

## Classroom Seating Management In Indonesian Middle School: English Teacher And Students' Perspective

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to know the perspectives of the teacher and student in using classroom seating management in learning English at MTsN 2 Kota Palangka Raya. This study involved two classes that use different seating layouts, as follows pairs and table rows. Three students in each class would be picked up, so there would be 6 students, 2 homeroom teachers, and 2 English teachers to be interviewed. This study uses qualitative research with a case study method. A purposive sampling technique was used, where the research instruments included observation, interviews, and documentation studies are applied in this study. The result found that both of teacher's and students' perspectives show the same answer which agree the pair seating layout is more comfortable and effective to be used in the classroom in learning English than the table row seating layout. The students express that the pairs is fulfill their comfort during the teaching learning process in the classroom as the theory said. The teachers also confirm that the students is lack of active participation because of keep distracting by other students who start the chit-chat during the learning process on the table rows.*

**Keywords:** *classroom seating management; teacher's perspective; students' perspective*

### INTRODUCTION

Classroom management has been regulated for the teacher at school in curriculum 2013, which can be seen in the Kementerian Pendidikan Regulation (2018) (Astuti, 2020: 81). Teachers are considered to have the skills to manage the classroom to create a satisfying classroom environment (Warsono, 2016: 470). Of course, there are always various ways how teachers manage their classrooms (Miles, 2021: 9), one of which is the seating arrangement technique (Astuti, 2020: 81). According to Brophy (1996), an effective classroom focuses on creating a positive learning environment by preparing teaching engaging lessons, and monitoring students' work.

Classroom management is very important for teacher to maintain an orderly and supportive atmosphere in the classroom (Aminah, 2021: 7). It helps teacher to manage and command students to get easily the objectives of the lesson during teaching-learning process. It is also needed skills, ability and talent from the teacher to manage the class, such as: planning,

preparation materials, organization, decoration, establishment, and enforcement of routines and rules in the classroom (Hoekstra et al, 2023: 2).

Hence, it is very rare to see Indonesian school implements different seating layout styles in the classroom to get better circumstances and students' comfort during the learning process. The common seating layouts that are mostly used are Traditional/Orderly Rows. However, based on an observation that has been done by the researcher for 2 months at one of the middle schools, the researcher found out that there are different seating layouts used, besides the Traditional/Orderly Rows. The school uses several seating layout styles, such as U-shapes, Table Rows, Pairs, and Traditional/Orderly Rows.

The different seating layouts that have been used in each class are managed by their homeroom teacher. During the researcher's observation, all the seating layouts turn out to have different feelings for students in paying attention and teachers in scolding and instructing the students.

However, this research has gaps from other research which can be seen in the use of research method and design (*case study qualitative approach*), the different styles of seating arrangement that are examined (*Pairs and Table Rows*), the sampling (*class of VIII-B and VIII-H*) and the location of the research (*at MTsN 2 Kota Palangka Raya*). This study is expected to provide solution for teacher how to manage classroom appropriately as what student is needed and feel more comfortable during the teaching-learning activity. So, teacher can improve the level of conveniences and participation's students by doing several ways especially in managing the classroom itself.

Based on the studies above, this study aims to determine the perspectives of the teacher and student in using classroom seating management in learning English at MTsN 2 Kota Palangka Raya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Classroom Management

Classroom management was found out by Jacob Kounin (1970), an education physiological expert from Ohio, USA. Kounin stated that every classes was considered as a small social community where the teacher and the students interacted each other and influenced toward the overall members (Praveen et al, 2018: 8090). Kounin showed that the effective managing succeeded not just because they were good at handling misbehavior, but also good at preventing it in the first place. According to research that has be done by Kounin (1970), Brophy et al (1996) continued Kounin's research. Their research finally found out some

effectiveness of teacher's indicators within the importance of group management and giving a positive class environment (Praveen, 2018: 8091). It is line with Egeberg et al (2016), stated that teacher and students' social and emotional development, beliefs and relationships had become more influential concern in recent decades.

Glasser (1998) in his Choice Theory, identified five basic human needs to solve classroom management problems as a tool or driving force in displaying desirable or undesirable behavior students in the classroom, as follows (Praveen, 2018: 8092):

- a. *Survival*: It consists with food, shelter, physical comfort etc.
- b. *Belonging*: It allows students to share their knowledge or ideas with their friends.
- c. *Freedom*: It makes them have choices, spaces and independent skills.
- d. *Power*: It makes them to choose and make their own choice for participating in the classroom.
- e. *Fun*: It consists with their joy and pleasure in doing some activities.

### **Seating Arrangement**

Based on Flexibility theory (Norberg-Schulz, 1965) and Communication Pattern theory (Leavitt, 1951), there was a correlation between a space and communication pattern influenced on leadership motivation and classroom atmosphere more effective where people can easily interact each other. Lev Vygotsky (1968) with his Social Constructivism theory stated that the collaborative nature of learning interaction influenced the environment, which means natural setting will affect to students behavior (Chemers, 2014: 25). Based on three theories, it can be seen students' ability in interacting to each other are engaged by their classroom condition/setting during the learning process. Some common ways to arrange students' desk are in small groups, pair of two, rows, semicircle/circle and horseshoe/U-Shape. Teachers can arrange it based on the situation of the classroom and students' character. By looking from Gremmen, Van den Berg, Segers and Cillessen (2018), showed that 40% of teachers used rows, 48% selected small groups and 12% selected others layout for their choice in teaching-learning process.

### **Indonesian EFL Students**

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to a traditional terms for the use of a non-native speaker of English in other countries, where their first language is not English (Sumbogo, 2018: 11). After decades, now English has to be learned as a second language since English begin to be a universal language in communication. So do in Indonesia. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia is a complex challenge to master it, because a recent survey shows that Indonesia falls under low proficiency category (Education First, 2020). Most

of EFL students seek for opportunities outside the classroom to improve their skills, but still English should be taught effectively at school as a Foreign Language (Alotumi, 2021: 3).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted at MTsN 2 Kota Palangka Raya which is located on Tjilik Riwut km. 7, Jekan Raya, Palangka Raya for 2 (two) months. This research was qualitative with a case study design and using purposive sampling. The sampling was taken from 6 students of the two classes (VIII-B and VIII-H), 2 homeroom teachers, and 2 English teachers. This primary data source was 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of MTsN 2 Kota Palangka Raya which focuses to 2 (two) classes with using Pairs and Table Rows seating layouts. For interview, it was the students (*who sit down on front, middle and back desk*), homeroom teachers, and English teacher are to be interviewed.

The data were collected through in-depth interviews with several questions related to the issue in-person and online, then analyzed by using data analysis descriptively. In this case, to validate the data of the research, the researcher used *triangulation of sources and triangulation of method* (Campbell, 2020: 127). For this research, the researcher asked to the students, homeroom teacher and English teacher with the same questions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research indicate a substantial impact on the overall learning experience for both students and teachers. An effective seating arrangement is found to enhance students' engagement, communication, and collaboration. Students express a preference for seating plans that encourage interaction, creating a positive atmosphere conducive to language learning.

The researcher finds 5 (five) important points in all of the data that has been found. The students who are respondents of the research from each class of 8B (pairs) and 8H (table rows) have their answers. It can be seen from their perspectives of the answer, the aspects that the researcher tries to discover are related to their feeling toward the seating layout during the teaching-learning process. It is similar to the teacher's point of view as well.

The five basic human needs of Glasser (1998) in his Choice Theory have been applied and are fundamental to this research, which identified 5 (five) classifications of it, as follows: *survival, belonging, freedom, power, and fun* (Praveen, 2018: 8092). Fereydouni et al (2019), in their research, stated that choice theory positively affects students' happiness and self-esteem

during teaching-learning activities. It increases the happiness of the students and makes them upgrade their confidence and self-esteem.

In this research, the researcher tries to use the choice theory to solve classroom management problems as a tool or driving force for students' behavior during the learning process. The researcher also finds that it has never been used in solving the seating arrangement before in every research. So, the researcher wants to try the theory in the seating arrangement for the first time to obtain new perspectives and data from it. That is the reason why the researcher uses this theory as the base of the research.

### **1. Students' Perspective toward Classroom Seating Management in Learning English at MTsN 2 Kota Palangka Raya**

Students' perspectives on classroom management in learning English can significantly influence their overall experience. The arrangement of seats plays a crucial role in fostering a conducive learning environment. Many students appreciate a layout that encourages interactions, collaboration, and easy communication with the teacher. A well-engagement and participation, allow students to feel more connected to the learning process.

On the contrary, a poorly managed seating arrangement may lead to distractions or hinder effective communication. Overall, students value a classroom seating arrangement that promotes a positive and interactive atmosphere, contributing to a more enjoyable and effective English learning experience in the classroom.

#### **a. Physical Comfort**

Physical comfort is related to *survival* in Choice Theory which consists of food, shelter, physical comfort, etc. The class of 8B which uses *pairs* as their seating layout, agrees that all of them are comfortable with their decision to use pairs as their seating layout. Because it has been their own decision to choose to use it at the very beginning. No other reason, it's just right. In addition, the class of 8H which uses *table rows* as their seating layout, also agree that they feel comfortable. But, sometimes they feel not. Because, at first the layout was not like this, but there was something that forced them to make it a *table rows* layout. They feel lazy to move it back as it was, so they agree to keep it that way. The existence of a "fan" also influences them to stick with others, so it can be counted as "fair" to have the same fan. The researcher interviews them, even though they feel comfortable, they still get disruptions during learning time, as follows (Interview on Thursday, 10 August 2023 at 8.24 am):

*"Yes, we feel comfortable. Because, we choose to use this layout since the beginning. But, I have an eye problem, so it's difficult for me to see the whiteboard clearly and I can't see too because it's too bright. Then, I usually have a daydream and can't be focus sometimes, when I get bored."* (Back seat student)

*"Yes. It's our decision, and we also choose our chair mate. But, sometimes, I get distracted by the light too."* (Middle seat student)

*"Yes, same. But, when it comes noon, the light is so bright. I can't see the whiteboard clearly, just a bit. Then, sometimes even though I sit in the front, I still can't hear teacher's voice because I get disturbed by my friends who sit down next to my desk."* (Front seat student)

### **b. Communication**

Communication is related to the *belonging* point which is mention that allows students to open up and share their ideas. Choice theory by Glasser can influence communication dynamics among students in table rows seating layouts by emphasizing personal responsibility and individual choices. Based on the results of the interviews, both classes of 8B (pairs) and 8H (table row) are also able to communicate and discuss with their friends. The pair's seating layout makes it easy to pull out the conversation with their chairmate easily but is limited to 1-2 friends only. However, the table row seating layout makes it easy to reach out to 3-to 4 friends in a row and 4 friends in front and behind them. So, the area is more massive than the pair's one. It is related to their interviews' result, as follows (Interview on Thursday, 10 August 2023 at 8.26 am):

*"Actually, yes. I feel comfortable because I have someone to talk to. But, I'm not that close with others, so it's hard for me to communicate each other. Even, my chair mate always moves to others desk. So, I prefer to get myself alone."* (Back seat student)

*"Yes, of course. Because, I don't have to speak loudly, I just need to touch my chair mate, then we can talk and discuss to each other freely."* (Middle seat student)

*"Yes, I do. I feel comfortable to do interaction with others while sitting in my seat."* (Front seat student)

### **c. Feel Free**

Feel free is related to *freedom* which gives them choices, spaces, and independent skills during the teaching-learning process. The students of the pair's class happily agree with the freedom they have as long as they learn within the pair's layout. They can move in and out freely, and their table is spacious enough to keep their own space and do work, whether solo or group. Meanwhile, the students of the table row's class are not feeling the same. Their movement and access are limited because the tables are sticking to each other, right side and

left side. The table is also limited to doing work by an individual, it is just easily them to work in a group. Their answer is related to the researcher's observation, as follows: (Interview on Thursday, 10 August 2023 at 8.26 am):

*"It feels spacious enough, but still spacious before than now. And yes, because of my desk like this I can save my stuffs, like tissue, dictionary and my mini yasin."* (Back seat student)

*"Yes, I feel this layout is spacious enough to do works. Of course. It makes me easy to do my tasks, because I can discuss to my chair mate. And yes, I can save a lot of stuffs, like my sport uniform, my mini mirror, foods even my bag can fit."* (Middle seat student)

*"For me, it feels a little bit narrow, especially when I have to stand up or something. But, if I only have to do my work, it's spacious enough. Then, Because, I sit at the front, so I can hear the teacher's instruction clearly and also I can save my books, pencil case and my drawing book. Sometime, foods"* (Front seat student)

#### **d. Participation**

Participation is related to *power* in Choice Theory which makes them choose and make their own decision for participating in the classroom. The 8B class with the pair seating layout tends to be more focused and pay attention fairly to the teacher's instruction because they don't have to be disturbed by others. Pairs make them way more conducive to listening to the teacher. However, the 8H class with the table row seating layout is more having a chit-chat with their friends because access to others is easier than the pairs. They are active to participate too, but tend to be distracted by their friends during the learning process. Their answer is mostly have different reasons, as follows: (Interview on Thursday, 10 August 2023 at 8.30 am):

*"Because of my position, I use to do something like scribbling my books and thinking something random than having a chit-chat. I don't know the others. But, when I don't understand about the material, the teacher directly come to me and help me out."* (Back seat student)

*"For me, of course. I can mirror with my mini mirror, and because I'm a girl right, so when the teacher is off guard, I can touch up with my makeup, just a bit. Also, I can eat snack sneakily or sleep. But when it comes difficult, the teacher is so nimble to give us attention and help us when we are in trouble."* (Middle seat student)

*"Because, I sit right in front of the teacher's table, I can't do anything except listening and paying attention to the teacher. And because of my position, I can be noticed easier than the others by the teacher."* (Front seat student)

### e. Fun Activities

Fun activity is related to *fun* in Choice Theory which consists of joy and pleasure in doing some activities in the classroom. The 8B class uses pairs as their seating layout and states that they can enjoy following the lesson, whether in regular activities or doing games. But sometimes they feel bored when it comes noon or the lesson turns out to be difficult to understand. On the other hand, the 8H class which uses table rows as their seating layout, states that the limited space while sitting down on their desk makes them more difficult to move. But, if the teacher does the game that makes them out of the desk, the space is more spacious enough. And is the same in 8B class, they get bored too if it comes to noon and harder to understand the materials. It is related to their answer, as follows: (Interview on Thursday, 10 August 2023 at 8.30 am):

*"I feel bored when it comes noon and right before the last lesson. And yes because, the classroom is spacious enough for doing anything, we feel happy."* (Back seat student)

*"For me, depends to the time and the subject. Especially the subject that I don't understand, I can be bored in following the learning process. But, I do enjoy the game."* (Middle student seat)

*"I just feel flat, not bored or excited. Fifty-fifty."* (Front seat student)

## 2. Teacher's Perspective Toward Classroom Seating Management in Learning English Context

From teachers' perspective, classroom seating management in the context of learning English holds considerable significance. The arrangement of seats directly influences the dynamics of the learning environment and the teacher's ability to facilitate effective instructions. Teachers often prefer a seating plan that allows them to engage with all students, ensuring equal attention and participation.

Strategic seating arrangements can also facilitate group activities, discussions, a peer-to-peer interaction, fostering a collaborative learning atmosphere. Additionally, teachers may consider factors such as minimizing distractions and optimizing visibility when arranging seats. A well-thought-out seating plan contributes to a smoother flow of the lesson, encouraging a positive and focused learning experience for both the teacher and students alike.

### a. Physical Comfort

As the same as the students' section before, it is related to the Choice Theory, *survival*. The teachers of the 8B class (pairs), which consists of the homeroom teacher and the English teacher have been interviewed. They agree that pair seating layout gives them comfort in learning because they are given the freedom to choose whatever seating layout, they want at



first. Meanwhile, the teachers of the 8H class (table row), the homeroom, and the English teacher also confirm that they do feel comfortable to teach in using group work, but when they have to explain one by one, they find it difficult to access them. Even though the students feel fine because of the position they can get the fan, they feel narrow too.

#### **b. Communication**

Choice theory by Glasser can influence communication dynamics among students in table rows seating layouts by emphasizing personal responsibility and individual choices. The teachers of the 8B class (pairs) state that during the learning process, all students are conductively following the lesson. Discussion can be done easily with pairs, so it is limited to 2 students side by side and 2 students front-back them. However, the teachers of the 8H class (table rows) state that doing group work during the lesson is a very good idea because table rows are suited for it. It can access to 4 students side by side and non-limited access to their friends in different rows. The teachers also don't have to separate them into groups in complicated ways. It has already been done. Unfortunately, the teachers find it difficult to explain one by one and reach out to the corner students.

#### **c. Feel Free**

The pairs seating layout which is used by 8B has already been approved by the teachers because in their statement the students are given the freedom to choose their seating layout in the classroom. All students are also able to bring or save their stuff on the table, so they can freely feel the classroom as a comfortable place to follow the lesson every day. The table row seating layout which is used by 8H, unfortunately, has not been approved by their homeroom teacher. She explains that the layout is made because of the unpredictable reason, which is a fan and they will change it soon. The English teacher is not giving any comments, because the decision is made by the homeroom teacher and the students.

#### **d. Participation**

Participation during the lesson in the 8B class also has been approved by the teachers. They state that the pairs are the best option to be used in the classroom because it has been the regular layout that is used in the common classroom too. The efficiency of the pairs is approved by any teachers, not only the 8B class. It gains the participation and focus of the students because the pairs reduce the number of students having chit-chat to others. Even though they do, it is just limited to chair mate. On the other hand, the table rows are not approved by the homeroom teacher. The desks that are sticking up together only increase the number of students having chit-chat to each other into the whole class. So, they keep distracting and do not focus on the teacher's explanation during the teaching-learning process.

#### e. Fun Activities

The activities that are done in the 8B class use pairs in the classroom, indeed it is narrow to have free space because the space is full of desks. It does not limit the students to doing activities like games or presentations in front of the class when the teacher instructs them to do so. They can happily do it as well. Hence, the 8H class with table rows has spacious free space to do games or other activities that make students stand up. Unfortunately, the homeroom teacher never does stand-up activities, only drilling phrases in sitting. So does the English teacher. That's why the students only take advantage of the free space to play outside the lesson time.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After the researcher has done the research and found the results that also has been explained in the previous chapter, the researcher finally can conclude, as follows:

From the students' perspective, they express that the pairs fulfill their comfort during the teaching-learning process in the classroom. They also show positive answers regarding to five basic needs of humans in Choice Theory, such as *survival, belonging, freedom, power, and fun*. However, the table row seating layout does not fulfill the students' comfort as the pairs do. From the five points of the Choice Theory, the table row only shows the *survival, belonging, and fun* answers. The students may state that they fulfill the *power* or participation.

On the other hand, the teacher's perspective shows an improvement that the pairs interpret the theory well. It is lined with the students' perspective above. Hence, the table row seating layout does not fulfill the students' comfort as the pairs do. The teacher confirms that the students lack active participation because of are distracted by other students who start chit-chatting during the learning process on the table rows. This research implicates to teacher and students in order to know how to manage classroom appropriately as what student is needed and feel comfortable with in learning English in the classroom.

This study still has limited scope to be done, where only compares 2 (two) seating layout, namely pairs and table row. It is expected to be sources and information in order to explore more seating layout affects to students and teachers. It is also expected to be continued by the other researcher with the different object of seating layout models. So, it can be expanded more and more

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