

The Key Factors Influencing Learning in The Language Classroom from Tourism Students' Perspective: A Qualitative Study of Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted at a higher educational institution in Malaysia. The purpose was to observe the factors that influence the learning behaviour of tourism students in two different classrooms. The same language was taught in modern and traditional classrooms. The research design was qualitative in nature; semi-structured interviews and class observations were conducted. The data revealed that the comparison of two different classrooms gave different results. The findings indicated that in the modern classroom, tourism students were happy and enjoyed learning a language owing to factors such as round table seating arrangement, multimedia facilities, less proximity to the instructor, creativity, and amicable class environment. These factors resulted in improved motivation and engagement in class activities, heightened confidence, less shyness, courage to ask questions, peer correction, attentive behaviour, and a more focused approach to accomplishing the tasks. However, the traditional classroom with a linear seating arrangement created problems for the students who used to sit in the back rows and were unable to view clearly. Moreover, high proximity created distance between the instructor and tourism students, and they were found shy to ask questions, and free movement was restricted.

Key words: Classroom; Communication; Motivation, Engagement; Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Several educators believed that the seating arrangement is a critical factor for learning performance, which is a pivotal factor in giving positive learning outcomes and learning behaviour. This study was conducted to observe the learning behavior of the tourism students in two different classrooms with two types of seating arrangements: rows or linear arrangement in the traditional classroom and circular arrangement in the modern classrooms. The objective of this study is to explore the factors that influence tourism students' learning behaviour in the classroom, acknowledging that the factors can result in an effective learning environment that corresponds with the students' interests (Suwandi et al., 2025).

Fewer studies have been conducted on the classroom seating arrangement and its effects on students' learning performance (Haghighi & Jusan, 2012; Hoekstra et al., 2023). This paper examines the impact of seating locations on classroom learning from the perspective of the students from the tourism department. Specifically, it examines the impact of seating on a) student learning behaviour, b) student and teacher relationships, c) attention, and d) student classroom participation. However, active engagement and participation in the learning experience positively promoted the use of higher-order thinking skills as indicated by Flynn et al. (2009), McKeachie (1990), and Stronge (2007). This research attempts to provide insight for educators, who may consult this study for methods of enhancing student engagement, attention, and the creation of a conducive learning environment within the classroom that results in enhanced learning of students of tourism education (Chau, 2025).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1920s, German psychologist Otto Köhler presented a theory known as the "Köhler Effect". He found that when two people completed a joint task, the individual performance of the weaker member was improved. Therefore, weaker students could not influence the good ones, but they themselves improved their performance. According to this effect, the stronger students will inspire and motivate them. This, in turn, would mean that the less-able students would work harder and perform better. In the twenty-first century, the idea emerged that the physical factors such as lighting, space, ventilation, and cleanliness, were equally important (Connors, 1983; Granstrom, 1996; Matlab, 2017) for good learning outcomes and promoting teamwork (Rohani et al., 2017).

In 1950, the traditional seating pattern was dominant with rows of seating in the classroom where the teacher used to speak, and students listened to the teacher (Tanahashi, 2007). In the following years, for active, task-oriented learning, semi-circle and cluster seating patterns were introduced (Lotfy, 2012). In the mid-1990s, educational research focused on classroom environment from the perspective of either teacher or student (Angela & Kathryn, 2011). The research of Kostourous and Olivier (2014) emphasized students' freedom to choose

their seats by themselves for comfort and a long span of attention in the classroom. Later, the concept of a conducive learning environment was introduced, and it surprised the educational world as teaching and learning both were affected by seating arrangement (Lotfy, 2012). However, the configuration of furniture, space, and room dimensions could also lead to negative students' performance (Atherton, 2005; Gifford, 2002). The classroom design might be favorable to enhance students' performance. On the other hand, the seating arrangement heightened the instructor's ability to teach in the best manner. To uplift the standard of teaching and learning, teachers needed to have a variety of seating plans which would influence class environment, students' behaviour, and achievement. Teachers' class management skills also contributed to students' learning outcomes (Chingos, 2013; Ngware et al., 2013). It was also observed that the inappropriate layout demotivated students and teachers' efficiency. However, for a variety of class activities, students required changes in the seating arrangement for a high level of motivation, engagement, and participation (Hammang, 2012).

Alberto et al. (2010) and Juhary (2012) indicated that students' position in the classroom corresponded directly to their performance. In his observation, students who were sitting in front were more motivated than those sitting at the back. Thus, students' performance and teaching, and learning methods were dependent on the physical factors. Both classroom capacity and size influenced the performance of students and teachers. It was observed that a conducive learning space proves to be effective for the teaching and learning process (Yelkperci, 2012). Bonus and Riordan (1998) supported the notion that students were more attentive when the seating arrangement in the classroom was set in accordance with the instructional goals.

From the perspective of confidence, the studies of Peter et al. (2015) found that the physical layout improved the confidence and engagement level of students. Healthy interactions were developed among students and between students and teachers. Consequently, students scored quite good. The classroom environment had a direct impact on students' grades, especially interaction between students and teachers, while highlighting a healthy and enjoyable learning process (James, 2016). Idayu et al. (2016) elaborated that if students' learning needs were addressed, the space layout of the classroom was appropriate, then a healthy environment would facilitate collaborative learning. Mudassir and Norsuhaily (2015) emphasized that a healthy and supportive learning environment enabled students to be more motivated and engaged in class activities. The studies of John (1999), Wannarka and Ruhli (2008), and Juson (2010) proved that seating arrangement improved students' behaviour in the classroom. They were more attentive and engaged in class activities. Students' social interaction was healthy, thus resulting in positive learning outcomes.

The study of educational literature, especially the studies of Ramli et al. (2013), Ngware et al. (2013), Khan and Mushtaq (2012), highlighted the physical layout, classroom capacity, student behaviour, course conducted, and student achievement and challenges as important factors, as shown in Figure 1.

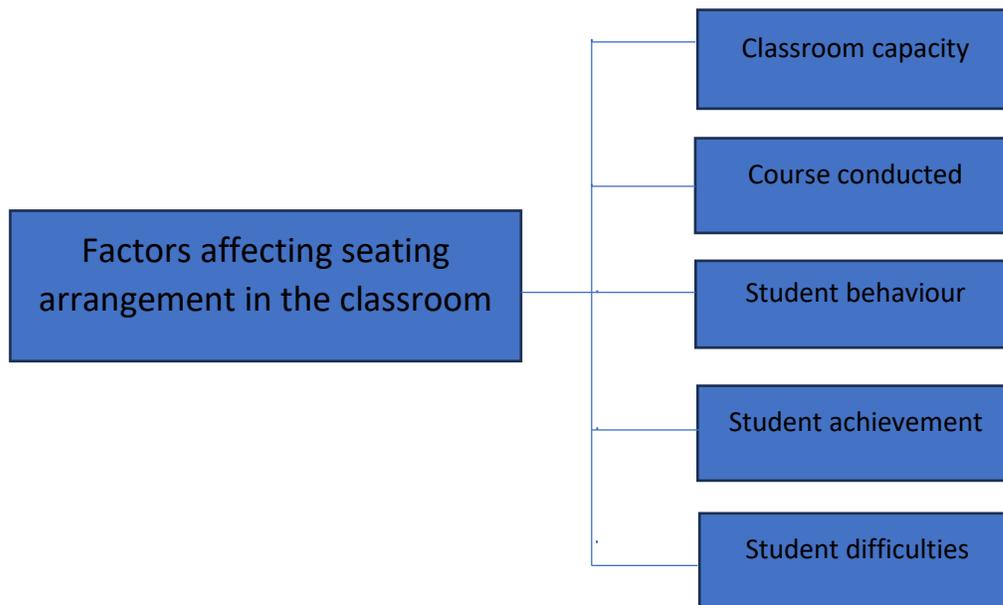


Figure 1. Influencing factors for the selection of seating arrangements in the classroom (Ramli et al., 2013; Ngware et al., 2013; and Mushtaq and Khan, 2012)

Studies of Chieu and Cheng (2016) and Reinke (2019) emphasized keeping the students actively engaged in the classrooms in order to achieve learning outcomes. Zong et al. (2022) mentioned that “Student engagement plays an important mediating role in the relationship between teaching factors (such as learning curriculum and teachers’ teaching quality) and students’ learning gain”.

In the language learning classroom, organizing activities was an effective way to enhance students’ motivation (Reinke, 2019) noticeably in the blended classrooms in higher education (Evians et al., 2020; Serrano et al., 2019). The physical classroom environment, specifically seating arrangements (Cornell, 2002; Haghhighi & Jusan, 2012), was found to be a crucial factor to boost students’ attention, engagement, and participation in the language learning process in the blended learning environment (Clinton & Wilson, 2019; Evian et al., 2020; Ochola & Achrazoglou, 2015; Serrano et al., 2019).

2.1 Instructional Paradigm and Students’ Behaviour

The physical classroom layout represented the instructional paradigm and linked with students’ attitudes, behaviour, communication, engagement (Bolden et al., 2019; Ochola and Achrazoglou, 2015; Park & Choi, 2014), students’ social connections inside the classroom (Vercellotti, 2017; Wilburn et al., 2019), and academic performance (Lewinski, 2015). Baron (1992) and Lotfy (2012)

highlighted that the priority should be given to the classroom seating arrangement in the creation of a classroom environment with the objective of maximizing students' participation in the activities. Lewinski (2015) also pointed out that the most powerful tool to improve students' high performance is the seating when effectively arranged in the blended learning setting (Evian et al., 2020; Serrano et al., 2019).

2.2 Three-dimensional Effects

The study of educational literature indicated three-dimensional effects of the seating arrangement on student engagement and commitment. Firstly, the relationship between seating arrangement and students' level of communication and social interaction with classmates was observed (Harmer, 2007; Wannarka and Ruhl, 2008), as mentioned in Figure 2.

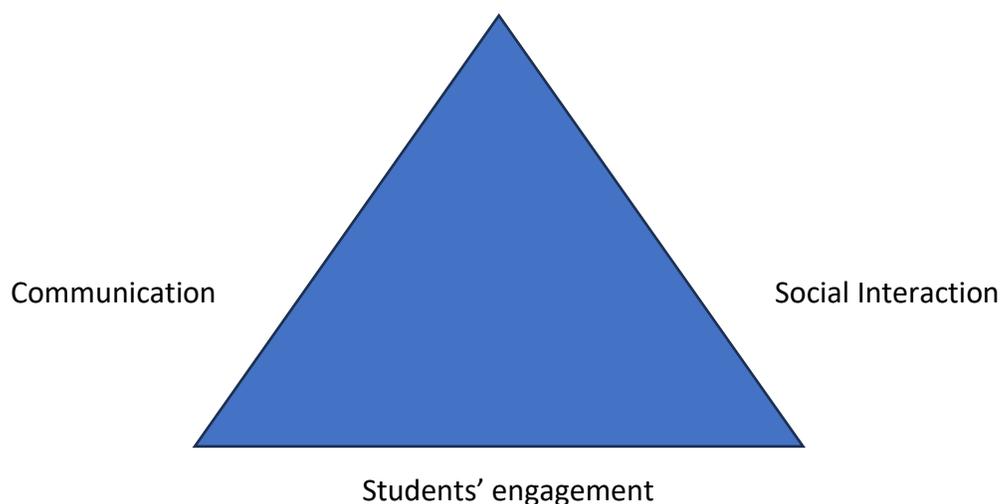


Figure 2. Three-dimensional effects of the seating plan

Considering the rows and columns arrangement, the whole classroom space was used. It is convenient from the teachers' perspective for students' monitoring, and at the same time, students view the teacher and interact easily. This arrangement was beneficial for lecturing and watching the videos (Harmer, 2007; Ochola & Achrazoglou, 2015). However, students could not see other students, and those at the back could not be viewed clearly. However, rows were considered unfavorable for peer communication and interaction within the classrooms. In addition to this, students in front could not see other students, and students at the back had poor visibility of the instructors and screen, which lessened their engagement in activities (Shernoff et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2018).

2.3 Seating Configuration and Students' Performance

On the contrary, semicircular or circular arrangements were found to be more suitable and avoided positional discrimination in blended learning (Park and Choi, 2014). Therefore, teachers

were found to move, provide quick feedback, facilitate students' discussions, and group work than in rows and columns (Kinahan, 2017). From the students' perspective, they sit closer and maintain direct eye contact (Harmer, 2007). Students in group seating enjoyed social interaction with peers; they asked more questions than in rows and columns seating arrangement (Gremmen et al., 2016; Lotfy, 2012). The seating plans are shown in Figure 3.

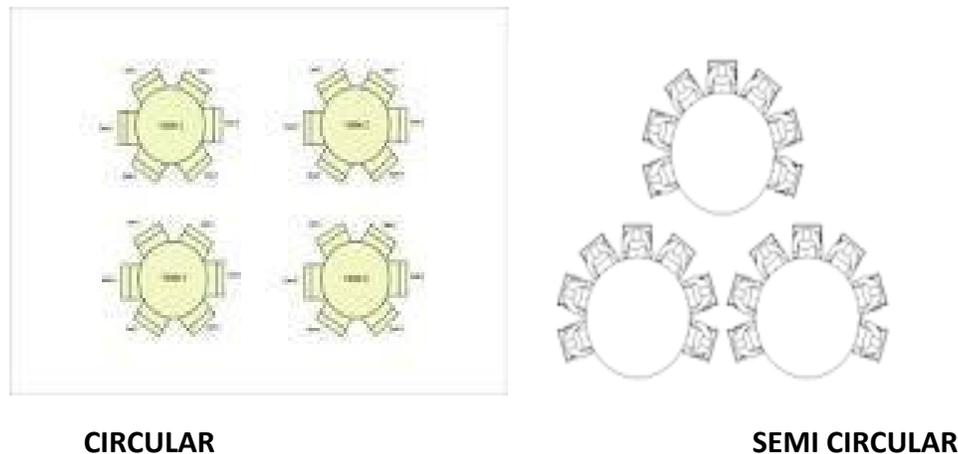


Figure 3. Seating patterns in the classroom

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study. A case study approach was used “to study the characters in a life situation” (Yin, 2009). The research instruments, such as semi-structured interviews and class observations, suited the best for this study in a higher education institution in Malaysia. By using the case study approach, this research explored the impact of seating arrangement on students' behaviour in the classroom in higher education. The interview protocol was designed with fourteen questions. The interview time was arranged at the convenience of the interviewees.

Two groups of tourism students from the Undergraduate Programme of a public university in Malaysia were selected through probability sampling. From group 1, students A, B, C, D, and E were interviewed. They used to sit in the modern classroom equipped with the latest facilities, and the layout was cluster seating with round tables and chairs. From group B, students X, Y, and Z, who learned in a traditional classroom with a linear seating arrangement, were interviewed for this study. They were given freedom to choose their seats as well as their peers. They were assigned various tasks and activities to complete within the classroom. The same interview

protocol was used for both groups. Using the research instrument of class observations, data were collected by observing the students from both groups. Fallout (2014) explained an observation process in which he used a “teaching attribute instrument; qualitative notes of behaviors.” (P.6). Throughout the semester, students were observed in the classroom with special focus on their communication, attention, engagement, interaction, and environment. The data was analyzed through codes and themes (Saldana, 2021). To check validity and reliability. The interview protocol was pilot tested with a few students and lecturers, and the questions were well understood. Then the formal interviews were recorded.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data was analyzed inductively through codes and themes. The data revealed interesting findings.

4.1 Seating Arrangement

The data analysis revealed that the Tourism students preferred the round table layout for the benefits such as comfort, peer support, motivation, quick learning, focus, easy access to the instructor, and engagement in group work.

Student A indicated:

“Yes, I am satisfied with the circular arrangement. I communicate easily with the teacher...I enjoy working in groups. I really prefer a circular arrangement because I can see everyone and I can get to know everyone as we are closer, and it creates closer bonding among us”.

Student B stated that she gained confidence and courage to ask questions due to the comfortable layout:

“Seating arrangement is circular and quite good because I have become more confident to ask the questions, and I am no more a shy person..”

Student C expressed his views and his joy to have the freedom to sit and work with his peers:

“I am satisfied because I can sit anywhere, I move easily, and I am more attentive than in the traditional classroom with rows and columns.”

Student D shared her opinion about her attention span due to the cluster arrangement:

“Seating arrangement makes it easier to pay attention to the teacher because we aren’t far from the teacher, so she can see us, so we just need to focus on our work.”

Student E showed her satisfaction with the seating arrangement:

“Yes, I am satisfied with the circular seating arrangement in the French classroom.”

Student X expressed his discomfort with the rows of seating in the traditional classroom, which hindered visibility and learning in the back rows of the classroom:

“In rows, it’s quite difficult to interact with classmates for group work. Also, it makes it difficult to watch the slides....I prefer a round table seating arrangement because I don’t have to turn my back to see the slides. Around the tables, communication is easy and helpful.”

Student Z shared his problem of visibility from the back rows in the traditional classroom:

“Sometimes it becomes difficult to have a clear vision of a teacher, which makes interaction difficult as well.”

4.2 Attention and Engagement

It was found that the cluster arrangement was quite effective in facilitating attention, engagement, and bonding among the students and the instructor. However, the linear arrangement created problems for tourists as the view was obstructed by the students, who were sitting in the front rows, especially students with weak eyesight who had a big problem of unclear vision. It was also found to be time-consuming to move back and forth and engage in the class activities with peers.

Student A highlighted the bonding and connection developed due to the seating arrangement:

“This kind of arrangement creates bonding between us, and we can pay more attention to the teacher and activities...the seating arrangement makes it easier to pay attention to the teacher. Because whenever we sit around the table, all students can pay attention and focus on what the teacher is teaching. I am actively engaged in class activities for learning the French language”.

Student B explained her views about her improved motivation in group work:

“Yes, I am attentive in class. The circular seating is helpful for paying attention in class. Because when I see my friends working in class, I feel motivated, they give me motivation, rather than I sit alone, and focus alone, and don’t participate in class, and don’t say anything”.

Student C shared his experience. She highlighted that, unlike rows, it is much easier to pay attention to the teacher:

“Seating arrangement really helped me because the teacher is in front of me, so I have to be more focused and engaged in class activities.... It’s easier to pay attention with this

seating, there is no blocking from the person in front of you, so you can easily pay attention to the teacher.”

Student D praised the modern language learning classroom:

“Yes, I am attentive in the French classroom. I love French so much, I love the classroom.”

Student E shared his opinion that he is engaged in activities:

“Yes, I am attentive in the French classroom... with circular seating arrangement, it is definitely easier to pay attention to the teacher.... I am attentive and engaged in class activities.”

4.3 Class environment

The findings indicated that the round table seating created a positive and healthy class environment. Tourism students were found to be happy to have good communication, interaction, and easy movement, and enjoyed learning in the classroom, but in the traditional classroom, the learning process was difficult.

Student A highlighted:

“Seating arrangement makes the environment comfortable and flexible. In the traditional classroom with rows, you cannot communicate easily with your classmates, but in a circular classroom, we can engage ourselves easily in activities together easily.”

Student B shared her opinion on easy communication:

“Seating arrangement makes the environment comfortable and flexible because when we sit in a circular arrangement, we can see each other and we can communicate easily without the need to move around. In circular seating, we can see our classmates and their expressions, how they react to our answers, or how they motivate us to answer or support us whenever we work in groups.”

Student C highlighted his sentiments:

“Yes, I enjoy working in groups. Circular makes learning more interesting, you sit around the tables, you can have more friends, it makes us feel bonded there compared to just rows.”

Student D expressed her opinion:

“The physical layout keeps us attentive and engaged. It’s helpful and we don’t need to move around, we choose our seats and work in groups, and helpful in group discussions..., it makes the environment flexible and comfortable. We did a lot of activities in French class. So, it’s easy for us to sit around the tables and work, and we discuss a lot.”

Student E praised the flexible class environment:

“Comfortable, yes, seating arrangement makes class environment flexible and comfortable, and we have freedom to choose where we choose to sit anywhere in class.”

Student Y shared his experience:

“I prefer round tables for learning French as a foreign language as learning a new language is quite hard. You need a fun environment and modern equipment. “

4.4 Interaction & Communication

It was found that the cluster seating proved to be useful in establishing effective communication and healthy social interaction among students and between students and teachers. The close seating encouraged effective communication.

Student A expressed her positive opinion:

“When my friends and I are around the table, we can communicate easily since we can see each other’s faces and communicate easily as we are close to each other. So, communication becomes more effective.

Student B expressed her view that sitting next to her friends around the table gave her a sense of belonging:

“When I sit near my friends, I feel connected with each other rather than far from them or sitting alone.... When I don’t understand anything, I can refer to my friend, or we can refer to our lecturer easily. This is how physical layout helps in effective communication.

Student C expressed his views on easy communication due to the layout in the room:

“Yes, I communicate easily, it really facilitates social interaction, it does feel too far in the room, you feel close to your friends.”

Student D expressed his joy in sitting with classmates, which enhanced his motivation and engagement:

“We communicate easily during class activities.... It's quite easy for us to interact and work in groups with this arrangement... the seating arrangement makes it easier to pay attention to the teacher because we aren’t far from the teacher, so she can see us, so we just need to focus on our work.”

Student E shared his opinion about easy interaction in groups:

“Yes, I communicate easily with the teacher...it facilitates social interaction with my classmates in groups.... I enjoy working in groups.... We sit in groups, which eases group activities.

I ask my friends and we do group work together, so it eases class work and activities. This is how physical layout plays an important role.”

According to student X:

“Yes, it is easy to communicate with teachers because we can easily catch teachers’ attention, and it is easy to communicate.”

Student Y expressed the difficulty in communication with peers due to rows:

“Sitting in rows is kind of not easy because we are sitting side by side, we have to move to communicate with peers, it's time-consuming....”

4.5 Confidence

It was found that tourism students gained confidence due to the physical layout in the clusters as they worked with peers in the groups, which enhanced the peer correction and consequently heightened the level of confidence. They preferred the circular seating to rows as rows were found to be less facilitating.

Student A gave his opinion:

“Everything is perfect and fine. I really like this type of arrangement, and I enjoy French class very much.”

Student B compared the two seating arrangements:

“Circular seating is better than traditional for learning of French language. I enjoy working with my friends in groups. I prefer a circular arrangement because I have gained confidence. Round tables are better and easier for group work and communicating with teachers.”

Student C spoke highly about easy learning in the clusters.

“Definitely, the seating arrangement makes learning easier than traditional rows or columns. I would prefer sitting closer to my friends for task-based learning, it doesn’t matter which shape, but the important thing is that we sit closer to each other, we learn together, where we connect better with friends and the teacher.”

Student D shared his opinion:

“To participate in activities with classmates in a traditional classroom is a bit hard. Group members must move from their places to make a group. It involves movement, which loses interest and motivation.”

4.6 Proximity

The data revealed that students from the modern classroom were satisfied with the learning environment and highlighted proximity to the teacher in a cluster seating arrangement. Direct contact proved to be beneficial in establishing healthy interaction with teachers, reading the PowerPoint slides, and asking questions to teachers. It was also convenient for both students and teachers. In row setting, the last rows created an inconvenience to communicate with the teacher, to remain attentive, and focused. Also, students talk in the back rows and distract others. Sometimes the teacher fails to satisfy students' questions.

Student C shared his views about his learning experience in rows:

"In rows setting, the second row is fine, but the last row, you feel so left behind. My attention span will be very short, and I will be easily distracted. In a circular arrangement, the space is big, you can move around, the lecturer can see students better, and students can see the lecturer better."

Student D emphasized the benefits of the circular seating plan:

"The circular arrangement is quite convenient because it's not far from my teacher, so it's close to my teacher and my classmates, so when we talk to each other. Even though it's easy for the teacher to hear us and see what we are doing."

Student E complained about the disadvantages of less proximity:

"Because in lecture halls, the class is very big, so when we sit sometimes, we have to talk louder with discomfort, but when we sit closer, we feel that we are close to the teacher and it's easy to ask questions, we just raise our hands, easy if any problem."

Student F explained the discomfort in rows:

"We have to move and change our places to form a group with the members, and that's time-consuming and requires movement."

4.7 Class Observations

The class observations were conducted with tourism students in two classrooms, A and B, throughout the semester. Classroom A was a modern classroom, equipped with round tables and modern facilities for French language learning, whereas classroom B was traditional with the row arrangement. The observations of group A indicated that students were much more enthusiastic and motivated than group B. In group A, improved interpersonal communication was observed in students' learning behaviour. It was found that the circular layout of the modern classroom was quite convenient and comfortable for the students. Students picked the seats of

their choice and sat with their friends, enjoying friendships while productively working in groups. Their classmates were constantly assisting each other in discussions to accomplish the given language tasks around the tables. Tourism students exhibited excitement, enthusiasm, and motivation as soon as they entered the classroom. Some of them entered the classroom about 20 minutes before class. They sat and did collective reading, while turning the pages of colorful French picture books with great zeal, and exchanged views with their friends. They enjoyed collaborative learning while exploring French as a foreign language.

Creativity was encouraged through videos, animations, and French websites to learn and express point of view. Students' attendance, motivation, and confidence were observed to be heightened, and fear of teachers and learning a foreign language was diminished. Creativity was observed in groups as well. The weak students were supported by the brighter ones. Mutual learning developed a culture of caring and sharing. Students were found attentive and disciplined. Even when the lecture was over, it seemed that students did not feel like leaving the classroom and remained thrilled and excited in the room with their classmates. Learning with peers and peer correction of errors in oral production around the tables was noticed. While correcting the pronunciation, peers giggled and teased each other. The act of asking questions both to the teacher and their classmates indicated a positive sign of curiosity for learning and attentive behaviour in class. Changes in tourism students' thinking, attitude, and behaviour were noticed. Students were found to be more responsive in groups in the circular seating arrangement than in rows.

The social constructivist elements of learning were facilitated by the grouped seating by making the teacher more accessible, as the distance between students and teacher was less, and the content was comprehensible. Students' engagement dominated their classroom activities, which led to a positive ambiance. Students were found to be highly engaged in language-related tasks such as watching videos on YouTube, exercises, worksheets, and dialogue writing. Each member concentrated on the activity, participated with vigour, and enjoyed the process of learning by doing with their classmates sitting around the table. It was found that learning in groups in a circular seating arrangement sharpened students' thinking process and cooperation through interaction with peers for the completion of tasks. High energy level, enthusiasm, and dynamism were found among groups. Even the quiet and timid students' performance in class improved as well. All the group members gave their input in mutual discussions and did research work together with high motivation. Each group member was found focused and absorbed in the tasks.

The element of collectivity was discovered to be stronger, such as the collective thinking process and collective research for vocabulary and synonyms, etc. The creative group presentations uplifted the excitement of the class. And made the class environment interesting. Weaker and less confident students were found to learn from the active students. Open communication, healthy interaction, a sense of competition, and motivation to perform better

than others were manifested by the students. It was noticed that students' creativity was at its peak in working with peers in groups. Cross cross-questioning and comments among the groups, peer correction of French pronunciation, and repetition exercises with peers. Mime session, theatrical presentations, freedom of expression and movement in the classroom, noise, laughter, friendly environment, freedom of performance, fun, fun-based learning were the noticeable elements in the modern classroom with the circular seating. A variety of styles of group performances and presentations also created humor in class.

On the other hand, group B in the traditional classroom with rows was found to be passive. Students who were sitting in front were more motivated and attentive than those sitting at the back. The level of engagement also varied among students. The ones having less proximity to teachers were more productive than others. From the perspective of behaviour, students sitting in the back rows were found chatting, playing with their cell phones, and distracting others. Teachers had to point them out and make an effort to keep them engaged in class activities. The level of attention and engagement was lower. In the rows of seating, teachers had to work harder on the group formation, movement was difficult, and some of the students preferred to stand near their classmates to participate in group work. It was found to be more time-consuming and less convenient for the students.

This enquiry was made to study students' learning behaviour in a traditional and a modern classroom designed for the learning of French as a foreign language. The study probed into the relationship of seating arrangement with students' learning behaviour while focusing on students' engagement in class activities, confidence, communication, social interaction with the teacher, and students. Both modern and traditional classrooms have their positive and negative aspects. Circular classrooms created strong communication, bonding, and a sense of belonging among the students. They learned more quickly with their peers sitting around them at round tables and were more motivated, engaged, and learning. The physical layout of the classroom represented the instructional paradigm and linked with students' attitudes, behaviour, communication, engagement as highlighted by Bolden et al., (2019), Ochola and Achrazoglou (2015), Park and Choi (2014), students' social connections inside the classroom as mentioned by Vercellotti (2017), Wilburn et al. (2019) and academic performance (Lewinski, 2015).

The data indicated the fact that students around tables established face-to-face direct contact joyfully than those seated in columns and rows, as mentioned by Steinzor (1950) and Gump (1987). Considering the rows and columns arrangement, it was convenient from the teachers' perspective for students' monitoring, and students could view the teacher and interact easily. Those from the back rows found it difficult to interact with the teacher, and visibility was less clear. However, this arrangement was beneficial for watching the videos, as mentioned by Harmer (2007), Ochola and Achrazoglou (2015). At the same time, the students could not see other students, and those at the back could not be viewed clearly. Hence, rows were considered

unfavorable for peer communication, which created inconvenience for engagement in activities as mentioned by Shernoff et al. (2017) and Wei et al. (2018).

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research was qualitative in nature and was conducted at a higher education institution in Malaysia. The Case study approach was used to study the key actors: the students from the Undergraduate programme who were studying French as a foreign language and as an optional subject. The research instruments were semi-structured interviews of the students and class observations throughout the semester in both traditional and modern language learning classrooms. The type of seating arrangement and its effects on students' learning behaviour in the classroom were closely studied. Two different seating arrangements, circular and rows, were chosen through purposive sampling. Two groups of students who were learning in two different classrooms with different layouts were closely observed and interviewed.

The findings revealed that rows were good for individual work. The students in the front rows are more attentive as they face the teacher than those who sit at the back. Group work becomes challenging in the rows as students are bound to move and change their places and physically adjust themselves to engage in group activities. This consumes time and becomes a wasteful strategy. On the other hand, students in the back rows face problems such as focus, attention, and asking questions becoming difficult, and reading the content from PowerPoint slides is also a hassle due to the lack of visibility. Collaborative learning becomes exhaustive in this seating arrangement. On the contrary, semicircular or circular arrangements are proven to be more suitable and avoid positional discrimination in blended learning. Considering the rows and columns arrangement, the whole classroom space was used. It is convenient from the teachers' perspective for student monitoring, and at the same time, students viewed the teacher and interacted easily. This arrangement was beneficial for lecturing or watching the videos, but not for group work. Therefore, teachers were found to move, facilitate students' discussions, and group work than in rows and columns. From the students' perspective, they sit closer and maintain direct eye contact. Students in group seating enjoyed social interaction with peers; they asked more questions than in rows and columns seating arrangements.

Three-dimensional effects of the seating arrangement on students' engagement and commitment were proven. Firstly, the relationship between seating arrangement and students' level of convenience of communication and social interaction with classmates and teacher was stronger in circular seating. Students' performance, creativity, confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm for learning were prominent features, as well as peer support, peer correction, and a culture of collaborative learning dominated the classroom. The weaker ones also show their involvement and good performance after sitting with the bright students. A culture of caring and sharing and a sense of belonging was instilled within the classroom community, with overall

positive effects on learning, emotions, and well-being owing to the circular seating arrangement. For practical implications, this study identifies the learning factors that facilitate social, educational, psychological, and institutional development. It indicates the strategies of the students' learning process within the classroom through effective teaching methodologies, a classroom environment, physical layout, student-instructor relationships, motivation, and engagement.

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