seating arrangement, observational data showed that six students were sitting in the front row showed that, based on the observation results, five students tended to pay attention only to the teacher from the beginning to the end of learning even though they sometimes paid attention to other things for a short time as necessary. Also, only one student often did other things, paid attention to other items and only occasionally paid attention to the teacher.

#### 4. 1. 2. U-Shaped Seating Arrangement

According to the observations, the student's attention to the teacher was divided into two different attention on U-Shaped seating arrangement:

Table 2 U-Shaped Observation

Students at U-Shaped Seating Arrangements.	Information
S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S0, S12, S11, and S6	S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S0, S12, S11, dan S6 were the students who tended to pay attention from the beginning to the end even though they sometimes got distracted for a short time.
S3	S3 was the only student who tended to focus on his handbook and notebook. He only paid attention to the teacher at certain times.

From the results of interviews, students' attention sitting on U-Shaped models have that attention to the teacher during the teaching and learning process takes place:

In the U-shaped seating arrangement, eleven students tended to pay attention only to the teacher from the beginning to the end of learning even though they sometimes paid attention to other things for a short time as necessary. Observational data showed that the number of students indicated that attention on U-Shaped seating increased compared to Row seating arrangements.

In the U-shaped seating arrangement, there was one student who paid attention to other things and only occasionally paid attention to the teacher. Observational data showed that the students on U-Shaped seating were the same students who occasionally paid attention to Row seating.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study show many pieces of information. The attention found in the Row seating was always paid attention to the teacher, occasionally paid attention and instead did other things in class, and rarely paid attention in the beginning to the end of learning.

Meanwhile, the attention that found in the U-Shaped seating was only paid attention to the teacher and occasionally paid attention to the teacher and often did other things during the learning process in the classroom.

## 4. 2. Discussions

Previous research entitled Exploration of Classroom Seating Arrangement and Student Behaviour in a Second Grade Classroom by Simmons et al. (2015) stated that even though it has the fewest off-task behaviour, a row seating is best applied for independent assignments. In the end, it does not encourage students' collaboration. They prefer to recommend u-shaped seating or cluster seating for cooperative learning groups. There is a huge. Most of the students in Front Row are the ones who generally answer questions asked in the class. But, when it comes to using U-Shaped seating arrangements, the students tend to focus on the learning process in the classroom; that's why they prefer to recommend a u-shaped seating arrangement.

### 4. 2. 1. Row Seating Arrangement

First, there was much different attention in the Row model. The attention found in the Row model was always paid attention to the teacher, occasionally paid attention and often did other things in the class, and rarely paid attention in the beginning to the end of learning. Based on the observation above, one different attention distinguished the amount of two seating arrangements. Only one student rarely paid attention to the teacher and instead paid attention to other things. It was only in the Row model and the students who sat in the Back Row model.

Second, more students always gave attention to the shape of the Front Row in the learning process than the Back Row. Based on the observation data above, out of nine students who always gave attention in Row form, five students always gave attention sitting in front, and only four were given that sitting behind.

Third, more students who occasionally gave attention in Row forms than U-Shaped. Based on observation data, two students occasionally gave attention to the Row form and there was one student in the U-Shaped shape. One student occasionally gave attention to the Row form showing different attention in U-Shaped form. In the second observation, more students always gave attention in U-Shaped form. In contrast, only one student occasionally stayed, giving attention even though the shape of the seat had been changed.

#### **4. 2. 2. U-Shaped Seating Arrangement**

Two discussions can be concluded from the findings in the U-Shaped seating

arrangement of this research. These are discussed as follows:

First, the attention found in the U-Shaped model was only paid attention to the teacher and occasionally paid attention and often did other things during the learning process in the classroom. As stated before in Row Seating Arrangement, one different attention distinguished the amount of two seating arrangements. Only one student rarely paid attention to the teacher and instead paid attention to other things. It was only in the Row model and the student who sat in the Back Row model.

Second, most of the students always gave attention in U-Shaped than Row. Based on the observations, more students always gave attention to the U-Shaped form rather than Row.

From some of the data above, students chose a U-Shaped form because they could focus on the teacher in the middle of the students, and the teacher saw all students because of nothing obstruction; all were equal.

The researcher concludes that the researcher believes that U-Shaped seating management could stimulate the student's attention to the teacher or lesson. U-Shaped seating arrangement could be the stimulation from external factors to make the students pay attention to the teacher of English Lessons because it can make a lot of interaction and communication between the teacher and the students and among the students themselves.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Based on the findings and discussion of the previous chapter, the researcher concludes



that the Row and U-Shaped seating arrangements as external factors influence the students learning attentions at SMPN 3 Polongbangkeng Utara. U-Shaped form is better applied to the classroom than the Row form because of the eye contact of the teacher and the students. The U-Shaped could provide facilities interaction between the teacher and the students, and among the students themselves. The researcher believes that the U-Shaped seating arrangement could stimulate the student's attention to the teacher or lesson. U-Shaped seating arrangement could be the stimulation from external factors to make the students pay attention to the teacher of English Lessons because it can make a lot of interaction and communication between the teacher and the students and among the students themselves

## References

- Abror, Abd. Rahman. (2003). *Psikologi Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta: Tirta Wacana.
- Danarjati, D.P., Adi, M., and Ari, R.E. (2014). *Psikologi Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu.
- Djamarah, Syaiful bahri and Aswan Zain. (2013). *Strategi Belajar Mengajar*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Fernandez, AC, Huang, J, and Rinaldo, V. (2011). Does Where a Student Sits Really Matter? –The Impact on Seating Locations on Student Classroom Learning. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*, 10(1).
- Gay, L.R., Geoffrey, E.M., and Peter, A. (2012). *Educational Research Competences for Analysis and Application: 10 Edition*. Pearson.
- Harmer, Jeremy. (2010). *How to Teach English*, 6 Edition. England: Longman.
- Kaya, N. & Burgess, B. (2007). Territoriality: seating preferences in different types of classroom arrangements. *Environment and Behavior*, 39, 859-876. doi: 10.1177/0013916506298798
- Kruschke, J.K. (2003). Attention in Learning. *Psychological Science*, 8, 171–175.
- Lachman, S. J. (1997). Learning is a process: Toward an im-proved definition of learning. *Journal of Psychology*, 131,477–480.
- Lotfy, Nohayer. (2012). *Seating arrangement and Cooperative Learning Activities: Students' On-task/off-task Participation in EFL Classrooms*. Cairo: Thesis, The American University.
- Merriam, S. B. (2004). The role of cognitive development in Mezirow's transformational learning theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 55(1), 60-68.
- Ming-tak, Hue and Li Wai-Shing. (2008). *Classroom Management: Creating a Positive Learning Environment*. Hongkong: Hongkong University Press.
- Posner, M. I., & Peterson, S. E. (1990). The attention system of the human brain. *Annual Review of*

- Neuroscience, 13, 25–42.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ne.13.030190.000325>
- Simmons, K., Laura, C., Schronna, C., and Vanessa, M.H. (2015). —Exploration of Classroom Seating Arrangement and Student Behavior in a Second Grade Classroom.” Georgia Educational Research, 12. Retrieved November 28th, 2018.
- Wijaya, Cece and Tabrani Rusyan. (1991). Kemampuan Dasar Guru dalam Proses Belajar Mengajar. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Wilson, C. (2014). Interview Techniques for UX Practitioners: A User Centered Design Method. Newnes.