



## Classroom Seating Arrangement: EFL Students' Choice in Speaking Class

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aims to identify students' choice for seating arrangement in speaking class where the researchers focus on students' preference on seating arrangement in speaking class. The researcher conducted a case study involving 19 participants of the third semester at the English Education Study Program and gathered data from observation, students' reflection, and questionnaire. The findings indicate that 72% buzz group seating, 10% horseshoe seating, 5% traditional seating, 5% pair seating, and 8% cluster seating are the most favorable seating arrangement among students. This study implies that seating arrangement help the students' focus and interest in learning process, participating and engaged in cooperative learning leading to the improvement of students' interaction in language learning.

**Keywords:** *Seating arrangement, Speaking Class*

### INTRODUCTION

Four decades ago, seating arrangement has become focus of research (Bennett & Blundell, 1983; MCroskey & MvVetta, 1978; Puckeridge, 1992; Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). Seating arrangement still little studies has been explored (Haghighi & Jusan, 2012) but seating arrangement has been researched continuously become continued research (Adedokun, Henke, Parker, & Burgess, 2017). Based on the empirical studies gathered, some studies revealed that seating location and seating type have impact on student performance (Fernandes, 2011; Michael, Knotts, James, Williams, Vassar, & Wren, 2013; Melisa & Ann, 2017; Parker, Hoopes, & Eggett, 2011), on learners' behavior and teacher beliefs (Adedokun, et al., 2017; Lothfy, 2012; Simmons, Carpenter, Crenshaw, & Hinton, 2015), and also on quality learning environments (Obeidat & Al-Share, 2012). Muhammad and Mahmud (2012) argue that seating arrangement is an important element in classroom management can influence teaching and learning process in classroom. Gremmen, Van den Berg, Segers, and Cillessen (2016) stated that seating arrangement can stimulate the students to have active involvement in a lesson. Moreover, seating arrangement can determine a classroom environment to be more positive, both for teachers and students (Simmons et al., 2015)

Harvey and Melaine (2013) stated that student learning may be affected by various physical characteristics of a classroom, not the least of which is the chair or seating style.



Ergonomically correct chairs and seating styles is an important element in the teaching-learning process (Gremmen, et al., 2016) and well-devised seating arrangement plan can positively influence academic (Wirburn, et al., 2018). Gremmen, et al., (2016) argues that the implementation of seating arrangement can improve students' speaking skill in term of accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility. But seating arrangement can positively or negatively affect student performance (Gremmen, et al., 2016).

In the Indonesian setting, some researchers have investigated Bugis (2018) investigated the seating arrangement in improving students' speaking skills at Iqra Buru University. Then, another study conducted in Bandung by Supratman (2015) addressed that seating arrangement to promote students' communication and interactivity especially student learning motivation, student-student, and teacher-student relationships, the nature of different tasks and activities performed, student classroom participation. This has a good impact on the participant in classroom discussion because active engagement and participation in the learning experience positively affect students' learning while promoting the use of higher-order thinking skills (Supratman, 2015).

These all-present studies that mentioned above are focusing on such "does where a student sits really matter?" The impact of seating locations on student classroom learning (Fernandes, 2011), and type of seating arrangement make the utilization can help academic skill (Supratman, 2015) without looking and asking students' opinion, whether they enjoy the seating arrangement in the classroom with the kind seating arrangement applied in classroom (McCrosky & McVetta, 1987). By looking at the benefits of the seating arrangement above, the researchers think that it is important to conduct this research to examine whether the seating arrangement set in the classroom is enjoyed by the students and which seating arrangement is favorable among students as it can affect the effectiveness of the students' learning. Therefore, the students' preference towards the seating arrangement in the classroom is needed. Hence, the researcher was interested in investigating the students' preference on seating arrangements in speaking class. Therefore, this study focuses on students' choice on seating arrangement in speaking class.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study engaged with qualitative study design used a case study approach. The participants were 19 students of the English Education Study Program in the third semester in IAIN Kendari. The data was collected through an online platform, Google form. The gathered data were analyzed using the technique of analyzing data by Creswell, they are: (1) collecting data, (2) preparing data for analysis, (3) reading through the data, (4) coding the data, (5) and coding the text for themes. In data condensation, the researcher decided which data is collected to code and which to pull out, after that, data then summarized, highlighted, and created into groups and partition (categorized), and took note (coded) to obtain several similar prefer from the students. After that, the researchers interpreted the coded data to infer the meaning of each data.

## FINDINGS

### *Students' choice types of seating arrangement*

In the reflection section, consists of two kinds of questions involved in this research, there were one open-ended question and one close-ended question. The researcher arranges the reflection to the thirty-one participants through an online google form to help the researcher in collecting the result. The following chart presented the result of reflection:

Tolong beri tanda checklist (✓) untuk jenis pengaturan tempat duduk yang diterapkan di kelas dan jawab pertanyaan berdasarkan preferensi Anda.

25 tanggapan

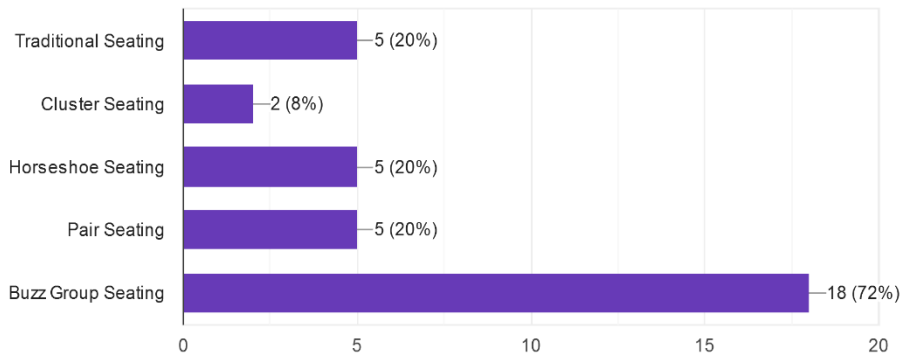


Figure 1, The result of reflection on students' preference in seating arrangement

Source: google form

From the table is the result of students' reflection. Because in this research, the researcher wants to know the students prefer on a seating arrangement that applied the lecturer in their speaking class. Based on the instruction is *Please give checklists to the kind of seating arrangement applied in the classroom and answer the question based on your preference*. Therefore, the first graph shows that 72% of the students choose Buzz group Seating and 20% others Horseshoe Seating, 20% of the students choose Traditional Seating. Meanwhile 20% of the students like Pair Seating and 8% other is Cluster Seating.

### *The students' reason prefer for the types of seating arrangement*

The following table presented the result of students reflection based on their reason about kinds of seating arrangement:

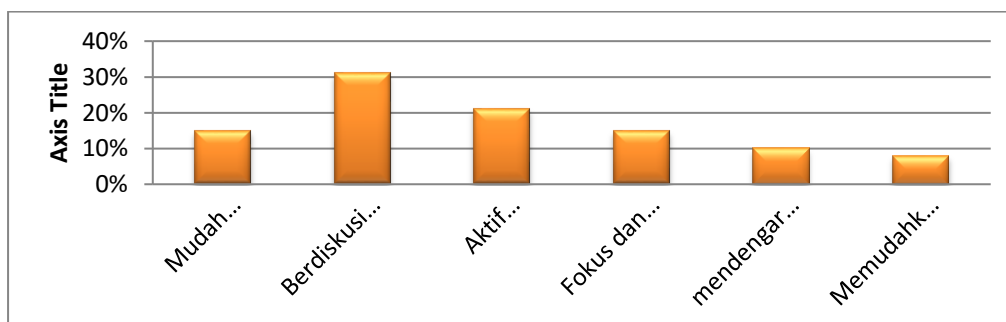


Figure 2. The students reason prefer kind of seating arrangement

From the table above the result reflection sheet on students reason prefer kind of seating arrangement. To strengthen the data above, here are the reasons students prefer on kinds of seating arrangement in the classroom in the form of reflection. Then, this reflection is taken by the researchers after the students have used several kinds of seating arrangements that have been applied by the speaking lecturer. 31% of students consider when using the Buzz group, they are have a good discussion such as issuing opinions, accepting the opinions of others, telling stories and issuing many ideas. To arouse the courage of those who are afraid to speak and like, by using Buzz Group, they can be brave and mentally tested to talk with their groups. There were some students' reason that showed choose buzz group seating applied in speaking class. As the S1 stated that:

*"I think when I sitting in this seating arrangement is good, because easily to speak English with the friends. And then, we also could very attention to the lecturer when he/she is teaching to us."*

*"my reason is when I was sitting in this arrangement, I feel free to express my ideas to my friend. And also I have many opportunities to speak and my friends too." (S10)*

In addition, 21% of students consider using buzz groups and horseshoe seating to make students more active in the classroom so that students who are less active are no longer afraid to make mistakes when discussing. 15% of students are happy because it is easy to understand the material and feel comfortable continuing to focus on using traditional seating also felt by 15% of other students. Therefore, 10% of students are aware of the instructions in the speaking class are also very important and that is done when setting up the buzz group seats, horseshoe seating, and pair seating. So, 8% of students think that the chair model can make it easier for lecturers to control the class. As the S4 said:

*"I like to sitting in this model because the sound of the lecturer will be more clearly to hear and this seating arrangement us to do beside convercation."*





*"I interest and like in buzz group seatng because make the voice of lecture is clear". (S7)*

*"...while the lecturer was easily to orginize and monitor students in the clases". (S15)*

## DISCUSSION

The purposes of this research are to find out the answer for the research question. This study is focusing on which type of seating arrangement do students prefer in speaking class because in fact information according to the research finding based on the result of observation in classroom the students are bored and feel sleepy with the seating arrangement in classroom. Besides, in this research the researcher used three kinds of instruments to get the result such as; observation, questionnaire and reflection.

They knew that buzz group seating is a seating arrangement that allows students to interact with lecturers and their friend during discussions in speaking class because when students want to express their opinion in learning Speaking. It is directly fixed to the teacher and all of his group friends. It's like by according to (Tarigan, 2012) buzz group is a technique that makes students work in small group and organize the students into group work in time already specified. While they are buzzing, the students are able to exchange ideas and draw on their wide collective experience. Michael (2010) stated that If teachers wanted their students to interact more during the discussion, student to participate in remedial activities and games, buzz group seating arrangement is the best design to be considered (Simmons, et al., 2015).

Overall, based on two research problem, first, which type of seating arrangement the students prefer in speaking class at English Education Department, the researcher found that students prefer in speaking skill at English education department. It could be seen in the chart based on the graph of students' reflection stated that student most choose buzz group seating. Because based on the reflection, the researcher found students perceive that they like buzz group seating because the seat position that made them face to face with teacher and all of their friends, makes it easier for students to pay attention to teacher because circular positions there are no barriers, making students focus on lecturers who are in the middle who explain the material, makes students more active because makes all students can be seen by the teacher and make the students must be active in English speaking classroom, it is like by according to Papalia (1994) Statement that "the buzz group seating arrangement allowed students to be able to pay attention to the teacher, make eye contact, and allowed the teacher to have control of the class".

While row seating with sitting position there is a student sitting in front of someone sitting behind the making the active students only the back of the front only. It is like by according to Rustandi and Mubarak (2017) statement that "when students are placed in rows it is convened that students should be passive learners". Rual and Wannarka (2008) also added that if students are working on independent or individual assignments, they should be seating in an arrangement that would create less interaction with their peers, such as row seating. And cluster seating is active only with friend proximity, and suitable for group discussion and the student found that cluster seating had a positive effect on social interaction and that more students were



actively participating during class discussions. It is like by according to Marx (2000) noted that “cluster seating fostered an environment that allowed interact with one another because of their close proximity”, and in a study done by Rosenfield (1985) they found that "cluster seating had a positive effect on social interaction and that more students were actively participating in class discussion with small clusters would heighten student interaction but might also limit teacher control and/or encourage social interaction not productive to learning" (Simmons, 2015). While horseshoe seating is a seating arrangement that allows students to interact with lecturers and their entire friend during discussions in English speaking classroom because when students want to express their opinion in learning Speaking it was directly fixed to the teacher and all of his friends. It's like by according to Rosenfield (1985) statement that “acknowledged that if teachers wanted their students to interact more during the discussion, horseshoe seating arrangement is the best design to be considered”.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study was drawn by the finding and discussion from gathered data. The result of this research the researcher found that most students prefer in speaking class the fourth of semester at English education department of IAIN Kendari was buzz group seating. Students prefer of buzz group seating because the seat position that made the students was easier to pay attention to teacher, listen to the lecturer instruction, focus and learn better because circular positions there are no barriers, making students focus on lecturers who are in the middle who explain the material and understand the material. Buzz group seating was a seating arrangement that makes students more actively in classroom activities because makes all students can be seen by the teacher and make the students must be active in speaking class. Overall, the students' choice Buzz group seating was a seating arrangement that allows students to interact with lecturers and their entire friend during discussions in speaking classroom because when students want to express their opinion in learning Speaking it was directly fixed to the teacher and all his friends.

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