

## MANAGING LEARNERS' DISRUPTIVE TALKING BEHAVIORS IN EFL CLASSROOM THROUGH SEATING ARRANGEMENTS: EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Fani Puspita Utami and Ahmad Bukhori Muslim

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

utami.fani@upi.edu; abukhMuslim@upi.edu

**Abstract:** Disruptive talking behaviors are considered as impolite behaviors during the classroom activity. To overcome this misbehavior, seating arrangement is proposed as one of the solutions by many theorists. Through a case study design, this study investigates 20 EFL teachers' perceptions on the types of seating arrangement and their considerations on setting related to both the pupils and the types of arrangement. From the questionnaire and the interview, the finding revealed that the teachers used variegated types of seating arrangement and there are nine aspects considered such as the types of activity, time allocation, the learners' interaction, the learners' academic levels, the size of classroom, the types of seat, gender, the learners' height, and the distance among the seats.

**Keywords:** *classroom management, disruptive behavior, seating arrangement*

### INTRODUCTION

The form of EFL classroom disruption varies across the countries. Through a preliminary survey to 20 EFL teachers in Indonesia, it was found that most of them perceived talking without permission as the most disturbing misbehavior including talking out of turn, unpermitted talking during the class, talking about an unrelated issue, and making jokes of new vocabularies. They also considered that those disturbances are the form of disrespecting the teachers.

Similar to Indonesia, Sun and Shek (2012) revealed that talking out of turn as the form of concerned misbehavior in Hong Kong. It hampered the teacher to present the material because the disruption not only annoyed the teacher and the activity, but also disturbed the other learners who intended to learn seriously. Even, by Douglas, Moyes, and Douglas (2016) confirmed and summarized that the classroom disruptive talking misbehavior wrecks the relationship among the learners. The disruption occurred frequently and required the teacher to manage effectively and immediately in order to continue the explanation. In Turkey, Ozturk (2017) study uncovered that talking without permission as the most deleterious misbehavior inside the classroom compared to passiveness, idleness, and disrespect.

The main contributing factor of this disruption is the social interaction between the learners. Brown (2001, p. 193) stated that the learners are more comfortable to sit with their intimate friends. Hence, it triggers them to interact more frequently without considering the proper situation. They may unconsciously communicate in the wrong time in which the talking may disturb others.

Related to this factor, seating arrangement is suggested as the solution to manage this problem. Therefore, Harmer (2007b, p. 41) proposed five models of seating arrangement; orderly rows, circles, horseshoes, separate tables, and solo works. Supratman (2015) found that circle arrangement is beneficial because the pupils face each other. Besides using eye contact, the interaction can be controllably since the teacher can watch the pupils in the circle. Meanwhile, Correa, Lara, Pino, and Vera (2017) framed the advantages of the separated tables which employed to engage the learners to participate, yet they need to be careful on dividing the group members. Conversely, Simmons, Carpenter, Crenshaw, and Hinton (2015) discovered that the

cluster seating arrangement created more spoken misbehaviors since the pupils have a chance to communicate with their friend. In Indonesia, the mostly-used seating arrangement is orderly rows which lead to the rigid relationship among the pupils. However, Bicard, Ervin, Bicard, and Baylot-Casey (2012)'s study revealed peacefulness due to the limited interaction in orderly rows. Hence, the disruptions are rarely found in this arrangement model. The conclusion which is correlated with Wannarka and Ruhl (2008) asserts that the type of seating arrangement should be adapted with the types of activity in which they serve more benefits than the interruptions.

Based on the explanation, this study intends to probe the EFL teachers' perceptions towards the seating arrangements used to diminish the learners' disruptive talking in EFL classroom and their considerations on setting the arrangements. The research questions are:

1. What are the types of seating arrangement used to diminish students' disruptive talking behaviors based on EFL teachers' perception?
2. What are teachers' perspectives of the consideration towards the seating arrangements?

## METHOD

This study is conducted through a case study design which aim is to gain information related to the current phenomena Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010). Twenty EFL teachers (12 Females and 8 Males) participated in this study. By utilizing the framework of Harmer (2007b) and Brown (2001), the researchers employed a questionnaire and an interview to enrich the data. The questionnaire was distributed purposefully to obtain information related to the learners' disruption and the classroom management strategy in the EFL classroom.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *What are the types of seating arrangement used to diminish students' disruptive talking behaviors based on EFL teachers' perception?*

After distributing the questionnaires, most of the respondents stated that the prevailing seating arrangement in their classrooms is orderly row (75%). However, all of them stated that the model did not accommodate them to diminish the learners' disruptive talking behavior. Even, it increased the frequency of talking since each learner sits in pairs and the distance between the pairs is quite close. Hence, they are triggered to interact and communicate with their friends disruptively. Also, they who sit in the back row will be unobservable if the person in front of them is taller. Meanwhile, three respondents (15%) had the separate table arrangement and two respondents (10%) had the horseshoe arrangement in their classrooms. Although their arguments lead to positive statement such as the suitable arrangement for a certain activity, the space, and groupings, they also tried different seating arrangement purposefully to diminish the learners' disruptive talking behavior.

Finally, after being questioned about the seating arrangement prevailing in their classroom, the researcher asked them about the seating arrangement used to diminish the learners' classroom disruptive talking behavior. The respondents chose circle arrangement (40%), separate table (35%), horseshoe (20%), and solo work (5%). None of them selected the orderly row due to its space and the distance among the pupils. Therefore, it triggered the teacher to modify the seating arrangement to bring a different atmosphere. Also, they recognized that each seating arrangement provides different advantages and disadvantages as asserted by Brown (2001) and Harmer (2007b). Hence, they experienced employing variegated types of seating arrangement.

[T3] *In circle arrangement, the students communicate clearly, focus more on the activity, and become active.*

[T11] *They are more composed and participate actively while sitting in the circle. They can see their friends talking and listen to them.*

[T17] *I prefer circle arrangement because when they can see each other. I sometimes join in the circle and observe them. Since I can see them, they are afraid of talking without my permission.*

Eight teachers selected the circle seating arrangement to mitigate the students' classroom disruptive talking. The preference of implementing the circle arrangement was to engage them in the activity. Making them focus on the lesson will hamper them from disruptive talking and intruding their friends. However, the teacher needs to find an activity which can direct their disruptive talking into the effective participation. Then, the visibility while employing the circle arrangement avoids them from troubling the activity through their disruptive talking. If they realize that they are watched, they will stop because of being ashamed and worry of being reprimanded. Meanwhile, T17 contrasted between the circle arrangement and the orderly row. He stated that the circle arrangement provides more advantages to deal with the learners' disruptive talking behaviors. The communication can be conducted better when they see the interlocutor's face. Naturally, when their friend is talking, they will listen to her and focus on every word she says. Another advantage happens when the teacher include himself in the row which gives the students a smaller chance to speak without the teacher's permission.

[T6] *In the separate table, the interaction between the students and the teacher can be interactive and lessen the opportunity to talk disruptively. I usually move the disruptive talker to where I can reach them easily. In the group, they are required to interact and socialize with the teammate.*

[T12] *Separate table arrangement is very useful to dissociate the disruptive talkers.*

There were seven EFL teachers who chose separate table arrangement to decrease the classroom disruptive talking behavior. Dividing the students into groups through the separate table arrangement eases the teacher to group the learners based on their academic levels. When the groups consist of students who have the same comprehension level, the teacher gives them different material or topic to be discussed. Meanwhile, when the teacher put students with different level, it enables the low achievers to learn from the good achievers. The purpose of using the separate table is to disunite the group of disruptive talkers. The teacher will put them in the different group in order to reduce the chance to disrupt the activity. The topic being talked should relate to the topic given by the teacher.

[T9] *I like making my students sit in the horseshoe arrangement because their frequency of talking decreased. Maybe, the major reason is because all of them sit in the first row which enables the teacher to watch them directly. Therefore, they may become worry and shy when I catch them talking with their friends.*

[T14] *Organizing the seat into horseshoe type proposes two advantages. First, it provides a space for the teacher to approach every student. So, if there is one student talking and disrupting the activity, the teacher can approach him and stop him. Second, the students have a small chance to talk without permission because the teacher can see them directly.*

The next seating arrangement model which was selected by the EFL teachers (20%) was horseshoe. In employing the types of seating arrangement, the teachers had their own way to

direct and diminish the classroom disruptive talking behavior. The direct attention is the key to monitor them. They may be ashamed when the teacher watches them talking disruptively and reprimands them. Meanwhile, the wide space supports him to implement it. More importantly, there is no obstacle which blocks the teacher's sight on them. It makes the teacher able to observe them clearly.

**[T18]** *To overcome the disruptive talking, I separate all of them into solo work seating arrangement. Although this model is usually used during an exam, it is very beneficial to restrain the spread of the disruptive talking.*

There is one EFL teacher who prefers solo work seating arrangement to diminish the students' classroom disruptive behavior. The reason lays on the disability of the disruptive talkers to communicate because of the wide space among the seats. Also, the teacher puts the disruptive learner to the reachable position.

### ***What are teachers' perspectives of the consideration towards the seating arrangements?***

There are eight aspects considered by the EFL teachers before reorganizing the seating arrangement, such as the types of activity, the learners' interaction and relation among them, the learners' academic levels, the size of classroom, the types of seat, gender, the learners' height, and the distance among the seats. The result of the second research question in this study is in line with Gremmen, Berg, Segers, and Cillessen (2016)'s study. They found that there were four aspects influencing the teacher's consideration on selecting the seating arrangement. Those are social, academic, classroom management, and physical aspects.

**[T6]** *The types of activity are very important to consider the proper and suitable seating arrangement. If I plan to do a group work, I will select the separate table arrangement in order that they are comfortable to discuss with the group.*

**[T7, T20]** *The students' level of comprehension is very important. In using the separate table, I have to decide whether I will arrange the groups with learners who have the same level of comprehension or not. Both of those considerations propose different advantages.*

**[T9]** *I always consider two aspects before rearranging the seats. They are the type of activity and the time allocation. When we change the arrangement, we should also consider whether the duration is enough for both the activity and the time to arrange the seats or not.*

The primary thing considered by the EFL teachers is the type of the activity. The activity should adapt with the seating arrangement, vice versa, and the teacher should mull the seating arrangement over in order to alter the disruptive talking into the effective participation. Therefore, the activity should involve all students to avoid them from talking disruptively. Correa, Lara, Pino, and Vera (2017) also stated that selecting the proper activity in order to engage the learners to talk related to the topic is necessary. The second consideration deals with the time allocation. Moving the chairs may waste the time. It may bother the teaching and learning duration because most of the time is used for organizing the seats. Thus, the teacher should set the duration for each activity in order to avoid wasting the time.

**[T10]** *The learners' height is an important aspect to be cogitated, especially when I utilize the orderly row. The taller one should sit in the back row in order not to block*

*his friend. Also, the distance or the space between each seat should be well-organized to ease the teacher walk around the classroom.*

**[T11]** *The size of the class should be well-considered. It will be helpful if the new arrangement gives a wider space for the teacher to walk around the classroom. Also, the moveable seats can help me to spend the time effectively.*

**[T15]** *The position of the student who always talks disruptively should be in the front row or closer to the teacher in order to monitor him and avoid him from influencing other students.*

The second part involves the physical aspects including the learners' height, the space, the size of the classroom, the type of the seat, and the position of the disruptive learners. The height is mentioned in order that the teacher can organize and watch all students in the classroom. The aim of space in seating arrangement is to enable the teacher walk around the classroom to approach the students. To change the type of seating arrangement, the type of the chair and table should be well-considered because some seats are unmovable. Also, the disruptive talker should sit close to the teacher or in the front row. When the learner is close to the teacher, it can eliminate his willingness to disrupt the activity.

**[T12]** *The interaction and the relationship between the student and those who sit next to him are very vital. We cannot put all of the disruptive student in the same team or in the near seating because they may create a greater disruption.*

**[T17]** *I teach in an Islamic school, so I have to consider gender as one of the aspects.*

The last two aspects are the learners' interaction and gender. The disruptive learners should not stay in the same group. Indeed, we create a greater chance for them to keep talking disruptively. Finally, the expected classroom environment cannot be invented. The last aspect is gender which is very crucial and rarely brought into light. For some schools, it is very necessary to interact physically with the same gender. Hence, the teacher is required not only to organize the seating arrangement but also to divide the learners based on their gender.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the finding, it can be concluded that the Indonesian EFL teachers use variegated types of the seating arrangement to reduce the students' classroom disruptive talking behavior. The types used are circle arrangement (40%), separate table (35%), horseshoe (20%), and solo work (5%). Each model offers different advantages. However, the selection should be balanced with the considerations mentioned above including the types of activity, time allocation, the learners' interaction, the learners' academic levels, the size of classroom, the types of seat, gender, the learners' height, and the distance among the seats.

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