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Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación

Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

### **The Impact of Seating Arrangement on Interaction and Speaking Skills in EFL Students**

Trabajo de titulación previo a la obtención del título de Licenciada en Pedagogía del Idioma Inglés


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### Resumen

La disposición de los asientos se ha definido como la forma de organizar a los alumnos y su ubicación en el aula para facilitar las tareas, las actividades y la comunicación. La mayoría de los profesores tienden a utilizar la disposición tradicional o en filas en las aulas, lo que podría estar relacionado con su falta de conocimiento sobre todos los tipos de disposición de asientos existentes o de cómo poner en práctica esas disposiciones en función de las necesidades de los alumnos. Los objetivos de esta síntesis de investigación son determinar qué tipos de disposición de los asientos en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL por sus siglas en inglés) son los más eficaces y analizar los efectos positivos y negativos, así como las percepciones de los alumnos sobre el uso de diferentes tipos de disposición. En esta investigación se seleccionaron y analizaron 20 artículos relacionados con la disposición de los asientos. Los resultados mostraron que la disposición de los asientos en forma de herradura/U era la más eficaz para mejorar la interacción y la capacidad de expresión oral de los alumnos, ya que éstos pueden estar frente a frente. Sin embargo, también se encontraron aspectos positivos en cuanto a mejorar el rendimiento de los alumnos en las actividades orales y la participación al estudiar otros tipos de disposición de los asientos. Además, se observaron diferentes percepciones en cuanto a la confianza, la espontaneidad, el entusiasmo y el dinamismo.

*Palabras clave:* disposición de asientos, interacción, expresión oral, participación



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### Abstract

Seating arrangement has been defined as how students and their seats are arranged to facilitate tasks, activities, and communication. Most teachers tend to use the traditional or row seating arrangement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, and it could be related to their lack of knowledge of all existing types of seating arrangements or how to implement those arrangements according to the students' needs. The objectives of this research synthesis are to determine which types of seating arrangements are the most effective and to analyze the positive and negative effects as well as learners' perceptions of using different types of arrangements. In this research synthesis, twenty articles related to seating arrangement were selected and analyzed. The findings showed that the Horseshoe/U-shape seating arrangement was the most effective to improve students' interaction and speaking skills since students can face each other. However, the other types of seating arrangements also demonstrated positive aspects in improving the student's performance in oral activities and participation. Moreover, different perceptions were observed in terms of confidence, spontaneity, enthusiasm, and activity.

*Keywords:* seating arrangement, interaction, speaking, participation



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Valeria

## Introduction

Seating arrangement is how students are organized within the classroom; it is the positioning of their desks. The seating arrangement is part of classroom management which is a very important aspect of the teaching-learning process (Sholihah et al., 2020). Due to the importance of seating arrangements in the classroom, teachers should pay close attention to the different effects they have on their students, especially in the aspect of student-student and student-teacher interaction. Currently, teachers take into account the organization of their classrooms; however, most of the time they keep the same form during all sessions when ideally there should be a variety that adjusts to the different activities to be carried out in class without having a negative impact. For these reasons, this research synthesis will analyze which of the different types of EFL classroom seating arrangements are the most effective considering the negative and positive effects they have respectively for interaction and improvement of speaking skills, also taking into account the students' perceptions of the different types of seating arrangements implemented.

In the first chapter, the description of the research is included. In this section, the background, the statement of the problem, the rationale, and the research questions and objectives are described. In the second chapter, the theoretical framework and the literature review are presented. First, some theories regarding seating arrangement are detailed. After that, short descriptions of different articles are included. The third chapter includes the methodology implemented in this research synthesis with its inclusion criteria, keywords, and other essential aspects. The results of the analysis of the articles are presented in the fourth chapter. Finally, the fifth chapter involves the conclusions of the research synthesis and the recommendations.

## Chapter 1

### Description of the Research

#### Background

Teachers and students could use different techniques to support the teaching and learning process such as management of the classroom environment, differentiated instruction, group learning, individual learning, etc. Sholihah et al. (2020) suggested that "classroom management is one of the important factors which influence the teaching and learning process "(p.162). Similarly, Simmons et al. (2015) expressed that classroom and seating organization need to be changed constantly to create a positive learning environment for both the teacher and students.

According to Pickering (2003, as cited in Fadlilah, 2019), seating arrangement facilitates several aspects in classrooms such as better monitoring of the students, presentation of the material, and organization of collaborative works, and it helps to decrease the factors of distraction.

Also, seating arrangements can affect students' interaction since the classroom becomes a place where they can share knowledge, support each other when they can do it, and practice their English skills. McCorskey and McVetta (1978) stated that teachers and students reach succeed when there is effective communication in the classroom, especially if the communication is given in a great amount of time.

In addition, teacher-student interaction is important in the learning environment since the teacher can make the students feel comfortable and they could feel motivated to speak more within the classroom. As the desk arrangement of classrooms is under the teacher's control, he/she could rearrange students' seats to increase interaction. (Adytiara, 2018)

Regarding the impact of seating arrangement on classroom interaction, Susanti (2017) indicated that the students were excited and enthusiastic about following the learning activities when the class is arranged in a proper seating arrangement. The same author also mentioned that the proper seating arrangement increases students' activeness in speaking. In this study, the successful use of seating arrangements and teachers' roles can be seen from the students' positive responses and active participation in speaking learning activities.

However, Fadlilah (2019) indicated that certain seating arrangements can also present problems within the classroom since it increases noise levels because the students are

talking about what they want and do not concentrate on the topic of the classroom. Similarly, implementing a seating arrangement makes it difficult for the teacher to handle all the students and find a better way to arrange them.

In this regard, Fadlilah (2019) stated that “the teachers should consider using kinds of seating arrangements in facilitating students’ interaction in English classroom” (p.6). As there are different types of seating arrangements, it is necessary to know which of them will be the most helpful and suitable for meeting the students’ necessities.

### **Statement of the problem**

Annisa (2021) indicated that “educators should pay attention more to the classroom seating position of the students to perform a highly estimated teaching-learning process” (p.1). However, seating arrangements can positively and negatively impact students’ interaction and speaking abilities. On the one hand, Barkley (2010, as cited in Astuti, 2020) expressed that through seating arrangement, students can collaborate and feel comfortable within the classroom environment which helps to increase their participation. Moreover, Paramita et al. (2013) said that teachers sometimes do not have sufficient knowledge about the organization of the class, and they need to improve themselves to provide a good environment and model for the class. Cooper (2011, as cited in Nayeem, 2015) stated that seating arrangement is often ignored by teachers in their professional preparation; therefore, most teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about all the existing types of seating arrangements and how they can influence the students’ engagement toward learning; thus, they tend to use the rows traditional seating arrangement, without focusing on their students’ needs. Wengel (1992, as cited in Nayeem, 2015) suggested that students should be arranged according to their needs. Despite EFL teachers not taking the initiative to try other seating arrangements, it is important to identify the different types that fit the needs of the students, and how teachers could implement them in the classroom to make students improve their skills, especially those related to speaking. At the same time, it is essential to consider the positive impact that will be obtained, and the characteristics of the classroom such as the physical space available and the number of students.

### **Rationale**

Teachers, among other aspects, have control of the organization of the classroom’s physical environment, which especially involves the seating arrangement. Dunbar (2004) mentioned that some teachers implement seating arrangements to facilitate discipline and instruction such as putting away their devices to get their attention. The seating arrangement would be

effective and provide positive results in facilitating the teaching and learning activities if it is flexible and adapted to the student's necessities. Sholihah et al. (2020) said that

The use of seating arrangement has a good impact on their learning process in speaking classes such as self-confidence, good monitoring from their teacher, and a new physical atmosphere in their class which can make them have a better mood to learn (p.164)

Hue and Li (2008) indicated that seating arrangements should facilitate learning activities in the classroom, teacher's strategies, and teacher-student and student-student interaction.

Research regarding seating arrangement is interesting since it lets us know the different ways that students can be arranged in EFL classrooms and how this can help students to improve their skills. To know more about the impact of the use of seating arrangement in the classroom and all the different types that can be implemented, a research synthesis is an effective method as it aims to collect reliable data from previous empirical research studies that have observed how seating arrangements impact on students' learning.

## **Research questions**

- What types of seating arrangements are the most effective to improve interaction and speaking skills in EFL classrooms?
- What are the positive and negative effects of using different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms?
- What are the students' perceptions about the implementation of different types of seating arrangements?

## **Objectives**

### **General Objective.**

- To determine which of the different types of seating arrangements are the most effective.

### **Specific objectives.**

- To report the positive and negative effects of implementing different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms.
- To analyze the students' perceptions about the use of seating arrangements in the classroom

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

#### Theoretical Framework

In this section, the concepts, theories, and types of seating arrangements collected from different authors will be presented to create an adequate context for the topics to be exposed later. The theoretical framework will be divided into the following three sections: definitions of seating arrangement, types of seating arrangements, and their use in the English classroom.

#### Definitions of seating arrangement

There are different definitions related to seating arrangement from the perspective of different authors. Savage and Savage (2009) stated that “the arrangement of the space, including furniture and bulletin boards, should communicate to all who enter what will be expected of them while they occupy the space” (p.67).

Regarding seating arrangement, Laslett and Smith (2002) claimed that placement and movement are under the teacher's control, and she or he decides where students will sit depending on some aspects such as promoting cooperation and dispersing the factors of distraction, among others.

The implementation of seating arrangements in an English classroom can aid the learning process and promote positive student outcomes. According to Pickering (2003, as cited in Fadlilah, 2019, p.10), seating arrangement facilitates several aspects such as better monitoring of the class, presentation of the material, and organization of collaborative works, and it helps to decrease the factors of distraction. Likewise, Hue and Li (2008) mentioned that “a good seating arrangement facilitates specific learning tasks and activities and communicates a teacher's beliefs about learning and teaching” (p.148).

Another important aspect of seating arrangement is the position of the teacher; she or he should face the students, have eye contact and interact with them, and move around the class to monitor the students. Ramsden (1999, as cited in Zerin, 2009, p.8) claimed, “The best arrangement depends on the situation of the class and teacher.”

#### Types of seating arrangements

There are a lot of seating arrangements that can be implemented in the classroom. Harmer (1997) suggested three types of seating arrangements:

**Orderly rows.** In an orderly row seating arrangement, both the teacher and the students can face and see each other and make eye contact. The teacher can walk through the classroom and see what the students are doing and even have nearer and individual contact with each one. This type of seating arrangement allows the well-performing of some activities such as showing a video, using the board, explaining a topic, etc. When this arrangement is used, it is important to make sure that all of the students are focused on what is being explained and check that they are doing the activities proposed. At the moment of asking questions, it is better to ask the students randomly from different parts of the classroom because they cannot know what they will be asked, and they can start focusing more on the topic. In addition, this type of seating arrangement also can allow students to work in pairs or groups; they could work with the person or people in front, behind, or next to them. However, orderly rows can also have challenges, for instance, it is difficult for students to make eye contact with the rest of the class, especially with those behind them since they have to turn around to be able to see and interact with them.

**Circles and horseshoes.** In this type of arrangement, the teacher's position in the classroom would be less dominating since she or he will be at the beginning or the end of the arrangement, and the location could not be favorable. The author mentioned that when the class is arranged in a circle, there is a feeling of equality since the teacher is not in front of the whole class. Regarding that, teachers who want to lower the barriers in the classroom tend to use this kind of arrangement. Another advantage is that the circle and horseshoe seating arrangement allows students and teachers to face each other, and it even becomes an intimate place where students can feel free and share their feelings and knowledge.

**Separated tables.** Separate table seating arrangements may present both benefits and challenges. Regarding benefits, it is easier for the teacher to monitor the student's work and help them if they have difficulties. In this arrangement, mixed-ability can be carried out; it refers to when the different groups are focused on a specific ability that differs from the other. Also, it can benefit collaborative work among students. However, separated tables deal with two problems. First, the students sometimes want to work with different people, thus variety would be desired. Second, it could be challenging to develop the whole class since they are more separated.

Apart from the types of seating arrangements already presented, Ramsden (1999, as cited in Zerín, 2009, p.8) suggested five types of seating arrangements. Those are.

**Clusters.** In this seating arrangement, four or five desks are arranged together, so the students can face each other. On the one hand, there is enough distance between each group, and the teacher can move easily among the groups and help each one. Clusters are beneficial for working in groups because the students can face, interact, and help each other; even though this arrangement promotes collaborative work, the students can also work individually. On the contrary, clusters can present some challenges such as the high risk of cheating on an exam or not facing the teacher and therefore getting distracted and not listening to the instructions given.

**Desk rows.** It is the most traditional seating arrangement. It consists of placing the desks in rows facing the front of the classroom. This arrangement allows the teacher to monitor the class and give instructions since all the students can see the teacher. Before arranging the class, the teacher has to analyze the students' behavior to know who should sit at the front or the back. Ramsden (1999, as cited in Zerín, 2009) added "the problem of this arrangement is that some students may sit at the back or corner of the class to avoid classroom participation and interaction. It is also problematic for group work" (p.10)

**Table rows.** Long desks are arranged in rows facing the front of the classroom. This arrangement aims for collaborative learning, so the students can interact and share their knowledge among themselves and also do peer correction. Some challenges with this type of seating arrangement involve difficulties in monitoring the class and the activities, testing the students, and doing group work, or class discussions since the students are not able to face each other.

**Semi-circle.** This seating arrangement consists of arranging the desks in a semi-circle shape. Both teacher and students can easily see each other and work in groups. The teacher can give explicit directions to students since they face the front of the class and can also do activities such as discussions, and debates, among others. In addition, the teacher can move through the class and monitor students. Regarding its difficulties, the teacher cannot interact individually with each student since they are very close to each other. In addition, a semi-circle arrangement takes up a lot of space in the classroom and can make it difficult to carry out other activities.

**Pairs.** In this type of seating arrangement, two desks are put together, so the students can do pair work or even work individually. The teacher must consider different factors before pairing the students. Also, this arrangement allows the teacher to move around the whole class and monitor the pupils. The problem with pairs is that students can avoid participation by sitting at the end of the class or in the corners.



### **The use of seating arrangements in the English classroom**

The type of seating arrangement implemented in the English classroom can influence the interaction between the class members. According to Rosenfield et al. (1985, as cited in Savage and Savage, 2009, p.68), "The arrangement of the desks provides the major setting, or 'frame,' that shapes teacher-student interaction". Similarly, Scrivener (2005, as cited in Lee, 2018, p.87) indicated that "changing seating arrangements can help students interact with different people [...] students might not like it if there is a constant movement every five minutes, but some variety of working arrangements is often helpful".

It is important to make a good decision regarding the arrangement of the students' seats. Garrett (2014) affirmed that a thoughtful and purposeful decision about how to arrange students will be needed for providing a good learning space, and it is essential to consider aspects such as the room size, the number of students, flexibility, and creativity. In addition, Garret (2014) considered that "students need adequate space in which to learn, individually and collaboratively", then teachers have to make sure that there is enough space among desks to circulate through the room and have better interaction with students. Even if there is not enough space, teachers should find a way to create more space such as removing furniture or arranging students in a new way, etc. Based on that seating arrangements should facilitate the movement around the room.

Among other authors, James (2016, as cited in Norsafiah et al., 2019, p.23) included the improvement in students' performance, better between the teacher and students, and a more enjoyable learning environment for the students.

In this section, the concepts, theories, and types of seating arrangements and their application in an English classroom have been covered. The information disclosed is essential to understand the different types of seating arrangements that can be applied in a classroom and how they can positively influence students' performance and interaction.

### **Literature Review**

This section presents a review of the existing literature to analyze the information concerning the implementation of seating arrangement and its effects on the students' interaction and speaking skills. The literature review will be divided into the following sections: application of seating arrangement in the English classroom for improving interaction and application of seating arrangement in the English classroom for improving speaking skills.

### **Application of seating arrangement in the English classroom for improving interaction**

Several studies have found that the application of seating arrangement in English classrooms can improve the interaction between the teacher and the students and among students (Adytiara, 2018; Fadlilah, 2019). For instance, Fadlilah (2019) conducted a study in 10th grade at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya whose primary purpose was to identify the teacher's strategies to facilitate interactional communication in the classroom.

The results indicated that orderly row and modular seating arrangements increase interaction between teacher-students since it facilitates giving instructions, explanations, and feedback. However, there was not much student-student interaction since they were more focused on the teacher's words.

Fadlilah (2019) also mentioned some problems with the use of row and modular seating arrangements such as the increased noise level, lack of concentration, bad distribution

of the students, and problems handling all of them. Yang et al. (2022) also argued that row seating arrangements can create distractions since the students focus on the whiteboard and not on their classmates, making interaction and group discussion difficult to handle.

Adytiara (2018) carried out a study based on the implementation of separate corners to facilitate interaction between students and the teacher. This study described that before using the seating arrangement in the classroom, the teacher was the one who spoke more in the class, but then when separate corners were implemented a greater deal of interaction among students was observed. This arrangement allowed the teacher to see each of the students and make eye contact with them; consequently, the separate corners effectively increased communication in the classroom.

An important aspect of choosing the type of seating arrangement is that students feel comfortable and can learn and work better (Astuti et al., 2020; Lotfy, 2012; Umur, 2015).

According to Lotfy (2012), students care about where they are going to sit and if they are going to feel comfortable. The author mentioned that seating arrangements can make students feel motivated to talk and participate, and even said that they interact and communicate better in cooperative learning activities. Likewise, a study made by Astuti et al. (2020) has shown that students prefer to sit in a row seating arrangement since they feel comfortable, and tend to interact better if they do collective or group activities. Egounléti et al. (2018) concluded that students interacted more when they were arranged in clusters or groups, and they performed better in the activities. Similarly, Umur (2015) showed that orderly rows can increase teacher-student interaction since they can focus more on the

teacher. Furthermore, the author mentioned that separate tables help to increase student-student interaction since they could face each other and speak better. Regarding separate tables, Junivianti (2017) stated that this type of seating arrangement facilitates students to work in groups or pairs, and they can interact better with their partners.

### **Application of seating arrangement in the English classroom for improving speaking skills**

Some studies have shown that the implementation of different kinds of seating arrangements in the classroom can improve students' speaking skills. According to Susanti (2017), "the using of seating arrangement and teachers' role in English language teaching can increase students' speaking ability" (p.382). Susanti (2017) demonstrated through a study that using a proper seating arrangement can motivate students to be involved in activities and increase their activeness.

Castro (2009) conducted a study with 45 young learners from different Chilean schools and different grades, 3rd graders students and 8th graders students. The primary purpose of this study was to identify what kind of seating arrangements, group, and pair seating arrangements, benefit interactional activities. The results showed that when 3rd graders were rearranged in groups, they tended to talk more just with one partner which highlighted that the best way to improve interaction is thorough pair work. Moreover, the findings have demonstrated that 8th graders tend to work better when they are involved in group activities. In addition, learners expressed that this seating arrangement helps them feel comfortable and encourages them to participate more in speaking activities. Jannah and Nurfaidah (2022) also demonstrated that students can feel more active if they are working in groups, and even they can develop a good discussion. Regarding pair work, St Aminah et al. (2021) argued that this seating arrangement enhances students to speak and participate more in oral activities and discussions.

Another study conducted by Correa et al. (2017) in EFL classes at a secondary school in Chile demonstrated that the use of orderly rows and separate table seating arrangements in EFL classrooms can increase interaction in the target language. The results stated that students felt more relaxed, and were motivated to speak and use English with their classmates. Supporting this claim, Anggriani and Humaera (2022) argued that students felt confident and more motivated to speak English when the teacher implemented seating arrangements in a small group discussion in the class. Regarding orderly rows, Annisa (2021) has concluded that the students who sit at the front tend to get higher scores in speaking skills than those seated at the back. Based on these conclusions, the use of

orderly rows can effectively improve speaking skills, but this improvement can be led by the students who sit at the front.

Apriliana, N. (2017), Sipayung and Benarita (2021), Sholihah et al. (2020), and Umur (2015) conducted studies using the U-shape seating arrangement in class. The results indicated that it is effective for discussion since the students can see each other, be more active in the speaking activities, practice the use of English, and even work better in groups or collaborative activities. Also, this seating arrangement allows students to be more confident and comfortable when speaking, and the teacher can easily monitor them. In addition, students can speak directly to the teacher and classmates and make eye contact with them. Based on these affirmations, it may be said that the U-shape seating arrangement is effective in improving the motivation of students in speaking activities.

There are other types of seating arrangements that improve the students' speaking skills. For instance, Bugis (2018) showed in his study the direct influence of the seating arrangement on the main characteristics of speaking ability fluency and comprehensibility; especially with the use of the circle seating arrangement over the other types that did not present. According to Pranena (2022), "Cluster seating arrangement made the students actively discuss in the group. This seating arrangement in fact will make the students sit in the group, and discussion would happen immediately" (p. 173).

This section provided important and necessary information based on the implementation of different kinds of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms and how they help improve students' interaction and speaking skills. This literature review involved several studies that are the basis for the analysis of this research synthesis.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

A research synthesis was carried out to know about the impact of the use of seating arrangements in the classroom and all the different types that can be implemented. According to Cooper and Hedges (2009), “a research synthesis can be defined as a set of literature review characteristics ... research syntheses attempt to integrate empirical research to create generalizations” (p.6).

The articles were searched in academic databases such as Scholar Google, ERIC, and ResearchGate. Some selection conditions had to be taken into account to find the appropriate sources. First, articles should contain information about the implementation of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms since information about how seating arrangement helps or hinders the learning of English is needed. Second, the articles had to be empirical because it is necessary to collect data and focus on the findings of the studies and then analyze them. Third, the sources should be written in English since it is the language in which this study focused to analyze the different types of seating arrangements and their impact on students' interaction and speaking skills. Four, the sources had to be published since 2010 to know the different types of seating arrangements applied in EFL classrooms over recent years.

Some of the key terms used to find the sources are the following: 1. seating arrangement in EFL classrooms, 2. seating arrangement for improving interaction, 3. classroom management, 4. placement in EFL classrooms, and 5. speaking skills.

Some of the journals that were reviewed for information are the Journal of Foreign Language Learning and Teaching, International Journal of Language and Literature, Al-Lisan: Journal Bahasa (e-Journal), Bangladesh Research Foundation Journal, Journal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan, among others.

Finally, an analysis procedure was conducted to classify the different types of seating arrangements that are effective for improving students' interaction and speaking skills and also the students' perceptions.

## Chapter 4

## Data Analysis and Results

In this section, an analysis of 20 articles was carried out to answer the research questions. The categories for the analysis of this research synthesis were types of seating arrangements that improve interaction in EFL classrooms, types of seating arrangements that facilitate the development of activities to improve students' speaking skills, effects of implementing seating arrangements in EFL classrooms, and student's perceptions about the use of seating arrangements in the classroom.

**Types of seating arrangements that improve interaction in EFL classrooms**

This category analyzes the different types of seating arrangements that help to improve interaction in EFL classrooms. For this category, six studies were collected and analyzed.

Table 1

*Types of seating arrangements that improve interaction in EFL classrooms*

<b>Types of Seating Arrangements</b>	<b>N. of studies</b>	<b>Author/Year</b>
Separate corners	1	Adytiara (2018)
Rows/Traditional	3	*Fadlilah, (2019); *Junivianti (2017); *Umur (2015)
Horseshoe/U-shape	3	Apriliana (2017); Egounléti et al. (2018); *Junivianti (2017)
Separate tables	3	*Fadlilah, (2019); *Junivianti (2017); *Umur (2015)

N= 6

*Note.* \*Studies are counted in more than one category

Table 1 shows five types of seating arrangements implemented in EFL classrooms that help to improve interaction among students. Based on the analysis, a horseshoe/U-shape seating arrangement is used in EFL classrooms to enhance interaction and participation in group activities (Apriliana, 2017; Egounléti et al., 2018; Junivianti, 2017; Umur, 2015). It was found that Horseshoe/U-shape seating arrangements allow students to interact with the teacher and their peers since they could face each other and pay attention to what the teacher is explaining when she or he is in the middle. This arrangement can be effective in catching the students' attention since the teacher can monitor each one of them and also enhance their participation or share their opinions with the class. Supporting this, Apriliana, (2017) and Junivianti (2017) demonstrated through their studies that this arrangement facilitates students to express their opinions in front of the class and even makes it easier for them to perform a monologue since all the people in the classroom are seeing and looking at them.

Based on the analysis, another type of seating arrangement that is one of the most implemented in EFL classrooms is the traditional row seating arrangement. According to the data, this arrangement can be effective in improving teacher-student interaction since all the students are looking at the front and their attention is on the teacher, and similarly, the teacher can face everyone. To support our findings, Umur (2015) claimed that this arrangement is useful for creating teacher-student interaction since the teacher can face all the students and monitor them, and also the students can just focus on the teacher's explanation. In addition, students work better in individual tasks through row seating arrangement because they concentrate on what they are doing so that there is not much student-student interaction and the teacher is centered. Similarly, Fadlilah (2019) and Junivianti (2017). found that this arrangement is helpful for monitoring, asking questions, and giving explanations, among other things.

Fadlilah, (2019), Junivianti (2017), and Umur (2015) also pointed out that separate tables can help to increase interaction among students. The findings suggest that this arrangement is helpful in certain activities such as debates, discussions, and presentations, so the students can interact among them and ask questions or share knowledge. Additionally, in separate tables, students do not interact with the whole class, but the teacher randomly groups them in different groups, and the teacher can assign each member an activity so each one can participate and contribute to the group.

Besides the other types of seating arrangements, Adytiara (2018) conducted a study based on separate corners. The data suggest that separate corners contribute to teacher-student interaction as the teacher has enough space to move around and monitor students and make eye contact with them. It helps to increase teacher-student interaction since students tend to interact with the teacher, ask questions, and respond.

To conclude, different types of seating arrangements can be implemented in EFL classrooms to improve interaction. If student-student interaction is needed, horseshoe/U-shape and separate tables can be used since students can talk with their partners and share knowledge, and they are useful when they have to do group activities. Whereas, rows and separate corners are effective if the focus is teacher-student interaction. As mentioned by Junivianti (2017), the students can interact more according to various activities and various types of seating arrangements.

### **Types of seating arrangements that facilitate the development of activities to improve students' speaking skills**

For this category, eight studies about the different seating arrangements that facilitate the development of activities to improve students' speaking skills were analyzed.

Table 2

*Types of seating arrangements that facilitate the development of activities to improve students' speaking skills*

<b>Types of Seating Arrangements</b>	<b>N. of studies</b>	<b>Author/Year</b>
Rows/Traditional	3	Annisa (2021); *Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera (2017); *Lotfy, N. (2012)
Circle	1	*Lotfy (2012)
Horseshoe/U-shape	4	Bugis (2018); Pranena (2022); Sholihah et al. (2020); Sipayung & Benarita (2021);
Separate tables	1	*Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera (2017)



Groups	1	*Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera (2017);
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N= 8

*Note.* \*Studies are counted in more than one category

Table 2 describes the different types of seating arrangements implemented in EFL classrooms to improve students' speaking skills. Based on the analysis, the Horseshoe/U-shape seating arrangement motivates students, especially shy students, to speak in class since they are facing the teacher and their classmates, and also they feel comfortable. To support our findings, Sholihah et al. (2020), and Sipayung and Benarita (2021) pointed out that U-shape helps the teacher to monitor and make eye contact with students, making them feel comfortable and motivated to speak, and also helps to create self-confidence in discussion and class activities. In contrast to our findings, Pranena (2022) mentioned that the horseshoe/U-shape seating arrangement can also make students hesitate and even cause anxiety while they are talking since the teacher and peers are making direct eye contact with them. For that reason, the teacher needs to promote participation in the classroom and also to make students not doubt or feel insecure when they have to talk so that the teacher can use different strategies such as games, and rewards.

In addition to the analyzed data, the horseshoe/U-shape seating arrangement can make students speak more in class and use the language frequently; consequently, as much the students talk they can improve their speaking ability, for instance, Bugis (2018) affirmed that "the implementation of seating arrangement can improve students' speaking skills in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility" (p.90).

The studies regarding the row seating arrangement suggest that this arrangement could enhance students' participation in class and be more concentrated on their learning, and students respond frequently to the teacher's questions. For example, Correa et al. (2017) and Lotfy (2012) demonstrated that in a row seating arrangement, students feel comfortable and tend to be more concentrated in the class; therefore, they can contribute and participate more in the class, especially in making comments or giving their opinions. However, Annisa (2021) mentioned that students who sit at the front tend to participate and speak more than students who sit at the back. It can be said that the student's participation and speaking ability can be developed better depending on where they are seated and also the approach of the teacher to the student.

According to the findings, a circle seating arrangement can help to increase the student's speaking ability since all the members of the class are facing each other and their attention is directed to the person who is talking. Lotfy (2012) established that students can feel comfortable when they are arranged in circles since they can make eye contact with their classmates and communicate with them easily, also students can concentrate on the topic and participate more. Even, from the students' perception this arrangement is good for group work.

In addition, Correa et al. (2017) explained the benefits of implementing separate tables and groups for improving speaking skills. This arrangement lets students use their oral skills and interact with their partners in group activities, even feeling relaxed and confident since they can practice and use the English language and improve it. In addition, the circle seating arrangement helps students to concentrate on what the teacher is explaining and perform better in class activities.

In conclusion, students can improve their English speaking skills depending on how different seating arrangements are implemented in the classroom. Based on the studies, students tend to speak and participate more if they are arranged in groups since they feel comfortable and can contribute more to the class. Similarly, Lotfy (2012) argued that students tend to speak more when they can see and face each other.

### **Effects of using different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms**

In this section, ten studies that include data and information about the effects of using different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms were analyzed.

Table 3

*Effects of using different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms*

<b>Effects</b>	<b>N. of studies</b>	<b>Author/Year</b>
Students did not interact or did not communicate with the teacher equally	2	*Astuti (2020); Annisa (2021)
Students tend to get distracted	1	Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera (2017)

Increase teacher-student interaction	3	*Astuti (2020); Bugis (2018); Junivianti (2017)
Increase student-student interaction	3	Anggriani & Humaera (2022); Apriliana (2017); *Junivianti (2017)
Create a positive atmosphere in the classroom	2	*Anggriani & Humaera (2022); Sipayung & Benarita (2021)
Helps to monitor and give instructions better	3	*Adytiara (2018); Pranena (2022); Sholihah et al. (2020)

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N= 10

*Note.* \*Studies are counted in more than one category

Table 3 describes the relevant positive and negative effects of using different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms. Three of the ten studies analyzed mentioned two specific effects that have a negative impact on the classroom. According to Astuti (2020), the position of the students in the classroom has a big influence on their performance and this is directly related to the amount of interaction that they have with the teacher. Additionally, and supporting our findings, Annisa (2021) explained that there is a significant difference in speaking skills performance between the students that sit in the front, the middle, or the back part of the classroom when applying the traditional seating arrangement; those students seated in the front or middle part of the classroom demonstrate a better performance than those students who sit at the back part. The other negative effect according to Correa et al. (2017) due to the change of seats in the class, students begin to interact more among themselves on topics that are not related to the session; they lose interest in the activities proposed by the teacher and this is detrimental to the progress of their learning, therefore it is very important to take this into account before making significant changes in the organization of the class.

Interaction between teacher-student and student-student is a very important effect included in this analysis. Junivianti (2017) stated that the choice of the seating arrangement in the classroom always has to take into account the type of activities that are planned to be done with the students because this will depend a lot on their participation, if the work is focused on improving the interaction between peers a seating arrangement that groups the students should be chosen, but if on the contrary it is required more interaction with the teacher, a

type of arrangement that focuses more on communication with the teacher should be prioritized.

Related to the classroom environment Anggriani and Humaera (2022) mentioned that prioritizing arrangements that bring students together helps to improve the classroom atmosphere by making class development more effective. Sipayung and Benarita (2021) explained that the U-seating arrangement helps to create the right environment among the students and with the teacher because it is suitable for generating group discussions where all members of the class can get involved and talk which is what improves speaking skills. In addition, Pranena (2022) stated that the use of the U-shape seating arrangement helps students to more easily and clearly understand the instructions given by the teacher. Also, Adytiara (2018) explained that using the Separate Corners seating arrangement aids in monitoring and eye contact on the part of the teacher as it improves the mobility and visibility of the students during classroom activities.

To conclude, the result of the analysis of all the studies mentioned above showed us that the implementation of a specific seating arrangement can have several effects on a classroom and its students, these effects may not always be positive, but they influence the management and development of learning, behavior, and interaction of the students related to their peers and teachers.

**Students’ perceptions of the implementation of different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms**

For this category, eleven studies were taken into account to analyze students’ perceptions regarding the implementation of different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms.

Table 4

*Students’ perceptions of the implementation of different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms*

Perception	N. of studies	Author/Year
Confidence	5	*Adytiara (2018); *Junivianti (2017); *Pranena (2022); Sholihah et al. (2020); Umur (2015)

Spontaneity	2	*Adytiara (2018); Castro et al. (2019)
Enthusiasm and Activeness	8	Aminah et al. (2021); Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera (2017) Apriliana (2017); *Susanti (2017); Jannah and Nurfaidah (2022); *Junivianti (2017); *Pranena (2022); Yang at al. (2022)

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N= 11

*Note.* \* Studies are counted in more than one category

Table 4 describes a variety of students' perceptions regarding the implementation of different types of seating arrangements in EFL classrooms. To support our findings, Pranena (2022) explained that when the teacher uses the Cluster seating arrangement students seem to be more confident to discuss and give their opinions during the lesson. Furthermore, related to the confidence level that students showed during the class Sholihah et al. (2020) mentioned using the U-shape seating arrangement has a positive effect on the speaking process since the students in the classroom demonstrate more self-confidence. In addition, Umur (2015) pointed out that the horseshoe/U-shape seating arrangements avoid students from getting bored in the classroom, and they feel comfortable seated in that way. Also, students do not hide from the teacher or other classmates; consequently, they can face everyone.

Another important aspect included in the table is spontaneity. Castro et al. (2019) explained that when the teacher uses In-Pair seating arrangement students start sharing ideas with a partner, they get engaged in the activities, and they express their ideas without the necessity of asking them one by one to do it. Students perceive this type of sitting arrangement as an opportunity to interact with the rest of the class being part of a comfortable environment. In addition, Adytiara (2018) mentioned that in the case of using Separate Corners seating arrangement, students tend to interact more with each other which motivates them to give spontaneous responses to what the teacher is saying.

Enthusiasm and activeness are essential to mention in this section too. According to Correa et al. (2017), students show a preference for the Separate Table seating arrangement since working in groups helps them to better understand the activities assigned by the teacher and consequently they show more interest in the lesson. When students demonstrate their comfort in the places they have in the classroom they start to be active elements of the class.

Apriliana (2017) highlighted that students perceive the Horseshoe seating arrangement as a positive one for them to be involved in the class more than when they are organized in another type of seating arrangement it also makes students pay more attention due to the circular position and at the same time this helps the teacher to observe the reactions of his students. In addition, Yang et al. (2022) supported that students perceive that semicircular arrangement helps them to be more active, and they prefer to be arranged in that way during classroom activities.

Furthermore, it was noticed that students tend to be more active when they are arranged in groups or in pairs since they could focus more on the teacher's explanation and their enthusiasm to develop the activities increased. To support this, Jannah and Nurfaidah (2022) demonstrated that students actively participate in class activities, and they freely speak and share their opinions when they form groups. Similarly, Aminah et al. (2021) concluded that when students are arranged in pairs they tend to speak more and be active in performing the activities with their partners.

In conclusion, once data and results of all the studies mentioned previously were analyzed, it could be inferred that students perceive the positions they take in the classroom in different ways related to their confidence, spontaneity, and mood in the class. These perceptions are positive for their behavior with others during the learning sessions, considering that everything revolves around the interaction that exists mainly among classmates.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to identify which types of seating arrangements are the most effective in improving interaction and speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Several studies were analyzed to identify the seating arrangements that were implemented and their benefits. Also, the student's preferences were taken into account.

In the data analysis of this synthesis. It was noticed that the horse/U-shape seating arrangement is the most effective way to improve interaction since it allows students to face their classmates and the teacher and express their opinions or arguments. As mentioned by Sholihah et al. (2020), and Sipayung and Benarita (2021), it is effective when a teacher-student interaction is needed since the teacher can monitor and face all the students. Also, students arranged in this way can be more focused on the teacher's explanation and more concentrated when doing individual work. In addition, it can be concluded that this arrangement is effective when students need to do role plays since they have the whole space in the middle of the class, and all their classmates can see them clearly. Other activities that can be developed easily are discussions and debates.

Regarding the types of seating arrangements which help students to improve their speaking skills, the horseshoe seating arrangement was one of the most used in EFL classrooms. Implementing this kind of seating arrangement in the EFL class can help students feel more motivated to speak and participate when they can see the rest of the class, especially those who are shy. In addition, as mentioned by Bugis (2018) they could improve their fluency and accuracy as much as they speak in class.

Other types of seating arrangements such as rows, separated tables, and circles can be used to encourage students to speak in group or individual activities. Moreover, students tend to be confident and feel relaxed when they have to use their speaking ability with their classmates since they can help each other and get a better understanding of the topic and practice their speaking skills. It can be concluded that the development of the students' speaking ability depends on which activities the teacher decides to perform and how she or he arranges the students for achieving the objective of the class.

As revealed in this research synthesis, implementing seating arrangements can have positive and negative effects on students. One important aspect to highlight is that the teacher should always take into account the activities planned for the class to decide which type of seating arrangement to choose. If the teacher needs more interaction among students, he or she

should look for seating arrangements that keep the students' tables close and at the same time make them practice their speaking skills. However, the teacher should keep in mind that when students are seated too close, this creates distractions, and they stop paying attention during the class.

Regarding student-teacher interaction, the U-shape seating arrangement seems to be the best option to optimize this type of interaction. U-shape arrangement allows the teacher to communicate better with the students, as it improves understanding when giving instructions or any information in general. As mentioned by Pranena (2022) when a U-shape arrangement is used, it increases the students' eye contact with the teacher which results in them paying more attention to what the teacher is saying, they also grasp and receive the information better. This aspect would have an important effect on teaching English since the teacher can see all their students and through their facial expressions can determine if they are understanding the topic. Moreover, by implementing this kind of arrangement, the teacher can present the material easily, and the students can perceive the content in a better way, for instance, if the teacher is presenting didactic material, the students could appreciate it better since nobody is blocking their vision.

Additionally, to create a good atmosphere in the classroom, the characteristics and behavioral traits of the students must always be taken into account to have positive results or to help in the proper management of the class. Students feel more comfortable participating and giving their opinions in class when using certain seating arrangements such as Cluster. Furthermore, it is very important to take into account when students show enthusiasm in the activities because this is the optimal response that a teacher can receive when he/she presents his/her activities.

It can be said that students' perceptions are very important when the teacher implements seating arrangements in the classrooms. It is necessary to consider that some students feel comfortable when they are arranged in groups since they can be with their friends and talk with them and perform better in the activities. However, other students prefer to work individually and just have contact with the teacher or students just want to choose their own seat and be closer to their near friends. Furthermore, students can also be bored of using the same arrangement every class; for that reason, the teacher needs to look for different seating arrangements depending on the activities especially if those are focused on improving speaking.

### **Recommendations**

After analyzing all the articles, it has been noticed that there should be articles specifying which types of seating arrangements are the most or less effective regarding the students'



age since they have different ways of learning as they grow up. For that reason, it would be better to research which arrangements can help children, teenagers, and even adults to improve their skills and what activities can be implemented in the classroom.

In addition, teachers in general not only when teaching a second language should be aware that they can implement different seating arrangements to help students to improve their skills, but they need to know how to use them based on the activities they want to perform. Especially, teachers should be conscious that using a row seating arrangement is not bad at all as it has been seen but know that this arrangement can also be effective to enhance students' participation and make them feel comfortable.

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