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email: jurnalpedagogika@gmail.com

REASONS WHY STUDENTS PREFER TO SIT IN THE BACK ROW OF THE CLASS

**Finci Trisnawati Mendrofa¹, Okta Cristopher Laoli², Rita Kristiani Telaumbanua³,
Septika Novianti Gulo⁴, Tri Yanti Nibenia Gea⁵, Yulidartini Larosa^{6*}, Yaredi Waruwu⁷**

^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6*, 7} Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Nias, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Email: tinilarosa28@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the factors that influence students' seating preferences in class and the impact this has on their academic performance. Using qualitative research methods through semi-structured interviews, 20 students from Nias University's PGSD study program participated in the study. Findings show that students' seating preferences are influenced by a number of factors, including interest in the course, comfort level, shyness, as well as external factors such as lighting and room arrangement. Most participants chose to sit in the back row for reasons of comfort, avoiding direct interaction with the lecturer, and established habits. However, some participants felt more focused and comfortable studying in that position. The study also revealed that seating position can affect students' interaction with lecturers and classmates, as well as their level of concentration and understanding of the material. By understanding students' preferences and needs, optimal seating arrangements can improve the effectiveness of classroom learning. These results make an important contribution to designing inclusive and productive learning environments for students.

Keywords: Seating Preference, Academic Performance, Classroom Learning, Student Interaction, Learning Effectiveness

ALASAN SISWA LEBIH MEMILIH DUDUK DI BARIS BELAKANG KELAS

Abstract: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi preferensi tempat duduk mahasiswa di kelas dan dampaknya terhadap kinerja akademik mereka. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, 20 mahasiswa Program Studi PGSD Universitas Nias berpartisipasi dalam studi ini. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa preferensi tempat duduk mahasiswa dipengaruhi oleh sejumlah faktor, termasuk ketertarikan terhadap mata kuliah, tingkat kenyamanan, rasa malu, serta faktor eksternal seperti tata cahaya dan pengaturan ruangan. Sebagian besar peserta memilih duduk di barisan belakang dengan alasan kenyamanan, menghindari interaksi langsung dengan dosen, dan kebiasaan yang sudah terbentuk. Meski demikian, beberapa peserta merasa lebih fokus dan nyaman belajar di posisi tersebut. Penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa posisi tempat duduk dapat memengaruhi interaksi mahasiswa dengan dosen dan teman sekelas, serta tingkat konsentrasi dan pemahaman terhadap materi. Dengan memahami preferensi dan kebutuhan mahasiswa, pengaturan tempat duduk yang optimal dapat meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran di kelas. Hasil ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam merancang lingkungan belajar yang inklusif dan produktif bagi mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: Preferensi Tempat Duduk, Kinerja Akademik, Pembelajaran di Kelas, Interaksi Mahasiswa, Efektivitas Pembelajaran

INTRODUCTION

Students have different perspectives on seating. Students sometimes choose to sit in the back row not because they want to, but because they are positioned by the teacher. Sometimes it is also because their height blocks the vision of their friends who are shorter than them. However, students also choose to sit in the back row during exams because they only want to cheat or cooperate with other friends.

In teaching, a teacher must be able to manage the class. Class management in terms of the rules that are enforced in the classroom, how teaching techniques are used, and of course how to design a classroom that is effective in teaching. Each classroom is student-focused according to learning objectives and principles, but the nature of the space and furniture design influences how the teacher plans the process and materials together, how students sit, receive learning, and tend to organize opportunities and types of collaborative and interactive activities, determining the teacher's influence over the learning process and instruction. Seating position can affect teacher-student interaction. Meeks (2013), says that students' seating position closer to the teacher can affect the way students learn (hear and see) explanations from the teacher. In student seating arrangements, it has a huge impact in the active involvement of students in the classroom, (Yang, 2022). This emphasizes that students' seating position in the classroom will affect their learning process. Meeks also emphasizes from the research that has been done that students who sit in the back row are labeled as students who have low self-esteem, closed and rebellious. Of course, if seen from Meeks' findings where sitting in the back row will have a negative impact on student learning.

However, in contrast to Eno's (2021) findings, who said that the back-row lover students were not all boring, rebellious, unmotivated, and uninvolved in classroom activities. However, Eno's findings explain that some of the students who like to sit in the back row are motivated in learning and act in activities or respond to activities in learning. Now, from these two contradictory studies, this is why the researchers wanted to know why students chose to sit in the back row of the class. Can their seating position help them improve their learning? It is possible that the back row seating position can provide a sense of comfort in the learning they get. From the reality seen there are many students who sit in the back row and tend to dislike sitting in the front row of the class. This kind of attitude can be questioned and found out the cause. Therefore, this research was conducted to find out these reasons.

1. Factors affecting seating preferences

In learning conducted in the classroom, a teacher who will be the center of attention of students. A teacher must be able to organize the classroom so that students are able to absorb and understand the material to be explained by the teacher. In arranging the seating is one that can greatly affect the focus or concentration of students. Eno (2021), said that the seating position of students who sit close to the teacher can attract attentive behavior and of course participate in class discussions. So this explains that student seating preferences can affect student performance.

Eno (2021), also said that students' seating preferences in class are influenced by students' interest in the subject. This means that students tend to sit in the front row of the class

if they are interested in the subject. And will tend to sit in the back row if they are not interested in the subject. Furthermore, Eno also explained other factors that influence students' seating preferences, namely students' shyness, also because they feel intimidated by the teacher's questions and some choose to sit at the front of the class because they have difficulty hearing the teacher's explanation. Cheating was also mentioned as one of the factors affecting students' seating preferences. Other factors, such as disorderly conduct by students, require the teacher to rearrange the students' seating. Indoor lighting can also be a factor that affects students' seating preferences. Meeks (2013), also suggests that students' vision and hearing can be factors that influence students' seating preferences. Students who sit in rows that are far from the blackboard or from the teacher will find it difficult to see or hear the explanation of the material explained by the teacher. Here Meeks also explains that the desire and comfort of a student is also another factor that affects student seating preferences. There are some students who do feel comfortable in certain seats not because they are afraid of teacher questions or other things.

2. Impact of Seating Position on Student Academic Performance

Students have different abilities in terms of academics. Sometimes there are students who are experts in material but not in practice. There are also students who excel in practice but not in material. These are all common things found in a class. However, in terms of student academics, seating arrangements are something that must be considered. This is because students' seating position has an impact on their academic performance. As stated by Ibiloye (2021), redesigning student seating arrangements can maximize the learning gained by students and of course a teacher can benefit in classroom control. Ibiloye also said that by adjusting students' seating positions, it will help to find the core of learning and develop students' academic competencies. It can also affect the application of the learning/knowledge gained and the aptitude of the students.

Yang (2022), also said that with classroom seating arrangements will improve active learning and academic performance of students in learning classes. This emphasizes that seating position has a great influence in improving students' academic performance. Meeks (2013), also wrote that students who sit in the front row of the class are able to outperform students who sit in the back row. This places a comparison between students who sit in the front row and students who sit in the back row. Each student's seating position has an impact on the student's academic performance.

3. Student Anxiety in Choosing a Seat

Choosing a seat in the classroom can evoke anxiety among students, particularly regarding their comfort and engagement levels. This anxiety is influenced by various factors, including social dynamics, personal preferences, and perceived academic performance.

Reasons Students Prefer Sitting in the Back Row

- a. **Avoidance of Attention:** Many students choose to sit in the back to avoid being noticed or called upon by instructors. This preference stems from a desire to minimize anxiety related to participation and public speaking.
- b. **Social Comfort:** The back row often provides a sense of social safety for students who may feel uncomfortable in larger groups or who prefer to be less visible. This asocial behavior allows them to engage with the class at their own pace without feeling pressured.
- c. **Perceived Control:** Sitting at the back can give students a sense of control over their environment. They can choose when to engage or disengage from activities, which can help mitigate feelings of anxiety associated with active participation.
- d. **Distraction Management:** Some students believe that sitting in the back allows them to better manage distractions, as they are further away from potential disruptions caused by other students or classroom activities.
- e. **Comfort and Ease:** The back row may be preferred for its physical comfort, as students can slouch or relax more easily without being observed closely by the instructor or peers. This ease contributes to a more relaxed state during class sessions.
- f. **Engagement with Technology:** In modern classrooms where technology is prevalent, students might prefer the back row for easier access to personal devices without drawing attention, allowing them to multitask if necessary.

The choice of seating in classrooms reflects a complex interplay between anxiety management and personal comfort preferences. Understanding these dynamics can help educators create more inclusive and effective learning environments that accommodate diverse student needs and preferences.

4. The influence of the classroom environment on student motivation

An important factor in determining students' motivation, engagement, and academic success is the classroom environment. A classroom is a dynamic environment that includes pedagogical techniques, emotional climate, and social interactions. It is more than just a physical location. Fraser (2012) asserts that the classroom setting has a significant impact on how students experience and perform academically. In this situation, a number of factors affect students' motivation and level of engagement with the learning process. The importance of the classroom environment in raising student motivation is also emphasized by Edi and Krisna (2024), who point out that peer interactions, classroom climate, and lecturer-student relationships are all very important.

Teachers and students having a supportive relationship is one of the most important factors in raising student motivation. According to Wubbels et al. (2012), a close bond between instructors and students can foster a feeling of security and inclusion in the learning environment. Students are more likely to participate fully, ask questions, and ask for assistance when they believe that their lecturers are there for them. Students are encouraged to take chances in their education since they know they have a trustworthy mentor at their side.

Additionally, the general atmosphere in the classroom has a big impact on how motivated students are. Clear standards, good classroom management, and a well-organized,

encouraging learning atmosphere foster an environment where kids can flourish. A positive emotional atmosphere where respect and empathy are valued can improve student involvement, as demonstrated by Wubbels et al. (2012). Students are likely to be more motivated and involved with the topic when they feel at ease and appreciated.

Another key factor in promoting motivation is peer interaction and cooperation. Students can gain social skills and learn from one another in classes that foster constructive interactions. Students get the chance to cooperate, exchange ideas, and encourage one another as they learn through collaborative learning activities. According to Edi and Krisna (2024), students might have a more pleasurable and fulfilling learning experience in an atmosphere that encourages teamwork.

Student motivation is also influenced by the accessibility of resources and educational aids. A good teacher is aware that giving students access to a variety of learning resources can inspire them to delve deeper into subjects and take charge of their education. Another crucial element is the classroom's physical layout. Students' perceptions of the learning environment can be greatly influenced by elements like lighting, seating configurations, and the availability of eye-catching displays. Students might be inspired to be creative and enthusiastic in a learning-friendly classroom. Finally, incorporating technology into the classroom has the potential to improve student engagement. Multimedia presentations, online resources, and interactive software can all be used to make learning more interesting and relevant. Innovative technology use by teachers tends to improve students' engagement with the subject matter and encourage participation.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative research design to explore the reasons why students prefer to sit in the back row of the class. Qualitative research methods, as proposed by Creswell (2013), provide rich and detailed insight into participants' lived experiences and are well suited to exploratory studies. A qualitative approach is well suited to gaining an in-depth understanding of students' personal experiences, perceptions and motivations, which can be captured effectively through interviews. The participants in this research consisted of 20 students from the PGSD Education Program at NIAS University who often sat in the back row of the class. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants who meet the criteria, ensuring diverse representation in terms of gender, academic performance, and background. The main data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview. Telaumbanua (2024), states that in understanding in depth the opinions, experiences and thoughts of research participants regarding the research topic, researchers collect data through direct interaction with them, better known as interviews. This method allows for flexibility in exploring specific areas of interest while maintaining a consistent structure throughout the interview. An interview guide will be developed to cover all relevant topics, including the student's reasons for choosing back row, their experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges faced.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Each participant was interviewed directly and gave their opinions freely according to their own experiences. From the interviews that have been conducted there are 5 questions given to participants. For each question we have summarized and obtained real results and not made up.

For the first question, do you like to sit in the back row of the class? Out of 20 participants, there were 15 students who liked to sit in the back row of the class, 2 students who answered that they liked to sit in the middle row, and 3 students who liked to sit in the front row. From this first question, it can be seen that there are a large number of students who prefer to sit in the back row of the class. They choose to sit in the back row for a variety of different reasons. Furthermore, for the second question, what is the reason you prefer to sit in the back row of the class? In this second question, all participants gave their reasons. Some answered that because they felt intimidated from the teacher's questions, participants chose to sit in the back row. For this reason there were 4 students who said the same thing. The next reason is because they feel embarrassed, there are 5 students who say the reason for feeling embarrassed as a reason for choosing to sit in the back row. And 6 other students gave other reasons, namely, because they felt comfortable in the back row, because they wanted to cheat on the exam, because they wanted to relax in the back row, wanted to talk a lot with friends, avoid questions from the teacher and because they were used to sitting in the back row. With this many reasons, it proves that students have different reasons for preferring to sit in the back row.

Third question, does the seating position affect your concentration or comfort while studying? There are 14 students who said yes, it really affects concentration and comfort while studying. And 6 other students said it did not affect their concentration and comfort. The next question, does the back row seating position affect your interaction with the lecturer and your classmates? All participants answered yes, seating position can affect interaction with lecturers and classmates. Some say that seating affects their concentration in learning, because if they are in the back row of the class, students will be able to focus their attention on learning. Some also say that being in the back row will prevent them from feeling sleepy because they can interact with other friends. The interaction referred to here is to tell stories with friends to relieve their boredom and sleepiness.

And for the last question, do you think sitting in the back row can provide more benefits than sitting in the front row for students to study? All participants have given answers, there are 6 participants who say that sitting in the back row can provide more benefits than sitting in the front row when studying. They said that just like the reason they liked sitting in the back row, the reason they said it was because sitting in the back row could provide a sharp enough concentration when studying, some said that sitting in the back row could help them manage their concentration as well as more attention to study. And 14 participants said that sitting in the back row did not provide benefits but rather had negative impacts such as not being able to concentrate, not being able to listen to the teacher's explanation properly and not being able to see the PowerPoint clearly.

From this result, we can know that many students sit in the back row not only for negative things such as cheating or gossiping but also there are students who are indeed more concentrated if they are in the back row than in the front row. As said by Eno (2021), that not

all students who like to sit in the back row are unmotivated, boring, bullies, rebels or who are not involved in discussions held in class. This proves that this finding is supported by Eno's statement. Not all students who sit in the back are undisciplined students, but they feel more comfortable while studying if they sit in the back row. Meeks (2013), also said that seating is not a problem for students' academic performance. This proves that not all students who sit in the back row do not have knowledge or are said to be unable to understand learning. But sometimes they will understand better because they are in a seating zone that makes them comfortable.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study results, it was found that the primary factors influencing students' seating preferences in the classroom include interest in the subject, comfort level, shyness, and external factors such as lighting and room arrangement. Although many students choose to sit at the back for various reasons, not all of them have low learning motivation. Some students actually feel more focused when sitting at the back. Additionally, this study confirms that seating position can impact interactions with lecturers and peers, as well as affect concentration levels and comprehension of the material. Therefore, lecturers must consider seating arrangements to support a more effective learning experience. By understanding students' preferences and needs, lecturers can create a more inclusive and productive learning environment.

The way students learn is an important thing to increase students' knowledge and understanding of the teacher's explanation in front of the class. The strategy used by a teacher in teaching also greatly affects this. Therefore, the researchers hopes that future researchers can find the right strategy in the terms of seating arrangements to improve the ability and knowledge of students.

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