

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF U-SHAPED SEATING ARRANGEMENT IN SMP N 1 SEWON

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Abstract

Perception is one of the important aspects of a learning process since it will determine the students' interest to learn in the classroom. The teacher should find a good strategy to help the students in learning the materials. The different seating arrangements will influence the learning process. The U-shaped seating arrangement can be applied to help the students achieve their goals in the classroom. This research aims to investigate the students' perceptions of the use of the U-shaped seating arrangement. The research question is "What are the students' perceptions about the use of the U-shaped seating arrangement in VII B class of SMP N 1 Sewon?" This research applied the survey research method. The participants of this research were 32 students of VII B class in the SMP N 1 Sewon. Close-ended questionnaire was employed as the instrument to collect data. The questionnaires were distributed to thirty-two students in the selected class. The results of the research showed that the students have a positive perception on the U-shaped seating arrangement. It can be seen from the activeness of the students in the classroom. High school teachers are suggested to use the U-shaped seating arrangement during the learning process.

Keywords: perception, U-shaped seating arrangement, learning process

Introduction

In the learning process, the students' perceptions have important roles in helping the students to achieve their goals in the learning process. The perception could be used by the students to understand the materials better. When the students come to the classroom for the first time, they will decide their own perception, whether their perception is positive or negative. If the students have a positive perception, they will enjoy the learning process for a whole day. However, when the students have a negative perception, the students will not really focus on the learning process.

As perception is one of the important aspects in the learning process, the teachers should find something different to make the students have a positive perception to learn in the classroom. One of the ways to make a positive perception is to manage the classroom. By managing the classroom, the teachers can encourage the students to be more active in the class. It can also make the students be more discipline to the rules that have been provided. Moreover, it could help the students to pay more attention to the teacher. Classroom

management includes the way the teachers teach the students in the classroom in order to help them to achieve their goals (Emmer and Stough, 2001).

One of the ways to manage the classroom is to set a suitable seating arrangement for the students. Seating arrangements can influence the students' behavior in the learning process. Wannarka and Ruhl (2008) state that the seating arrangement helps the teacher to handle the misbehaved students. In addition, by changing the seating arrangement, it could create a positive effect for the students when they are interacting with their friends and doing their tasks (Budge, 2000; Hofkins, 1994; Moore, 1986 as cited in Kaya and Burgess, 2007). The students should have a comfortable seat to learn in the classroom. Whenever the teacher asks them to move or to come in front of the class, they have to be able to do it easily. Therefore, they would not disturb their friends who are sitting next to them. Moreover, the seating arrangement also helps the teachers to control their students while learning the materials. For example, if the students want to ask a question the teacher should have enough space to move around.

Factors that Influence Perception

Altman, Valenzi, and Hodgetts (1985) state that perception is the way people can stimuli their brain and interpret the idea of something that happens (p.85). Based on the theory above, perception can be defined as a sense of a person to catch the idea on the phenomena that happen. Goldstein (2009) states that the sense can be anything such as the sense of smell, hear, taste, feel, and sight (p.5). It can be seen from a condition when there is one topic, people will have their own idea or opinion. They will deliver their own perception based on their point of view. Pitcher (2015) defines that perception happens where people think of something differently.

According to Altman, Valenzi, and Hodgetts (1985), there are four important factors influencing a person's perception (p. 86). The first factor is the selection of stimuli. Perception can be defined when a person has a different perception in one phenomenon or a thing. If a person is interested in one phenomenon, it means that he/she has a selection to choose. A person just focuses only on a small number so that it is called a selection. He/she will select specific cues and filters differently based on what he/she perceived. It means that if the students are interested in the U-shaped seating arrangement, they will select it or choose it. The second factor is the organization of the stimuli. When a person has selected the information, he/she will arrange it to become meaningful information. Therefore, it is called by the organization where the information should be put together in a meaningful way based on her/his experience. The third factor is the situation. If the students come to the classroom, they will see their seating arrangement. The students will decide whether they have a positive perception or not. If the students have a positive perception, they will enjoy the learning process. That perception will also influence the students' behavior in the classroom. Therefore, a person's familiarity, expectations, and situation influence the perception of each person (Altman et al, 1985). The final factor is the person's self-concept. The self-concept is important because our mental picture will determine what we are going to do and what we perceive about one phenomenon.

If we have a weak mental picture, it will influence our courage to do something. It is called by a self-concept where people can feel and perceive themselves. When the students are interested in the U-shaped seating arrangement, they will enjoy the learning process. They also will encourage themselves to be more active in classroom activities.

Benefits of U-shaped Seating Arrangement

According to Kinahan (2017), the U-shaped seating arrangement is one of the seating arrangements which is arranged in the shape of a letter U. In this seating arrangement, the teacher will stand in the center front of the class, therefore that the students can see the teacher explaining the materials easily (Zerin, 2009). In addition, it can boost the relationship between the teacher and the students in the classroom. The interaction between the students and the teacher is important. Maintaining this relationship can be done by the teacher by making eye contact, controlling the students, and moving around the classroom (Simmons et al, 2015). The U-shaped/horseshoe seating arrangement is the best setting for both the students and the teacher to build the interaction while conducting the teaching and learning process in the classroom (McCorskey and McVetta, 1978). In addition, the students will be able to see clearly whenever the teacher gives a demonstration in front of the class (Denton, 1992 as cited in Nurmala, 2014).

There are some benefits of using the U-shaped seating arrangement. The first benefit is that it can make an easier interaction between the students and the teacher. In this seating arrangement, the teacher will stand in the center of the class. It will support the interaction between the teacher and the students. The students can see the teacher while explaining the materials clearly. Besides, it can also build interaction between the students-students because the students can have a discussion with their friends without any disruption. The U-shaped seating arrangement can increase the sense of community and promote social interaction among the students (Hurt, Scott, & McCroskey, 1978 as cited in Kaya and Burgess, 2007). In addition, the U-shaped seating arrangement can help the teacher to handle the misbehaved students because the teacher can move around the classroom easily (Zerin, 2009).

The second benefit is that it makes the class participation higher than the other types of seating arrangement (Sommer, 1969 as cited in Kaya and Burgess, 2007). It happens because the teacher can see the students one by one clearly. Therefore, when the students have questions related to the materials, they can just raise their hand and easily ask the questions. By having the U-shaped seating arrangement, the students can enjoy to work with their friends or to work in a group. The U-shaped seating arrangement makes the students easily talk to each other when they have to discuss the assignments (Zerin, 2009). The students do not need a lot of energy to move their body in order to discuss the materials with their friends.

The third benefit is that it helps the students to see the demonstrations clearly (Denton, 1992 as cited in Nurmala, 2014). It happens because the setting of the U-shaped seating arrangement creates a large space in the middle of the class. Therefore, the students can see the presentation or the demonstration easily

from their seats. Moreover, when the teacher asks the students to come in front of the class in order to present their tasks, the students can present it freely with less disruption.

Method

This research was survey research. Backstorm and Hursh-Caesar (1981) stated that “the survey research can improve our assumptions by providing timely and accurate information, the validity of which we can check” (p.2). The survey data were collected by using a questionnaire and the interview activities. Cohen et al. (2002) stated that “survey gathers data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of the existing conditions” (p.25). Survey research was employed to know about the students’ conditions, behavior, and feelings on the use of the U-shaped seating arrangement. This research was conducted in SMP N 1 Sewon. The school is located at Jalan Parangtritis KM.7, Timbulharjo, Sewon, Bantul, Yogyakarta. The research was done in March 2019 until April 2019. There were 32 participants from VII B class. A closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data.

The Students’ Perception on the Use of U-shaped Seating Arrangement in the VII B Class of SMP N 1 Sewon

There were eight statements addressing the students’ perception of the use of a U-shaped seating arrangement in VII B class of SMP N 1 Sewon. The first statement stated that “By using the U-shaped seating arrangement, I can do something that I do not like before in the classroom”. The data from the questionnaire showed that one student (3%) strongly disagreed, two students (6.25%) disagreed, five students (15.62%) agreed, and 24 students (75.00%) strongly agreed. From the data, there were only three students who disagreed with the first statement and more than 80% of the students agreed that they liked to do something that they do not like before, for example sweeping the floor, greeting the teacher before the lesson starts, and reading the book.

The next statements are related to the students’ perception of the use of U-shaped seating arrangement would be presented below.

Table 1. The Students’ Perceptions on the Use of U-shaped Seating Arrangement

No	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
2	By using the U-shaped seating arrangement, I can do something new or different in the classroom.	1 (3%)	0 (0.00%)	10 (31.25%)	21 (65.63%)
3	By using the U-shaped seating arrangement, I can help the teachers when they need my help.	1 (3%)	1 (3.13 %)	4 (12.50%)	26 (81.25%)
4	By using the U-shaped seating arrangement, I feel comfortable.	1 (3%)	2 (6.25%)	13 (40.63%)	16 (50.00%)

5	This type of seating arrangement is interesting for me.	7 (22%)	8 (25.00%)	5 (15.63%)	12 (37.50%)
6	By using the U-shaped seating arrangement, it can encourage me to learn.	1 (3%)	2 (6.25%)	17 (53.13%)	12 (37.50%)
7	By using the U-shaped seating arrangement, it helps me to achieve my goals in learning	1 (3%)	1 (3.13%)	4 (12.50%)	26 (81.25%)

From the table above, there was one student (3%) strongly disagree, none of the students disagreed, 10 students (31.25%) agreed and 21 students (65.63%) strongly agreed with the statement U-shaped seating arrangement helped the students to do something new in the classroom. It also can be seen that more than 90% students agreed with the second statement. The students tried to challenge themselves to do something new in the classroom, for example, they tried to make their classroom clean by sweeping based on their own schedule. It was something new for them, because they did it after the class ended up. The statement is also supported by the result of the questionnaire number three, in which one student (3%) strongly disagreed, one student (3.13%) disagreed, four students (12.50%) agreed, and 26 students (81.25%) strongly agreed. If the students wanted to do something different in the classroom, it meant that the students felt comfortable. It is related to one of the factors of perception: situation. Based on Altman, et, al, (1985) would influence a different perception of each person. The situation of the classroom would influence the students in achieving the materials in the classroom. If the students had a positive perception at the U-shaped seating arrangement, they would be comfortable to learn. More than 70% the students of VII B class in SMP N 1 Sewon agreed that the U-shaped seating arrangement helped them to be comfortable to learn in the classroom.

The fifth statement stated that the U-shaped seating arrangement is interesting for the students. According to the data results of the questionnaire, it showed that seven students (22%) strongly disagreed, eight students (25.00%) disagreed, five students (15.63%) agreed, and 12 students (37.50%) strongly agreed. Even though there was a different result from the data above, there were more than 50% students agreed that the U-shaped seating arrangement was interesting for them.

The sixth statement stated “by using the U-shaped seating arrangement, it can encourage me to learn” the data showed that one student (3%) strongly disagreed, two students (6.25%) disagreed, 17 students (53.13%) agreed, and 12 students (37.50%) strongly agreed. According to the findings, more than 80% of the students agreed that U-shaped seating arrangement can encourage them to learn in the VII B class of SMP N 1 Sewon. The findings are supported by the theory of perception from Altman, Valenzi, and Hodgetss (1985) stating that perception would stimuli people to think and act based on what they faced (p.85).

The last statement stated that “by using the U-shaped seating arrangement, it helps me to achieve my goals in learning” showed that one student (3%) strongly disagreed, one student (3.13%) disagreed, 19 students (59.38%) agreed, and 11 students (34.38%) strongly agreed. This statement showed that U-shaped seating arrangement could help the students to achieve their goals in the classroom by the activeness of the students in classroom. If the students were active, it meant that they understood what the teacher have explained. From the data above, there are more than 80% of the students agreed on this statement.

In a nutshell, every student had a different perception on the use of U-shaped seating arrangement in VII B class. But most of the students agreed that the U-shaped seating arrangement was interesting for them because it was the first time for the students who have not tried to use the U-shaped seating arrangement in their school before. It was also still interesting for the students who have tried the U-shaped seating arrangement in their school before. Moreover, through this kind of seating arrangement, the students could achieve their goals in learning process. For example, they could accept the materials easily, they had a willingness to do something new in their classroom.

Conclusion

The U-shaped seating arrangement gave a positive perception to the students in VII B class of SMP N 1 Sewon. It can be seen from the data results, in which the students state that they could enjoy to learn in the classroom, feel comfortable in the classroom, and encourage them to learn materials. It is recommended to use this seating arrangement because it would be beneficial for SMP N 1 Sewon. The school should pay attention more related to the tidiness of the classroom. Therefore, the students would enjoy to learn. It is expected that there will be other research talking about the students’ perception on the use of U-shaped seating arrangement in the learning process. Future researchers are suggested to relate other factors of perception, such as selection of stimuli, organization of stimuli, the situation, and self-concept. These factors are important since they also affect the students’ perception in the classroom.

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