
EXPLORING CLASSROOM SEATING ARRANGEMENT AND ITS EFFECT ON CHILDREN BEHAVIOR IN EFL CLASS: A REVIEW

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Abstract

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) is not a new thing for Indonesian practitioners. There are many factors must be considered by the teacher, one of them is classroom arrangement. The seating arrangement has significant influence on children behavior and their performance. Therefore, the aims of this study are to investigate the types of children seating arrangement and its effect on their behavior. This paper reviews the previous studies which investigated the impact of seating arrangement on the children behavior. It also presents literature review of the types of seating arrangement which can be used by the teacher. There are five studies which included and most of them use interview and questionnaires to gain the data. The different results are presented in this paper but most of the studies agree that managing seating arrangement in classroom has positive influence on children social environment. However, traditional classroom and row seating arrangement are mostly used by the teacher in managing the classroom environment.

Keywords: Seating arrangement, Children behavior, EFL classroom

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) requires some skills and knowledge that must be achieved. There are many factors which need to be considered by the English teacher in order to attain the learning objectives. Learning environment is one of crucial factors which influence the learning outcomes. The learning environment contributes positive impact to children, in terms of learning achievement and it has been explored in several studies (Gianikas, 2013; Hammang, 2012; Hannah, 2013).

The environment that commonly used by the students to learn is classroom. In fact, mostly the students spend their time to study in the classroom and sometimes the learning process takes place in out of the classroom. So it is the teachers' rights to choose suitable learning environment for their students. The teacher has opportunity to organize the classroom to create a positive classroom atmosphere.

In terms of TEYL, the students need situation and environment which support the learning processes at ease. Classroom management becomes the key aspect of their learning attainment. As stated by Brown (2001), one factor related to the students' achievement is classroom management. In addition, Dunbar (2004) focuses on two aspects of classroom arrangement; those are physical arrangement and management strategies. Classroom arrangement is one of strategy in managing classroom environment. It is associated with physical arrangement of the classroom's seating position.

However, the teacher should spend more time considering the way to set up the classroom. Since different classroom arrangement will influence the learning outcomes. For instance, in row setting, the children who sit in front of the classroom tend to be more active during the learning process and possess higher learning achievement compare to the children who sit at the back (Gianikas, 2013; Ngware, Ciera, Musyoka, & Oketch, 2013; Richard, 2006). Thus, the teacher should be selective in order to set the classroom organization by considering the students' characteristics.

Especially for English teachers, the classroom seating arrangement needs to be well organized because it will make the children at ease to learn the language. Moreover, it will give effects on children actions and learning. Sometimes the teacher designs the classroom activities individually, in pairs or in group. When group activities are applied, the teacher should aware of the importance of classroom seating arrangement for successful interaction for the children (Gianikas, 2013; Meeks, Knotts, James, Williams, Vassar, & Wren, 2013). Therefore, seating arrangement can promote various children behaviors and attract the children to learn. It also gives beneficial atmosphere for the children and helps the teacher in controlling the class easily.

Understanding the classroom seating arrangement provides positive contribution to the teachers. in order to recognize the classroom situation for the effective and conducive learning process. There are numerous study investigated the effect of

seating arrangement on the children behavior. Hence, this study will explore the types of classroom seating arrangement which mostly used by the teacher in teaching English for children and how does seating arrangement affect the students behavior.

Young language learners' characteristics

Teaching English for young learners is broadly defined since the term, child and childhood are specified into chronological age span. It has been defined by many experts that young learners are the students of pre-school and primary school ages (Nunan, 2010; Puskas, 2016). The student at this age can be classified into critical period for language acquisition (Pennfield, 1959 & Lenneberg, 1967). It relates to the brain capacity where children brain has great deal of plasticity which seems to facilitate language teaching (Ortega, 2013).

According to Ortega (2013) and Pinter (2006), there are some characteristics of young learners in learning a language which differ from adult. Those are; (1) the brain plasticity which makes them easier to imitate any language exposure, (2) not analytical which means they only understand the meaning of the given information without analyzing the language, (3) fewer inhibition of language learning, (4) weaker group identity where they only focus on themselves rather than others, (5) having limited knowledge of the world, so they simplify the input more likely, (6) showing interest on their fantasy, imagination and movement.

The characteristics mentioned above can be developed in second and foreign language classroom. Understanding the characteristic of young learner helps the teacher to explore the students' skills and abilities. However indirect learning, creativity and fun learning play key role in teaching young learner. The teacher can design the classroom activities, learning material and also manage the classroom more comfortable for the students to achieve learning objectives.

Classroom management

Classroom is categorized as the environment where the students develop the skills and abilities take place (Cameron, 2005). By understanding the practices of classroom management, the teacher can make positive classroom environment in which the students feel more relax, comfortable, interested, and secure during the learning process (Scott & Yteberg, 1991, Brown 2001). Brown (2001) & Dunbar (2004) also explain that there are some variables of classroom management which influence the process of language learning. They are teacher teaching style, and physical environment.

While students' learning style focuses on the way the students understanding the knowledge, teacher teaching style involves the process of managerial of the classroom. The teacher teaching styles covers the teachers' ability to manage classroom activities, learning material and student's task in order to create such fresh atmosphere in the classroom (Brown, 2001; Dunbar, 2004).

Then, the key aspect of physical environment in classroom management is the classroom condition. The teacher should aware of the physical appearance of the classroom. Brown (2001) classifies four categories of physical appearance, those are; controlling the appearance of the classroom (i.e. neat, clean, free from noises, air circulation, etc.) that make them feel comfortable to learn, using chalkboard or marker to give visual input with visual explanation will help the students understand the material easily, preparing the equipment needed which support teaching and learning processes, and arranging the position of the desk.

Dunbar (2004) also mentions several rules to guide the teacher in arranging the classroom. First, the seating of the students should be well-arranged where they can directly pay attention to the teacher. Then there should be a free space for teacher and students' mobility. The students should have a good sight to see board and teacher clearly. The students should be seated facing the board and the teacher. The arrangement of students' seating and all equipment in the classroom should flexible to facilitate various teaching activities.

The types of classroom seating arrangement

There are various types of students' seating arrangement. The teacher has opportunity to set up the classroom desk by considering the needs of the students. The assigned seating facilitates the students to do such learning instruction easily. In arranging students' desk, the teacher must take in to account about the learning activities, free space area, learning center, teacher's desk, and special-effect area (Denton, 1992). The flexibility of seating arrangement is needed since the teacher will be able to design the activities for individual or group (Brown 2001;

The classroom usually consists of one or more furniture types (e.g. single desk, double desk, long table, etc). The single desk allows the student to be flexible in organizing the desk for individual or group task. Here some seating arrangement which usually used by teacher (Brown, 2001; Harmer, 1998; McCorskey & McVetta, 1978; Poole & Everston, 2017);

1. *Rows/traditional seating.* This is the most simple and convenient arrangement where the tables are placed individually facing the front of the class. The teacher has mobility to control the classroom. By selecting this arrangement, the teacher can design the class into pair work or group work by turning back some of the desk from the teacher.
2. *Circle or horseshoes.* It works by set the students' desk into half of circle shape. It is useful when the teacher or students do presentation or give demonstration in front of the classroom.
3. *Cluster.* This arrangement consists of a small number of students sitting together in a group. It consists of four or five desks pushed together, so every desk is facing another one. This type of arrangement facilitates the students' social ability as it works on group activities. The students can discuss about the task given and the teacher can focus on a particular group of students. However, the teacher should take into consideration about students' characteristics (level of proficiency, attitudes, gender, etc).

Those three arrangements are mostly used by the teacher to facilitate the students' learning activities effectively. However in arranging the students' seating, the teacher needs to ensure that all students have to participate in the class. It is because the students who sit in front or at the center tend to be more active compared to the students seated in the back or corner of the class.

The influence of seating arrangement for children

Several studies have carried out the effect of classroom arrangement in achieving learning objectives. Anderson (2009) (cited in Haghiihi & Jusan, 2012) explains that seating arrangement can influence the students' behavior, like the intensity of classroom interaction among students and teacher. In managing students seating, it provides opportunities for the students to create effective learning (Merrit, 2014). Every types of arrangement are used in different teaching approach (Hammer, 1998).

A study which is done by Hasting (1995) indicates that row seating is beneficial to improve students' skills. The students tend to have interaction with teacher and follow the instruction. It also increases students' independence when they are assigned to ask question (Marx, Further, & Hartig, 2000). It also reduces the distraction of the classroom since young learners tend to do activities as they want. On the other hand, clusters seating increases

students' social skill. They have respect for others' ideas or opinion when they seated in group.

However, sometimes seating arrangement does not contribute significant effect on some skills or activities, there is no significant influence of seating arrangement on literacy skills (Merrit, 2014), while for speaking activities, it can increase students' motivation on foreign language learning since the students are given opportunities to interact with others when they seated in separated table (row and circle) rather than cluster (Correa, 2007).

RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study is library research which focused on empirical review based on existing literature research. This review concerned on the specific aspect of research methodology which has inclusion criteria. The criteria included in this article were; it investigated an independent variable of seating arrangement, participants had to be young learners (preschool and primary school) in English learning, the articles were available in and published in 1995 – 2017. There were found 5 articles that fit in all criteria of the research. Those articles were published in national-international journals and proceedings and had been indexed in Scopus, Google scholar, and Shinta.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The researcher found five articles which relevant with this study and most of the studies used observation and questionnaire to collect the data. The list of the study is further explained in the following table,

Table 1. Research Method and data collection

Authors names	Design	Data collection
Hannah (2013)	Literature based research	Documentation
Hasting and Schwieso (1995)	Experiment	Observation and Interviews
Ngaware, et.al (2013)	Survey	Questionnaires
Putra (2012)	Qualitative	Observation and interview
Wasnock (2010)	Survey	Questionnaires

The researcher found 5 relevant data to the categories. The method of the research was described in the table above. The results indicated that there are various research designs which were used by previous researcher and most of them using observation and questionnaire as technique to collect the data. The findings of the studies in terms of the

effect of students seating arrangement in TEYL context are explained in detail.

Hannah (2013) presented literature based research as the design of the article. She explains that the effect of setting the students seating can promote public speaking in classroom. It allows the student to speak and share their opinions, ideas, and thoughts. In addition, she also reveals that arranging students' desk increase the students' motivation and productivities on learning. By grouping the students, it can reduce class disruption in which the teacher's role is to monitor the students' activities. Cluster seating can promote students' leadership, cooperation, and awareness of others.

Hasting & Schwieso (1995) conducted experimental research in which it is classified into two experiments. The first study aims to identify the effect of classroom seating arrangement related to on-task and of-task activities. The result indicates that there is increasing number (10% - 20%) of students' on-task when the students are seated in row and falling on-task activities in group seating. Based on students' interviews, the result shows that 76% of the students prefer group arrangement. The findings indicate that there is different result between students preference and teacher observation. Task engagement levels increase when the students seat in rows. The second study, the effect of students seating which focused on disruptive and low academic students indicates that the students' on-task level increase and the students' out-of-seat intensity decrease when the students are seated in row.

Ngaware, et.al. (2013) conducted survey research in primary school in Kenya. The participants are the principal, teacher and learners. In terms of English language learning, they revealed that seating in front of row has significant effect on language learning achievement. In addition, the students who seated in the first row tend to be active in speaking English rather than the students who sit at back.

Putra (2012) found that the teachers in kindergarten and first grade of primary school design attractive classroom activities. It can help the teacher to engage the students' interest on learning. The teachers arrange the classroom setting become more attractive and provides many supporting learning resources (posters, magazine, comics and story books). He also found that arranging the classroom seating based on learning activities can maximize the students' contribution during the learning process.

Wasnock (2010) found that group seating can increase the students cooperation (social abilities) in which they can help and learn from each other. Besides that, the students tend to be more motivated and interested to learn and do assignment in peer.

However, in row seating, the teacher is able to monitor the students easily. The students only focus on the teacher as the center of all activities in classroom. Hence, in terms of on-task activities, increasing number occurs when the students are seated in row (52.4%), group (22.3%) and other combination (17.5%).

Therefore, the table below presents the summary of the findings concerning the effect of students seating in TEYL context.

Table 2. The effect of students seating

Type	Effect
Row	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promoting individual learning. b. Developing the students to become active learners, such as asking question, doing assignment, following teacher instruction, and helping other students.
Circle & Horse-shoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Developing students' self confidence as they are speaking in public. b. Promoting students' discipline and awareness of the classroom organization c. Increasing students' motivation.
Cluster/group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promotes leadership and cooperative learning in which the students can do project activities more effectively with their groups. b. Developing social awareness, such as helping their friends in understanding the material.

In terms of frequencies on the types of seating arrangement, most of researchers found that row seating is the most arrangement type which is usually used by the teacher. It is because row seating is the easiest type to be organized (Hastings & Schwieso, 1995; Ngaware et.al, 2013; Wasnock, 2010). Then, Putra (2012) suggested that the best way in organizing classroom seating is arrange the seating based on the classroom activities, so that it can fit with the students' works and be more effective and efficient for the teacher and students.

The importance of arranging students seating based on the activities is one of key role in language learning (Brown, 2001; Gianikas & Nicole, 2013; Harmer, 1998). Each types of seating has its own positive and negative impact. In terms of on types of seating, row shows positive effect on students' behavior (Haghihi & Jusan, 2012). Based on Hasting's findings (1995) seating in row increase the number of on-task activities. The students are more active in asking question, following the teacher's

instruction, and doing given assignments. On the other hand seating in groups make the students do of-task activities such as making noise, distracting others, turning seat, and do not paying attention to teacher. However, row seating also increase students independence ((Marx et.al, 2000). In addition, seating arrangement has influence on students' motivation (Correa, 2007) when the students are given opportunities to choose their partner as their please.

In group work the students can learn social life in which they can share their opinion regarding the assignment (marx et.al, 2000). Harmer stated (1998) that group seating can develop students' leadership and make them aware of individual differences, so that the students become more at ease to finish the works. By designing students seating in circle shape, the teacher is able to promote students' confidence. The classroom design which can be fit with this type is presentation or demonstration (McCorskey & McVetta, 1978). The students will be able to have eye contact with all classroom members and train their confidence in public speaking.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Classroom seating arrangement needs to be taken into account in order to facilitate the students' needs. There are some types that mostly used by teacher in arranging the students' desk. Row seating is a traditional types that usually used by teacher. This type engages students to be more active and independent during learning process. Circle and horseshoes is useful for presentation activity in which it makes the students feel confident to present material or task. In addition, cluster or group seating is suitable in developing students' leadership, social abilities and social awareness.

The research findings indicates that row or traditional seating is mostly used by teacher to promotes on-task activities. The increasing number of on-task activities occurs when students are seated in row rather than in group or other arrangements. However, in arranging the students' seating, the teacher needs to consider the students' needs and classroom activities. The teacher should arrange the seat in order to give beneficial influence for all students. Therefore, the students can feel different situation when working in group, peer or individual.

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