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# Modern Seating Arrangements Implications for Students' Participation in EFL Classrooms

Case Study: Third Year LMD Students  
Department of English at Abbes Laghrou University -  
Khenchela

*A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture*

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## **Dedication 1**

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Compassionate

This work is dedicated to my dear parents for their deepest love, prayers, care  
and support along my studies

To my lovely sisters and brothers, the source of love, for their endless  
encouragement, help and understanding, namely:

Amira, Sabrina, Ibtissem, , Madiha , Mehdi, and Amine

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For each beginning there is an end, and the special thing about the end is the  
success and the achievement of the goal;

I dedicate this work, the gaining and passion of a long journey, to:

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## **Abstract**

The present study seeks to investigate the effect of modern seating arrangements (MSAs) on EFL students' classroom participation. To collect data, two questionnaires were administered to the samples. The participants of the current research are both EFL teachers and third year LMD students at the Department of English, Abbes Laghrour–University of Khenchela . It was hypothesized that applying modern ways of arranging classroom furniture such as the U-shape, circles and cluster styles, would effectively promote students' participation in EFL classrooms. The results show that MSAs have a positive effect on EFL students' participation in EFL classrooms. Add on, it is proved that both EFL teachers and students share the same perceptions towards the positive effect of Modern classroom setups, especially the U-shape, on students' participation. Moreover, teachers and students believe that changing the classroom seatings according to the nature of activities promotes classroom participation. Furthermore, they agree that the U-shape is the most useful and practical MSA.

**Keywords:** Classroom Seating Arrangements, the U-shape, Circles, Clusters, Participation, EFL teachers and students.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**CA:** Classroom Arrangement

**CM:** Classroom Management

**SA:** Seating Arrangement

**EFL:** English as a foreign language

**TSA:** Traditional Seating Arrangement

**TRS:** Traditional Row Seating

**TCS:** Traditional Column Seating

**MSA:** Modern Seating Arrangement

**OFM:** Office Furniture Manufacturers

**N:** Number of Teachers/Students

**%:** Percentage of Teachers/Students

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## **General Introduction**

Classroom management (CM) is one of the challenges that many teachers face when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Generally, CM refers to the teacher's organisation of space, time, materials and control of students' behaviours, movement and interaction during class to establish better learning. Therefore, CM requires teachers to have good classroom management skills and techniques. Classroom setups are considered as one of the effective techniques that may optimize students' behaviours and encourage them to learn English.

### **1. Background of the Study**

This research regards seating arrangement as it aims to investigate the effect of MSAs on students' participation. In this regard, researches have been done previously on seating arrangement types. Many researchers find TSAs to be ineffective for students' participation. It is proved that fixed formed classes are not the suitable environment for language teaching for various reasons (James & Rob, 2001). The first reason has to be that language requires a communicative setting to take place effectively. The environment in traditional classes tends to make students passive agents; it does not encourage active participation. TSAs based on teacher-centred style of instruction, that is to say, the teacher is the dominant element who gives only knowledge and instructions, however, students are just like "listening objects". Therefore, it gradually started to be replaced by student-centered learning, in the frames of Modern seating arrangements (MSAs), which replaced students' passivity and allowed them to be active by creating an interactive atmosphere inside the classroom. As Halpern (1994) indicates, "learners have the ability to encounter an effective learning through an active interference and natural curiosity engagements". Besides, Neuman (2003, P. 33) argues that "information exchange within CA (classroom arrangement) is forcing a revolution in how all of these players think about what makes a good place of learning" focusing mainly on modern shapes of seats.

Highlighting this side of the issue, Cornell (2002, P. 73) concentrates on the idea that "the furniture within the classroom is not only a part of that environment of learning but rather a tool within it as well". Chairs, tables, and the teacher's desk are the main laying out aspects through which the teacher and students organize and manage an appropriate classroom that help the students to participate effectively. Cornell, also, suggests that certain dimensions are important for designing classroom furniture. One of these dimensions is 'comfort, safety and

health'' (p. 35-360). Since students are obliged to sit for long periods of time in the classroom, it is better that seating arrangements (SAs) create a kind of comfortable zone and movable exchange of information between the teacher and students in an active way. Thus, seating styles are necessary tools within the classroom environment; if used effectively, they create a shift from passive to active learning and facilitate methods of education and strategies to improve learning connections and students' participation.

As it is argued by Dunne (2001), a successful SA is a method of classroom management when it comes to the arrangements which focus on the blank teachers need in order to move fluently between students' tables to give the information in an appropriate, understood way. It is believed that modern seating arrangements are more likely to have a favorable effect on students learning since it is the shape of the room or the location which decides the participation and contribution level of the student itself. Additionally, researchers have suggested that TSAs are ineffective for creating a balance between students on the scale of participation since there is a huge gap in those classes between students in the front seats and the ones in the back seats, unlike MSAs where students would likely have an effective role and a noticeable part inside the classroom; active learners participate equally.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The classroom environment is consistently identified as a substantial aspect for a successful teaching/learning process. As a part of classroom management (CM), the physical arrangement of chairs and tables plays a vital role in facilitating the classroom interaction. It is argued that effective SAs have a great impact on fostering students' participation, and motivating them to learn English, so that meaningful learning can be achieved. However, this is not the case in many EFL classrooms. SA is grossly ignored and underestimated by many EFL classroom practitioners; teachers do not put into practice adequate skills of CM, which may affect negatively the students' participation during class.

One of the most important roles of a good classroom manager is to be able to arrange effectively the classroom, that is through breaking the traditional fixed style of SA and lay the ground for the students to interact more naturally. Therefore, the use of Modern Seating Arrangement styles such as the U-shape, circles and clusters would likely break the authority of traditional SA styles; students will have the chance to participate, engage and speak freely in the modern arranged classroom.

### **3. Reason(s) of Choice**

The ultimate reason behind the present research is the urge to derive on the driving forces and factors that motivate students to be more active members in the classroom when modern seating arrangements are put into practice. We believe that MSAs can create the productive environment ,and break the routine of traditional formed classes.

### **4. Aims of the Study**

The present study aims, first, at having a better understanding of the different SA styles, especially modern ones, and how they influence students' learning and participation during class. Second, it seeks to raise teachers' awareness about the need to use some of the modern SAs. Finally, and most importantly, it strives to investigate the effectiveness of Modern Seating Arrangements such as the U-shape, circles and clusters on promoting learners' participation in EFL classrooms.

### **5. Research Questions and Hypothesis**

In order to achieve the above stated aims, the present study addresses the following three questions:

Do modern seating arrangements affect positively students' participation in the classroom?

How do EFL classroom agents perceive modern seating arrangements link to students' participation?

Does changing the classroom SA according to the nature of activities affect positively students' participation?

Which type of the Modern Seating Arrangements is more practical and useful in an EFL classroom?

We hypothesise the following :

Applying Modren seating arrangements such as the U-shape, clusters or circles types, would effectively promote students' participation in EFL classrooms.



## **6. Methodology**

A descriptive method is adopted to achieve the stated aims of the present study. In order to gather data, two different questionnaire versions will be administered to our samples, one for teachers and the other for students, at the Department of English at Abess Laghrour –University of Khenchela.

## **7. Structure of the Study**

The dissertation is divided into two parts, one theoretical and the other practical. The former consists of two chapters; the first of these is devoted to SA-related issues while the second accounts for participation in education and other related matters. The latter comprises one chapter dedicated to results analysis and discussion, accompanied with reference to the methodological framework. The work opens up with a general introduction and closes with a general conclusion.

# Chapter I

## Classroom Management: Seating Arrangement

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## **Introduction**

Nowadays, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has become intricate given the many variables in process. A successful teaching-learning experience depends mainly on a well-managed classroom. Many experts agree that it is only with good Classroom Management (CM) that can teachers achieve an effective environment for learning. CM, generally, is an umbrella term that incorporates the different skills, and techniques that facilitate the educational process; Scrivener (2012, p. 3) argues that “*in order to help create the most engaging and useful learning, we need to learn new techniques, or perhaps relearn familiar ones. So that they are effective in a classroom environment*”. Therefore, EFL teachers should develop not only their linguistic abilities but also their CM skills. Classroom seating arrangement is one of the effective elements of CM that teachers can use to promote and facilitate the teaching-learning process. In fact, this chapter sheds light on CM in relation to Seating Arrangement (SA) and the different traditional and modern types of the latter.

### **I.1. Overview of Classroom Management**

#### **I.1.1 Definition of Classroom Management**

The term Classroom Management has been discussed by many experts in the field of education. Groves (2009, p. 1), for example, urges teachers to “*think of classroom management as your (their) personal toolkit of policies, actions, and works, which you use to keep your(thier) classroom smoothly and your (thier) student working safely and efficiently*”. Similarly, Richards (1990, p. 98) states that “*Classroom Management refers to the students’ different behaviours, movements and interaction during a lesson, are recognized and controlled by the teacher to enable teaching to take place most effectively*”. Therefore, it is the teachers’ duty to organize the classroom in such way that results in students’ positive behaviour. Hence, CM techniques such as classroom SA may be considered as an effective method to encourage desirable behaviour and prevent the unacceptable ones. In this regard, Jones (2005, p. 55) argues that the teacher should make the teaching process more enjoyable and this can be reached simply by making some changes in the classroom seating arrangement.

‘Classroom management’ and ‘discipline’ are two terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, but they are, arguably, completely different. Walters and Frei (2007, p.13) explain, “*classroom management refers to how things are generally carried out in the classroom, whereas classroom discipline is the specific management of students behaviour*”. In other words, CM is the teachers’ job which deals with how things are generally done whereas

discipline is the students' responsibility which deals with the way they behave in class. Savage and Savage (2010) propose the following table that shows the difference between classroom management and classroom discipline:

**Table 1. Comparing CM and classroom Discipline. (Savage & Savage, 2010, p. 9)**

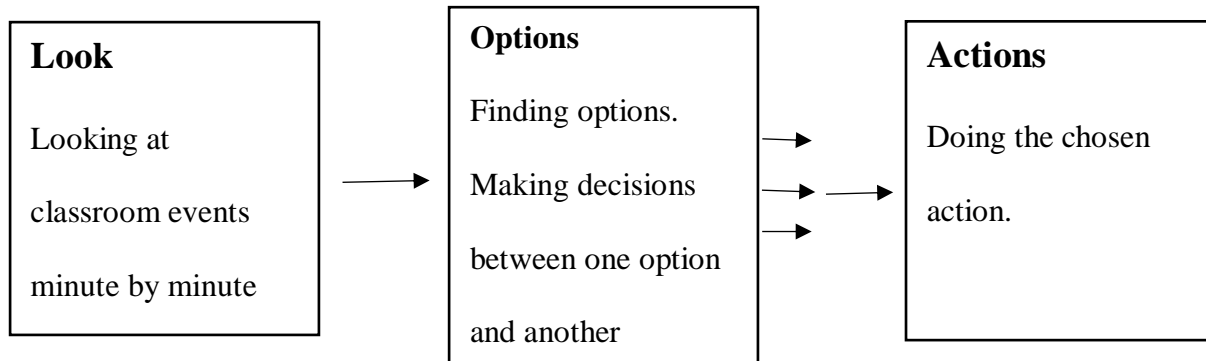
| Classroom management<br>The prevention component   | Classroom discipline<br>The reaction component  |
|--|---|
| 1. Organizing the environment for success.<br>2. Keeping the students engaged.<br>3. Eliciting the cooperation of students.<br>4. Sharing power and authority. | 1. Responding to misbehaviour in order to reach self-control.<br>2. Stopping misbehaviour quickly.<br>3. Respecting the dignity of students.<br>4. Helping students learn to accept responsibility for their actions. |

In general, CM consists of all the features teachers do in order to organize students' space, time, and materials so that the teaching-learning process can happen effectively. This management involves promoting students' engagement during lessons and establishing a productive learning environment.

### **I.2.1 Teachers' Role in the Classroom Management**

The teacher is an essential agent in the teaching-learning process. S/he has many roles and responsibilities in the classroom. Douglas (2007, p. 78) mentions that teachers can play different roles in the course of teaching which may promote a better learning. They are lesson planners, disciplinarians, mentors, guiders, classroom managers and many more. Classroom management is a significant part of every teacher's role description. In this regard, Ornstein (1990) states that an effective teaching depends mainly on a good classroom manager. In other words, a successful teaching process depends to a large extent on teachers' ability to manage effectively the classroom. According to Ediger (2013), even experienced teachers can allow disruptive behaviour to occur during class if they fail to establish proper CM. Teachers must use more appropriate management measures to boost learning and minimize disruptive behaviours (Ediger, 2013). Their ability to carry out this efficiently depends mostly on their level of knowledge and various skills.

According to Scrivener (2005, p. 79), teachers are needed to have “*certain organisational skills and techniques*” in managing multiple tasks and situations that can take place in the classroom. The figure below illustrates the basic skills of Classroom management. (Scrivener, 2005, p. 80)



**Figure 1. Basic Skills of Classroom Management.**

Scrivener (2005, p. 80) states that teachers have to “be able to look at and read classroom events as they occur and think of possible options”. After finding these options, they make suitable decisions and “turn them into effective and efficient actions”. In the same context, Lemlech (1999, p. 7) adds that the teacher requires not only a “bag of tricks” for unplanned time and unexpected situations that suddenly occur in classroom but also management techniques like classroom seating arrangement.

## **I.2. Seating Arrangement (SA)**

### **I.2.1 Definition**

Classroom SA is one of the most important factors of physical environment. Generally, SA “refers to how students’ seats are arranged inside the class” (Nadeem, Iqbal & Rahman, 2012, p. 13). According to Jones (2005, p. 54), “*a good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of CM. It’s discipline for free.*” In other words, SA is one of the CM techniques that can be applied easily by the teacher within the classroom if it is well planned for. It facilitates classroom discipline and control.

I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. (Epanchin, Townsend & Stoddard, 1994, p. 166).

It can be understood from Epanchin, Townsend and Stoddard’s words that organizing and rearranging classroom seating is one of the teachers’ roles and responsibilities among other

needed changes. Add to this, Garrison and Howard (1998) claim that when students are not doing well, it is the teacher's role to motivate and inspire them.

Besides, the students learning styles should be taken into consideration while arranging the learning space. Teachers have to arrange the seats in a way that meets the students' educational needs. They have to ensure that all students are participating during class. In this regard, Pitner points out "*the best arrangement is one that fits the teacher's style, fits the classroom dimensions, and feels comfortable to the students*" (2013, p 63 ). Therefore, teachers should break the authority of the various traditional SAs. Furthermore, the teacher s' position has a significant role in the classroom. Teachers require more free space to move around the room as "*leaving sufficient space in the classroom is very important to give teachers easy and efficient access to different groups of students*" (Jones, 2005, p. 73). Moving around the classroom helps the teacher to maintain control, discipline and motivate students to participate during class. Jones, also, affirms that the usual movement areas in classroom should be "congestion-free" to prevent problem behaviours.

### **I.2.2 Importance of Classroom Seating Arrangement**

The key to good CM is the application of some techniques and skills that the teacher may use to make the learners organized, focused, productive and more engaged during class. SA is, undoubtedly, one of the effective techniques of CM that promotes a better learning environment. The students and teachers' position and how they are located in the classroom have an indirect but significant effect on the learning agency (Aydın, 2000; Başar, 1994). It is claimed that knowledge acquisition can be achieved more easily with proper seating arrangements. It is easy to take seating for granted, but suitable seating can be an effective tool to accomplish class objectives.

The classroom seating arrangement has a great influence on student's behaviour. The way students behave in class depends essentially on how the desks are arranged in physical classroom. Harmer (1989, p. 45) states that "*to change the student's behavior is to change the environment to support the behavior you are looking for*". In addition, Martella and his co-authors (2003) consider that the well-arranged classrooms are likely to maintain positive behaviour and limit disruptive behaviour within the classroom. In other words, classroom SA tends to increase task-on behaviour and decrease task-off behaviour. Suitable SA rises students awareness of different acceptable and undesirable behaviours in specific locations in the classroom.

Moreover, arranging the class materials depends on the students' seating location. Proper room arrangement provides an easy access to classroom materials and activities to help achieving the instructional objectives. SA is also important in terms of control of classroom traffic (Emmer, Evertson & Worsham, 2006). In other words, SA provides more space for teachers to move easily between students, so that, disruptive behaviours cannot take place in the classroom. Most importantly, suitable SA encourages students' engagement, and facilitates the teacher-student and student-student interaction in class.

### **I.3. Types of Classroom Seating Arrangement**

The teaching-learning process in schools takes place mainly in classrooms. Therefore, the classroom should be well arranged to establish a good learning environment. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the different types of SA are among the influential factors that any teacher should take into consideration while arranging the students' seats. They make the learning space more workable. Haghghi and Jusan (2011) believe that students' attention and focus raise if the classroom SA suits the teacher's goal. In addition, students' seating locations decide about classroom materials to be used. Furthermore, various types of SA can even influence the instructor's ability of teaching (Haghghi & Jusan, 2011).

Aydın (2000) developed two main approaches to CA: teacher-centred and student-centred. Different SAs are based on those two approaches. By following the teacher-centred CA, teachers can choose Traditional Columns (TCS) and Traditional Rows Seating (TRS). Whereas, in the student-centred approach, teachers may choose the modern seatings such as U-shape, circles or cluster type. These types of SA can be chosen according to different teaching objectives (Fives & Buehl, 2008). For example, the teacher may choose arranging learners in small groups to foster classroom interaction (McCorskey & McVetta, 1978). It is all about the teachers' specific goal as well as the nature of the task that dictate the most effective type of SA

### I.3.1. Traditional Seating Arrangements (TSA)

The Traditional rows and columns are the most popular types of TSA that are available for EFL teachers. However, some teachers may use these types of SA without having the needed background and appropriate environment for applying such seatings. Accordingly, some definitions, descriptions, visual data as well as advantages and disadvantages of each type are provided below to give teachers a better and clear clarification.

#### I.3.1.1 Traditional Row Seating (TRS)

The first SA is the classic row seating. In TRS, desks are placed in horizontal straight lines; the students face the board, sit one behind the other in three or four groups of desks. By following this arrangement, students are free to choose the seats they like. On one hand, Gage and Berliner (1984) suggest that students who sit at front and middle rows can communicate and interact easily during class. On the other hand, teachers generally notice that the students who sit at the back rows do not have the chance to participate or to focus and are more likely to show disruptive behaviours.

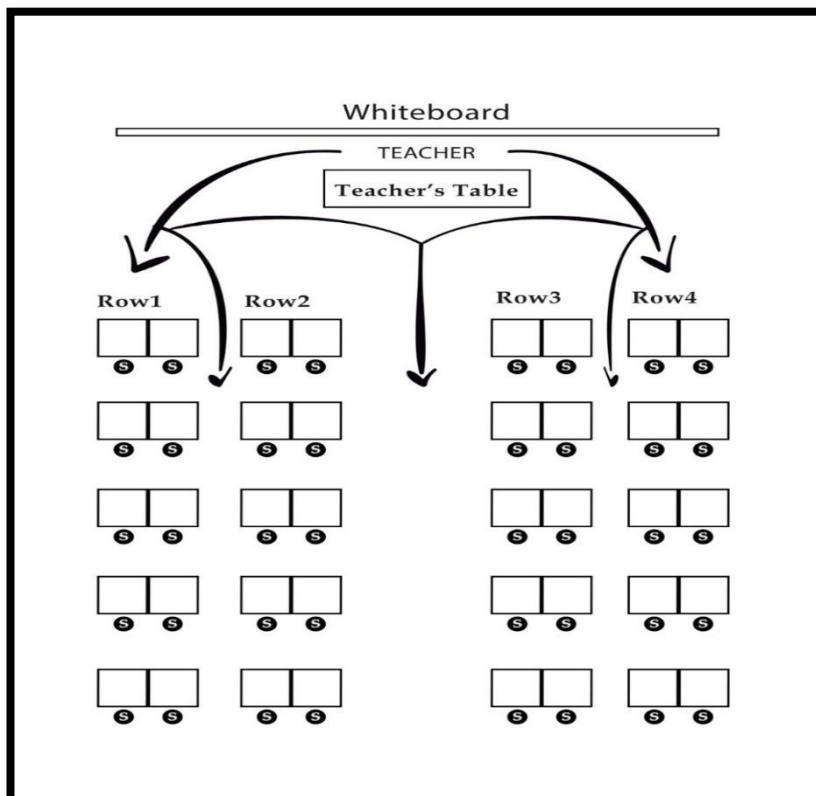


Figure 02: Teacher-Centered/Traditional Rows Seating Arrangement (TSA)



Figure (02) above shows that the TRS mainly includes four straight rows. Each row consists of about pairs of five to seven equidistant desks, as Rosenfield (2001, p. 42) says, “*something like tombstones in a military cemetery*”. In fact, TRS is the dominant and most applicable type in many schools and universities all over the world.

### **I.3.1.1.2 Advantages of Rows**

There are many obvious advantages for the students seating in traditional rows in the classroom. It allows their focus to be directed mainly to the teacher, therefore, it is called teacher-centred. By Following this type of SA, teachers can easily notice the on-task and off task-learners in the classroom. According to Harmer (1998), in orderly rows, the teacher and students can easily see each other and classroom discipline can easily be maintained. Moreover, teachers will not need to move around the room while giving instructions and guiding the students; they give only oral instructions to the whole class just from their desks. However, the teacher can give individual explanations for those who ask for that. Furthermore, this type of arrangement suits classroom activities like watching a video, using a board, demonstrating text organizations, etc.

### **I.3.1.1.2 Disadvantages of Rows**

Despite the aforementioned advantages of RSA, some disadvantages are worth mentioning. First, this type of arrangement makes it difficult for students to work in groups when the teacher asks them to do so, it provides no space for the students to arrange the desks. Also, it eats away the instructional time during the lesson. In addition, many teachers see that RSA as the most noisy type of seating; students seating at the back rows make much noise while teachers explain the lesson. In this regard, Harmer (1998, p.53) states that “*almost 90 % of misbehaviour problems occur at the back of the classroom*”. Another disadvantage of RSA, is that the instructor cannot move easily amongst students. Moreover, students at the front rows are luckier than those at the back rows (Aydın, 2000). Meaning that, students who sit at the front rows are more likely to participate and interact with the instructor, whereas those at the back rows are less engaged and do not have equal opportunities to interact with their teacher. In addition, this seating arrangement makes it easier for students at the back rows to cheat in exams. Furthermore, in RSA, there is no place for interaction and group discussion; the teacher dominates the class and plays the role of knowledge provider, while students remain passive agents and take only the role of knowledge receivers. Subsequently, many teachers find it difficult to design small groups with this type of SA. However, Harmer (1998) states that when teachers are faced with more than 40 students at a time, the TSA is the suitable seating arrangement for them. This kind of traditional organization does not promote students’

participation and engagement during class, therefore; disruptive behaviours can easily take place.

### I.3.1.2 Columns Seating Arrangement (CSA)

CSA, is the second type of TSA, and similar to RSA. Traditional Columns seating has fixed solo tables instead of pair tables, organized one behind the other in straight lines. Each solo table contains a wooden pallet for students to write on (see figure 03 below). However, this type of seating is somehow much better than the RSA for some reasons, discussed below. Despite the fact that this type of arrangement is a traditional one, none of the Algerian universities apply it.

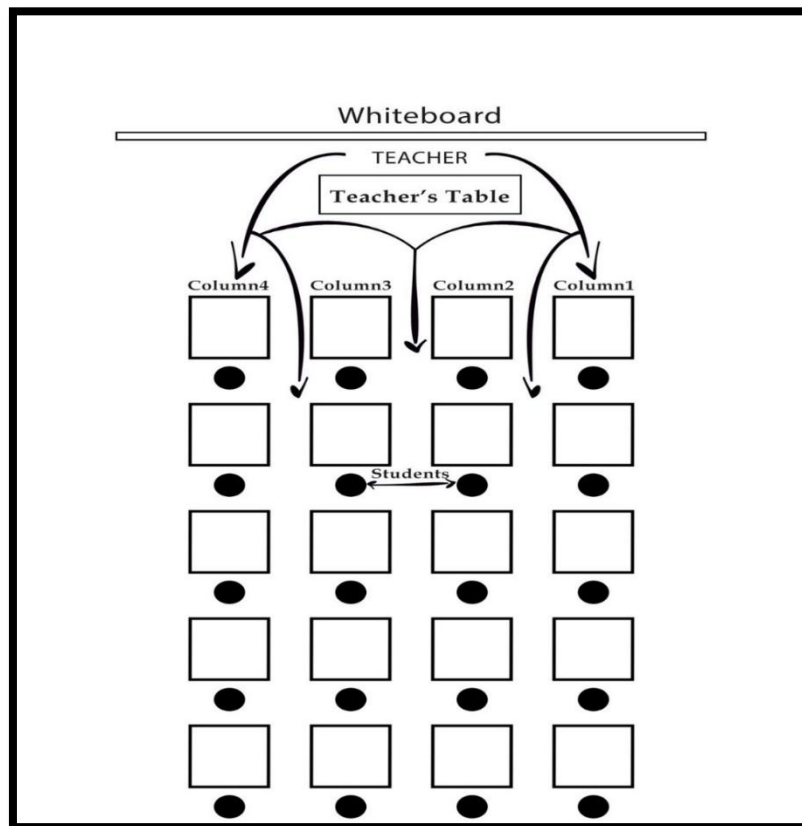


Figure 03: Columns Seating Arrangement (CSA)

#### I.3.1.2.1 Advantages of Columns

Like any other SA, CSA is advantageous in a number of ways. First, it is good for a teacher-centered class; the instructors work with the whole class just from a focal point, their desks. Besides, the direction of the student's focus is totally on the instructor. Second, columns seating, make it easier for the teachers to memorize students' seats, so that, they can check their attendance without much effort. Additionally, this type of seating, makes it difficult for students to cheat during tests; teachers can see clearly any movement of students during exams. Moreover, this SA provides much space for both teachers to move around the room and

students to have an ease access to their desks. Therefore, the teacher can easily manage the class as it is planned for, and prevent problem behaviors during the lesson.

### **I.3.1.2.2 Disadvantages of Columns**

Besides the above-mentioned advantages, CSA suffers from some inconveniences. First, by following this fixed type of SA, teachers find it hard to form group works, even though some students work perfectly with friends. Moreover, students may easily lose their attention, focus and engagement. Furthermore, it makes both teachers and students feel like they are in class (in its sense as a restrictive environment), which may keep them stressed, bored and waiting for the session to end. In the Algerian context, both traditional and modern solo tables (see figure 04) are not applied in universities. Despite the fact that there is no best SA to follow, modern SAs are worth a try, apart from the fixed traditional SAs.



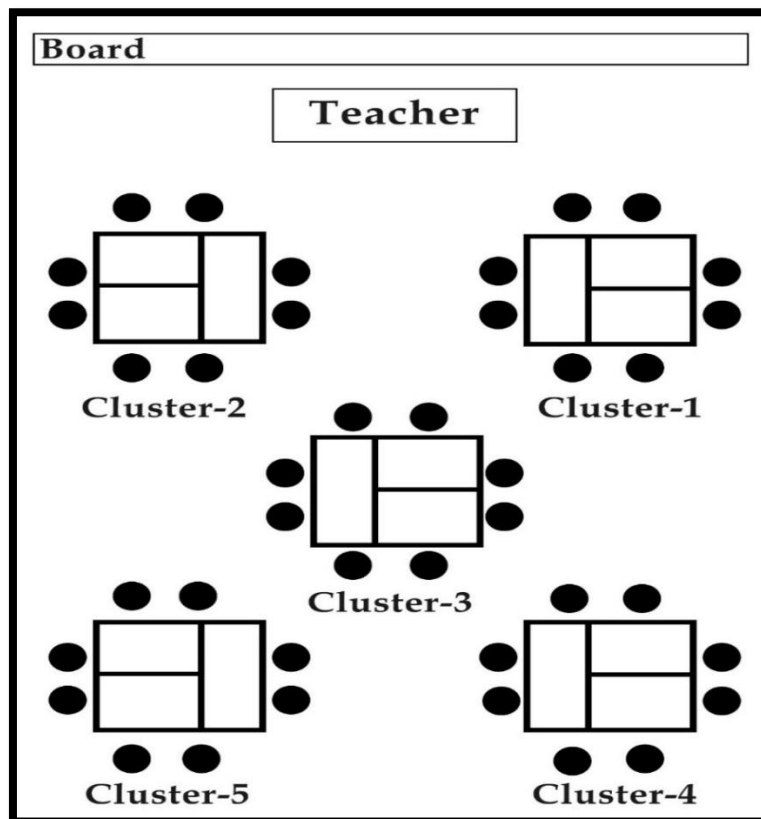
**Figure 04: Modern/Traditional Solo-Table Forms (Tabler, 2012)**

### **I.3.2. Modern Seating Arrangement (MSA)**

In contrary to TSA, MSA is more flexible in its forms. The teacher can use various modern seating types in different situations with different language activities and objectives. For instance, for group discussion, a semi-circular or the U-shape seating would be more effective than TSA. “*Alternative CA is a home away from home*” for teachers as well as students (Seivert, 2005, p. 43). In this regard, Harmer (1998) proposes three types of Modern SA: Clusters, U-shape, and circles.

### I.3.2.1 Clusters Seating Arrangement

In the cluster seating arrangement (CSA), also called group seating, each Cluster consists of five to eight desks. Clusters are arranged on different places in the classroom providing space for teachers to move freely from one students to another. The goal behind using such seating organization is to promote group discussion and collaborative learning. Therefore, groups should include students from different levels so they can help each other during activities of projects.



**Figure 05: Cluster Seating Arrangement (CSA)**

Due to the fact that cluster seating has great influence on promoting students' learning, Office Furniture Manufacturer (OFM) have developed a new model of CSA that may help forming clusters in an easy way. Hence, teachers will not face any difficulties concerning the classroom SA. These new modern clusters (as shown in figure 5 and 6) create well organized classes for promoting a better learning.



**Figure 06: Modern Cluster Steel Seating table, OFM ([worthingtondirect.com](http://worthingtondirect.com))**

### **I.3.2.1.1 Advantages of Clusters**

Both traditional and ready-made forms of clusters are known to be greatly advantageous. To begin with, cluster seating facilitates classroom interaction and makes students more relaxed. In a study done by Rosenfield (1985) found that clusters develop social interaction and promote students' participation during class discussions. For instance, teachers will not face any difficulty when arranging modern seating furniture and can easily shift from one activity to another. Besides, the teacher can easily walk in the classroom. Another advantage of this modern seating is that students feel more comfortable like they are at home; this may create a strong relationship between the teacher and her\his students. Moreover, students' behaviours can be easily monitored by the teacher. In addition, sharing knowledge in group work would help developing individual knowledge. Most importantly, CSA can help developing students' self-confidence. It helps students to overcome difficulties in their presentations, and allows them to be more encouraged to participate during lesson.

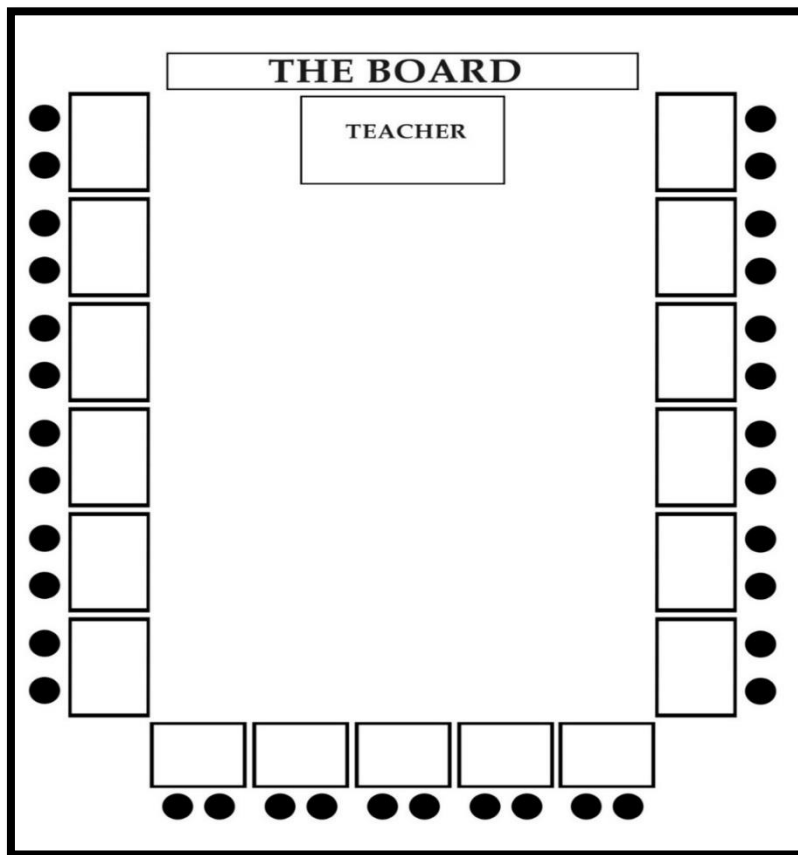
### **I.3.2.1.2 Disadvantages of Clusters**

Both the traditional and modern way of applying CSA have a number of drawbacks. First, the traditional cluster seating is time wasting; teachers spent a lot of time arranging the tables and chairs to form groups, and the other half of time spent reorganizing the classroom furniture to avoid disarranged class for the coming teachers. Second, for Modern clusters, students find it difficult to interact with students of other groups. In addition, teachers who lack skills of controlling students find it difficult to apply such a type of SA. Rosenfield (1985, p. 76 ) argue that "*common sense indicates that small clusters would heighten student interaction but might*

*also limit teacher control.*” Another drawback is that the teacher may not be able to fully monitor and assess each students’ individual work or ability.

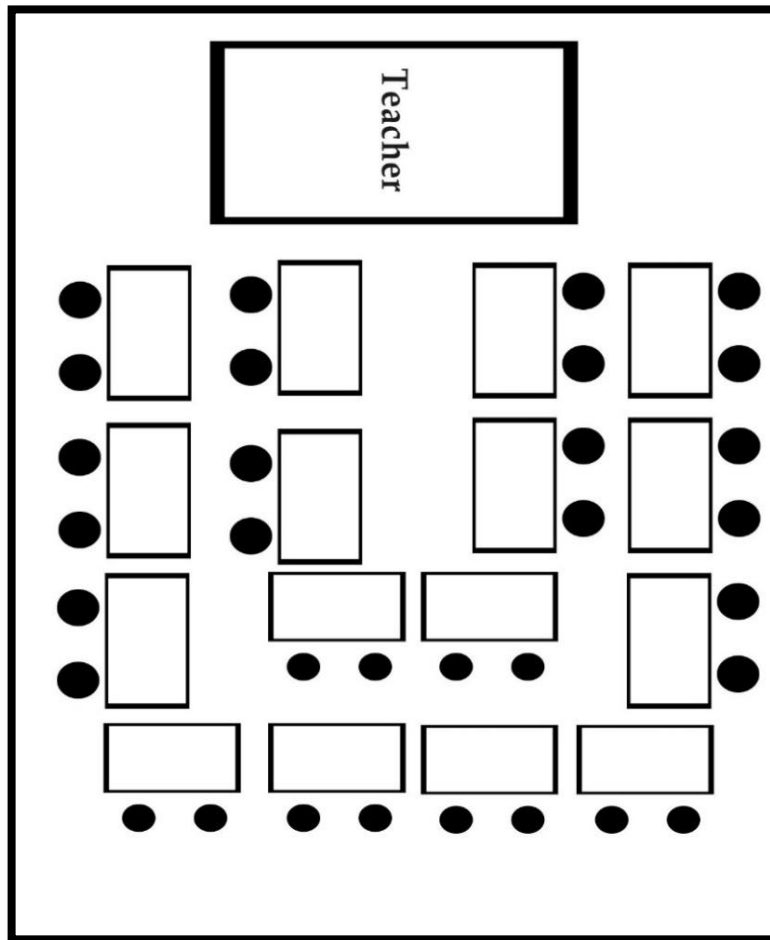
### **I.3.2.2. The Horseshoe or The U-shape**

The Horseshoe Seating Arrangement (HSA), otherwise known as U-shape Seating Arrangement (USA), is labelled as such simply because the tables in this seating take the form of the “U” vowel or a “horseshoe”. This seating has a large space at the middle that allows the instructor to have a clear view of all students. In addition, it allows students to make easily eye contact with their teachers. The teacher’s position in this type of seating is usually at the open end of the horseshoe while students face the teacher and whiteboard (see Figure 7).



**Figure 07: U-shape/Horse-shoe Seating Arrangement (U/HSA)**

The size and space of the classroom are two main concerns for HSA because the U-shape SA needs either a larger class or fewer numbers of students to be applied. However, teachers can make use of a double-horseshoe, instead of one big ‘U’. They can generate different smaller “U’s” of six or seven students as a solution for smaller rooms (see figure 8). This SA is generally applied in Lecture Halls and classroom seminars. The U-shape is preferred by both students and teachers since it facilitates both the discussion and control.



**Figure 8: double U-shape/Horse-shoe seating arrangement**

### **I.3.2.2.1 Advantages of The U-shape:**

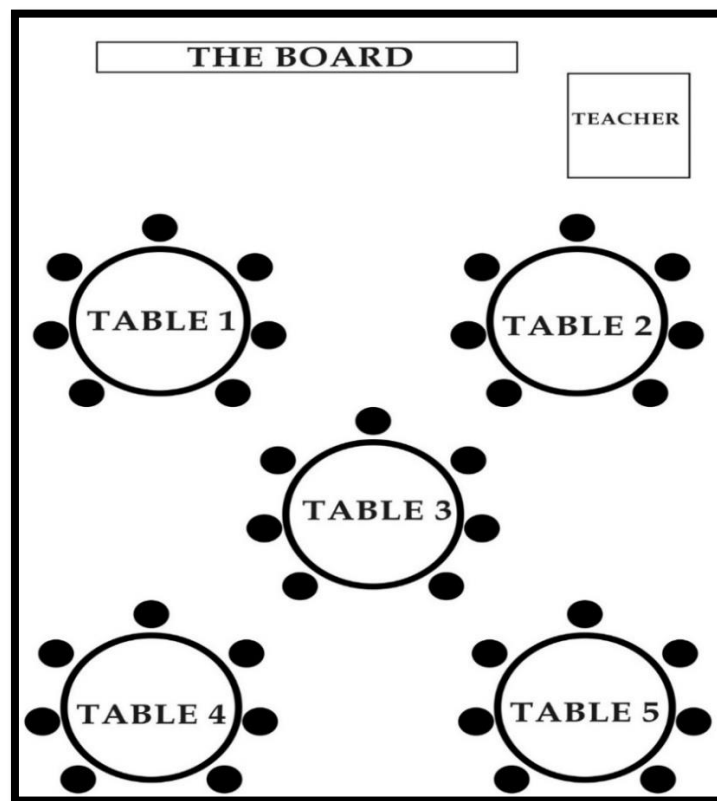
The horseshoe setup is known to be of great advantage. For instance, interaction and participation are greatly facilitated in this SA. Rosenfield (1985) claim that U-shape is the best SA to increase learners' interaction in class discussions. It encourages open discussion and students' engagement during the lesson. Furthermore, it allows eye contact between the teacher and all students, and helps the lecturer to move close to each student. In this way, the teacher can easily control students with behaviour problems. The U-shape, also, facilitates collaboration between learners, which helps motivating low-interaction students to participate more and focus on their lessons. Papalia (1994) adds that the horseshoe seating arrangement increases students' attention during the lesson. Finally, this SA allows students to have more freedom and feel like they are at home as it generates a home-like environment to promote a better learning in a more interactive classroom.

### **I.3.2.2.2 Disadvantages of The U-shape**

Despite all the aforementioned advantages of the U-shape SA, some teachers may dislike it for some reasons. First, getting too close to students and vice versa, may affect negatively the educator’s authority in the classroom. Second, students may easily become off task if the task provided is very easy and not attractive. So, it may lead students to lose attention and start chatting with each other during the lesson.

### **I.3.2.3. Circles Seating Arrangement (CSA)**

In Circle SA (CSA), students are gathering around round tables to form groups (see Figure 9). CSA is considered to be of a great use for collaborative and discussion-based classes. It is best recommended for group discussion, and role-play activities. When conducting class discussions, a circular arrangement can be used to facilitate the flow of ideas, thoughts and expressions. Also, instructors find it easy to control the discussion. Additionally, this type of SA allows students to see clearly each other and interact easily during class.



**Figure 09: circle seating arrangement (CSA)**

#### **I.3.2.3.1.1 Advantages of Circles**

There are many advantages to students sitting in round tables,. First, arranging the desks in a circle would be very helpful for creating a more active and focused environment in which students can participate freely and feel more comfortable to share their ideas and give on-task



comments. Black (1985) argues that round tables help students to foster on-task oral input. Second, there are no tables and desks on the middle of the circle; thus, the teacher and students can interact directly. Moreover, this seating helps developing a feeling of equality among the group. It, also, provides the teacher with a much greater opportunity to get close to the students. Additionally, CSA encourages students' engagement and class discussion. More importantly, pairs can easily make dialogues.

### **I.3.2.3.1.2 Disadvantages of Circles**

Despite the advantages discussed above, CSA may be disliked for some reasons. Firstly, in a circular arrangement, shy students may feel uncomfortable which may affect negatively their focus and attention during lessons. Secondly, this type of seating requires much space or fewer number of students to be applied in EFL classrooms. Moreover, it seems difficult for students to follow the different displayed materials. It is very likely to add a point that in choosing any type of seating arrangement, EFL teachers should take into account low interaction seats to avoid disruptive behaviours during class. Low interaction students should be always sited in the front seats. Add on, in forming groups, instructors should put low interaction students between high and middle ones.

It is argued that every piece of the classroom's furniture, either made of metal, plastic, or wood, is of major importance. In fact, the way teachers arrange the desks and tables may make great difference on students' achievement. Thus, before teachers start moving chairs around, they should consider how different seating arrangements can make it easier for them to create a more productive learning environment.

### **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, this chapter offered a solid theoretical background for and shed light on the first variable of this study which is the seating arrangements. In order to clarify its complexity, a general overview of classroom management is provided. Then, a range of different definitions and concepts relating to SA is covered. Furthermore, the role played by SA in establishing a productive working environment in EFL classrooms was clarified through explaining the difference between the different types of SA, both traditional and modern SAs, and exposing their advantages and drawbacks. The application of each type depends on different factors like classroom size, students number and the task in hand. Therefore, we suggest, EFL teachers should pay more attention to choosing the appropriate SA.

## **Chapter II: Participation in Education**

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## **Introduction**

Traditionally, teaching was initially text-based and teacher-oriented in which the main focus is on the instructor in delivering the information to learners who were only passive agents. Presently, however, the teaching process turns around the interference of students in exchanging information through class oral discussions since it reinforces cooperative and shared learning. This way, the classroom becomes the setting where different educational processes occur including participation. This phenomenon is essential to the success of the teaching/learning process since both teachers and students take a significant part in establishing, organizing and achieving a successful learning environment. Participation appears mainly through interaction and engagement in the class. It is a form of communication in regard to the way students display their performance in order to accomplish certain oral activities through which they are put in the position of interacting and talking directly to the teacher. This type of learning process encourages collective exchange of information, motivates students' interest and creates an efficient teacher/student relationship.

### **II.1. Definition of Participation**

The concept of participation is not easy to define nor to distinguish from other related terms given the various perspectives associated to it. Commonly, the notion of participation refers to the means through which active students are created, integrated and involved in exchanging information within the classroom environment, via interacting with the teacher in order to establish a successful and effective learning ground. As a general definition, Oxford Dictionary defines participation as “the act of taking part in an activity or event.”

Vandrick (2000) claims that participation generally turns around the idea of active students who speak in class, ask questions, are able to give answers, make comments, and become part of class discussions. However, passive, detached and non-engaged students are the ones who do not participate in class environment following any of these ways. Peterson (2001) also suggests that participation often holds the traditional concept of being active and engaged in class activities. He states: “Class participation may include readily speaking, thinking, reading, role taking, risk taking, engaging oneself and others, and it occur inside classroom confines.” (p.187). That is to say, participation is considered as an educational process in which several skills other than speaking are interrelated within the classroom boundaries. Fritschner (2000) defines participation by focusing on two categories of students; “talkers and non-talkers, the former refers to students who prefer speaking out in class, and the latter who participate through

‘attendance, active listening, sitting in their seats, doing the assignments and being prepared for class’.” (p. 352). That is, students’ participation may be viewed through various ways, whether speaking in the class is maintained by the student or not, since other factors may interfere in establishing the level of involvement and contribution in class activities.

More recently, different ideas and points of view concerning participation appeared. Heyman and Sailors (2011) describe classroom participation as “a form of active learning in which students publicly discuss the course material.” (p. 605). However, Dancer and Kamvounias (2005) declare that participation is required to be part of the course assessment since it lies under a collection of five integrated elements: preparation, contribution to discussions, group skills, communication skills and attendance (p. 448). This way, participation fosters students’ interaction skills and improves other skills such as collaborating and exchanging with classmates and the instructor. Participation is defined in some ways quantitatively, in which the interest is essentially on the amount of students’ responses and to what extent they raise their hands in the class during the lesson. It has to do with “any comments or questions that students offered or raised in class” (Faissinger, 2000, p. 39). Various studies take classroom participation to be a similar phenomenon to discussion, which demands a group conversation involving the whole class. However, participation includes even brief and concise exchanges between teachers and students, or within small groups of students. It can result in perceptive comments and interesting connections made by students, and can promote an advanced level of involvement and intervention in classroom environment.

## **II.2. Types of Participation**

Ordinarily, participation in the classroom is related to frequent attendance and speaking out but actually there exist different forms of participating in the class. Most researchers claim that besides the known type which requires direct oral participation, there exists another type in which participation is represented implicitly.

### **II.2.1 Verbal Participation (Oral)**

Verbal participation or oral interference of students inside the classroom is considered as the most recognizable way through which the teacher-students' direct communication and interaction happens. For Fritschner (2000), students' oral participation occurs via giving comments, asking and answering questions or presenting orally in front of the class. That is to say, participation is seen from the conventional perspective of teacher-student exchange. Additionally, verbal participation includes mostly the investment of the learners' speaking skills in the use of the right words and expressions in order to be active and efficient participants during the learning process. Similarly, Northcott (2002) declares that verbal interaction is usually about allowing the students to examine their comprehension through raising their hands and asking questions during the lesson.

Considering both discussion and communication as a significant part of students' participation, the sociologist Freire (2000) believes that these two factors are essential for students' accomplishment because individuals have the capability to encounter learning via active and cooperative problems treatment. Taking into account Luoma's (2004, p. 20) conception of features of speaking as elements of the common social action of speech, verbal participation relies on the notion of the speaking skill that is part of the communication and interaction system. Furthermore, this type is mainly related to the direct exchange of ideas and opinions inside the classroom, added to the the ability to be active and engaged student in classroom discussions. That is to say, The effective communicative process in this type is determined by the existence of a direct relationship between the teacher and the student via the use of spoken language and speech.

### **II.2.2 Non-verbal Participation (Silent)**

Non-verbal participation or indirect interaction of students inside the class is seen as the way through which students have the opportunity to get involved in the class in a different manner. This means taking an active part in class discussions and activities not necessarily with direct speaking, but rather through using non-verbal cues and signs of communication. The overall interference of body language, facial expressions, nodding the head, as well as body directing towards the teacher and class are some good examples of that. These features enable students to create their own learning ground based on effective listening skills and active thinking.

For Jaworski and Sachdev (1998), silence is used by students as a "facilitative device ... to gain access, organize and absorb new material" (p. 286). In other words, since silence is

considered as part of the non-verbal participation, it is an efficient way to promote profound concentration in order to approach and manage the given subject matter. This type of participation does not really replace the traditional form but rather gives another convention by which the students step into the learning process even if they are silent participants in the class. In the same way, this description was determined by Weaver and Qi (2005) for the sake of referring to the term para-participation, which is viewed as a supplementary form to the non-oral participation. Para-participation occurs when the students take an initiative part within the classroom environment, revealing their attention, becoming apparent to the teacher and expressing their opinions using the non-verbal communication signs (facial expressions, body movements, gestures...) without utilizing the voice. Highlighting this idea, Zainal Abidin (2007) argues that inside the class, there exists another kind of students which differs in perceiving and reacting to the learning items, through showing active interference in some talks and act passively in others. This category prefers the non-oral communication behaviors, speak less and listen more, use the strategy of taking notes silently and tend to avoid discussions within lectures.

Participation is considered as the initial factor that affects generally the learning medium and specifically students' personal achievement in the way that it differs from one student to another. As it is previously known with two different types, participation is in fact a combination of the two verbal and non-verbal interference of the learners, according to each student's personality and the way he/she expresses his/her point of view and ideas inside the classroom. Therefore, both need active interaction and encouragement from the teacher.

### **II.3. Types of Students Behaviour in Class**

Classroom behaviours are the manners through which students display their ways of dealing with different activities and tasks given by the teacher, and how they participate in the learning process. Some students tend to behave as silent participants and others prefer to express their knowledge and capacities explicitly. Liu (2001, P. 91-95) suggested four types of students' behaviour in class: Full Integration, Participation in the Circumstances, Marginal Interaction, and Silent Observation.

According to the author, these behaviours represent the main sorts of conducts characterizing students' involvement in class. First, Full Integration refers to the state when students are normally involved and incorporated in the class discussion; they are aware of their answers, comments and interventions. Second, Participation in the Circumstances occurs in the

presence of outside factors (like, for instance, socio-cultural, cognitive, linguistic or the surrounding environment) that influence students; in fact, while students tend to control their way of intervention according to the level of the subject matter proposed to discussion, these factors affect negatively their participation and interaction with teachers and classmates in which speaking and communicating happen only when necessary. Third, Marginal Interaction is when students take a passive role inside the classroom and behave as listeners rather than talkers; this type of behaviour strongly affects students' learning achievement and their way of dealing with interactive situations. Considering the last type, namely Silent Observation, it is the sort of behaviour by which students avoid active participation or engagement in classroom debates or activities and act as material receivers only with no interventions or comments about the given topic; they use different techniques in order to obtain the needed information such as writing or taking direct notes.

Despite the differences among these types of students' behaviours in classroom, an active student should take part within the process of learning in every possible manner, in other words, an active researcher should obtaine knowledge and engage himself directly and naturally in class discussions, so that, better learning can be achieved.

#### **II.4. Modes of Classroom Participation**

Modes of classroom participation suggest how learning happens and what classroom structures are used in order to expose the way students deal with different activities and tasks. The most familiar modes are shaped in three methods. These are open discussion, collaborative and group discussion, and cold calling.

First, in 'whole-class discussion', otherwise known as 'open discussion', the teacher opens the floor for questions attempting to engage all classroom participants into discussion. Usually, open discussions turn around the reading skill in which students are asked to do different readings about a particular topic that will later be a subject of discussion among them.

In this regard, Welty (1989) argue that Horseshoe and circles are the best modern seatings to create an effective environment where students can easily interact and directly exchange ideas with each other .Second, in 'collaborative and group discussion', students are joined together in small groups in order to manage a particular activity, complete a task or solve a problem proposed by the teacher. Students' work may be presented through two ways; either directly throughout the session or as a pre-prepared activity that is reported later in front of all the class members. This method mainly involves group work which enhances interactive skills among

students, it facilitates the incorporation of students' participation in the class. Third, 'cold calling mode', also referred to as 'random call' or 'selection of students during the lesson', means when the teacher raises questions about a particular topic and then chooses students randomly to provide answers. Cold calling method is considered to be beneficial regarding the way it creates equal opportunities among students to participate and take an active part in the learning process; moreover, this method increases students' desire and readiness to participate in the process of answering and asking questions, they choose to become volunteers in classroom discussions (Dallimore EJ, 2013).

## **II.5. Theories and Approaches to Participation**

Considering the fact that traditional teaching/learning process differs from the current ways of teaching which focus more on the notion of interaction and active participation of students, various theories and approaches have emerged in order to spot light on students' centered learning.

### **II.5. 1 Constructivist Theory of Learning**

The approach is built on providing ideas for understanding different operations of learning; how knowledge is recognized, comprehended and possessed. Constructivism has been developed in the last decade at the University of Cologne, and presently referred to as the cologne program or cologne constructivism. In fact, this approach was established by many psychologists such as John Dewey (1859-1952), Jerom Bruner (1915) and Jean Piaget (1896-1980). However, the concept turns around one idea that is highlighting the necessity of learners' active engagement in constructing knowledge by themselves and generating meaning via interaction and communication as they learn.

Piaget (1970) argues that constructivism as a psychological theory arises from the field of cognitive science. He views the individual as an existing creature in the sense of physical, biological and cognitive structures. For him, "the subject exists because, to put it very briefly, the being of structures consists in their coming to be, that is, their being 'under construction.'... There is no structure apart from construction" (Piaget, 1970, p. 140). Furthermore, even the structure of learning and grasping information is built upon composition and development. In the same regard, the supporters of Piaget view that the process of generating meaning is constructed individually in order to create an effective understanding. For instance, Schifter and Simon (1992) believe that the constructivist model of instruction depends on the engagement of students in building their knowledge and concepts based on previous



understandings, through establishing the appropriate learning environment where the learners own the content of inquiry. Additionally, Piaget and his followers suggest that the process of learning happens within the boundaries of interaction and negotiation. For Dewey (1916), constructivist view depends mainly on actions made by the students within the social framework because learning is part of sharing knowledge and exchanging information with the group. This means that where participation and involvement of students occur, the appropriate knowledge also occurs. Bruner's (1915) constructivist point of view explains that teachers should develop the curriculum according to students' level of understanding, besides motivating them to participate in different activities since active participation is essential to foster advanced learning.

To conclude this theory, Constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cooperation during the learning process. That is to say, students can form groups and work on various activities with the guidance of the teacher, so that, students can easily make connections within their communicative surrounding.

## **II.5. 2 Interactionist Approach**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the social interactionist approach emerged under the impact of the constructivist notions and it exposed the idea of involving social interaction in the learning process. The concept of interaction within the teaching/learning frame refers to the discourse between the learner and his/her teacher, other learners inside the classroom. Moreover, this approach serves to display the necessity of the individual's integration within a social environment.

Although the names of both Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky were linked to constructivism besides the way they illustrated the notions of social interaction, their ideas concerning involving context and interaction within the learning environment differ in the sense of how this notion is important. According to Piaget (1972), social interaction and context are put in the second stage of developing knowledge and learning after focusing on the different levels of individual cognition.

Vygotsky (1987) as the founder of interactionist theory explains that significant interaction and direct involvement with others is the fundamental point of acquiring new information and developing cognitive skills. He suggested a concept which gathers the principles that determine the gap between what learners can accomplish within the group or independently. This concept is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), it is the virtual zone where knowledge

and language are acquired under the guidance and encouragement of a capable member of the learning environment, taking into consideration primarily the different features of social interaction. From Vygotsky's perspective, interaction plays a beneficial and primary role in changing the learner's level of performance during the teaching/learning process from aided to independent performance in order to create an active member who constructed his own individual knowledge.

Interactionism tends to relate the learning process with exchanging information and grasping the appropriate knowledge within the boundaries of collective groups. This is by providing learners with the opportunity of displaying their action in a form of interactively organized groups rather than individuals or independent participants. This approach has been extended to give a complementary concept or perspective called 'the socio-cultural theory'.

### **II.5. 3 The Sociocultural Theory**

The socio-cultural approach focuses mainly on the learner's talk or the process of exchanging discourse within the classroom environment in a form of participation which is the process that primarily affects learning. It is defined by Wertsch (1990) as "an approach that focuses on the institutional, cultural, and historical specificity on mental functioning rather than universals" (p.112). Concerning the principles of this theory, Anton (1999) maintains that "one of its main principles is that cognitive development and thus learning originates in a social context (such as the language classroom)" (p. 304). Put another way, learning is affected by creating an atmosphere which gathers all the features of talk, discourse and knowledge exchange between the different members of the teaching/learning process in and not out of the classroom context. In this context, Gutierrez (2008) believes that "knowledge is not created in the individual mind, it is essentially created in the social realm, through interaction" (p. 123). This perspective was supported by Vygotsky (1987) who claimed that knowledge is not acquired by the individual independently but rather it is a combination of what he can accomplish alone besides his dependence on other social and interactive factors.

#### **II.5. 3. 1 Need Hierarchy Theory**

Learners in class can be absent-minded, they worry about other matters such as personal needs, life issues and social affairs rather than their own learning and achievement; therefore, their behaviors within classroom environment can be affected. Maslow's Hierarchy Needs theory, as a psychological theory proposed by the psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943), refers to the concepts of motivation, self-actualization and individual needs' satisfaction. ) Maslow

suggested five basic human needs classified as a hierarchy in the form of a pyramid, which presents the individual's specific desires and needs that must be satisfied orderly from the lowest to the highest in order to reach the self-actualization and satisfaction stage. These needs are as follows: first, Psychological needs; includes the essential life components (food, clothing, shelter, sleep...). When these needs are satisfied they are considered as the most motivating factors for learners during the learning process, since it affects the mental and cognitive functions of the individual. Second, Safety and Security needs (non-harmful environment...). In case the learner feels insecure within the surrounding environment, his ability to learn and concentrate will be threatened. Third, Love and Belonging needs (social stability, intimacy and connections). Here appears the desire to build social relations with different members of the surrounding medium such as instructors and classmates for the reason that social stability affects the learner's interactive and communicative potential with different class members. Fourth, Self-Esteem needs; once the individual satisfy his personal and social needs, his self-confidence will be enhanced for the sake of being proud of his achievement and capabilities. Fifth, the last level of needs, known as Self-Actualization, is described by Maslow (1943) as

“The person's desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. The specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions” (p. 382-383).

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, there exists a remarkable impact of the different human characteristics (physical, social, mental...) on learning and achievement.

### **II.5. 3. 2 Force-Field Theory**

Force-Field theory derives from the work of the social psychologist Lewin (1947-1952) who suggested that there exist different kinds of outside factors that affect the individual's motivation to develop and change. Lewin (1947) referred to these factors as positive (leading moves toward an objective) and negative (blocking moves toward an objective) forces. The notion of this theory in regard to education tends to explain how psychological and situational factors influence learners' participation in the process of learning, and how they affect their achievement.

Based on this, Miller (1967) combined Maslow's theory (1943) of the individual needs' progression with Lewin's idea concerning the existence of influential powers in order to end

up with the fact that once the social and economic status is developed, the individual necessarily seeks change and progress regarding his learning accomplishments. Rubenson (1977) also took part in this frame, he explained that the educational process is similar to business in terms of setting final goals and achievements in order to progress. Cross (1981) states that “meaning that people who want to get ahead will put effort into personal achievement” (p. 166). Furthermore, Lewin’s Force Field Theory is generally about stating a change model that is composed of two types of forces that work in favour and against progression.

### **II.5. 3. 3 Life Transition Theory**

The term of transition mainly refers to a kind of transformation or shift in the individual’s life. This description was illustrated by the counseling psychologist Nancy K. Schlossberg (1981) who explained that Life Transition Theory is about how learners face different kinds of transformation in their lives’ situations which affect their participation in the educational activities. She suggested three kinds of transitions: first, Anticipated transitions, referred to as the events, which happen predictably or expectedly. Second, Unanticipated transitions which are the circumstances that happen unexpectedly and have a remarkable effect on the individual’s life. Third, Non-events which are predictable but do not happen. These transitions have an impact on changing the individuals’ behaviours toward their lives’ achievements and accomplishments.

### **II.5. 3. 4 Reference Group Theory**

Reference Group Theory, represented by Robert Merton (1949), holds the perspective that each individual is connected and belonged to a particular group through social and cultural relationships, because of the fact that membership groups are seen as the reference groups which determine the individual’s performance, accomplishments and behaviours. Concerning the educational frame, reference groups and the surrounding environment affect the degree of the learners’ engagement within the learning process; for instance, a student who compares his status with a group of students in order to achieve what they have achieved, this way he will start following their path even if he changed his own orientations. Merton (1949) believes that reference group essentially depends on the concept of interaction; in other words, the members of the one group tend to share the same organized patterns or modes of interaction.

## II.6. Importance of Participation

Since participation plays a significant and noticeable role in the learning environment, it is used by the teachers as a strategy to ameliorate the teaching/learning process. Based on this, participation is represented through creating an organized class which includes students who are actively engaged and involved in a variety of classroom activities. Therefore, the reasons behind the importance of this strategy appears in various ways.

According to Ferguson-Hessler de Jong (1994), active students have the ability to encounter a preferable academic accomplishment, compared to passive students. This means that students who are more engaged in classroom interactions and oral activities present higher performance in the learning environment (Astin, 1999). This idea was supported by Tatar (2005) who claimed that dynamic interaction of students in classroom debates and conversations is essential in order to achieve a prosperous learning, it is the way to effective education and spontaneous growth of students in the future.

Following this, participation in the class can bring remarkable advantages to students. De Vita (p. 173–174), believes that it:

- motivates students to take part in a productive thinking operation by which they generate ideas, modify them, and express their own opinion;
- supports the progression of students' listening skills; and
- assists students to elaborate assessment skills through promoting the interchange and analysis of concepts.

In the same way, Green Wood, Terry, Marquis and Walker (2004) reported that students' participation and engagement in the class is the preferable factor which interrelates with teaching and academic performance. When students have the opportunity to be involved in the teaching process and take part in lectures, there will be no space for opposing behaviours (misbehaviours; talking without permission) that interrupt their understanding. This notion tends to represent the effective role which is played by participation regarding students' improvement of academic accomplishment within acceptable and desirable behaviours. Furthermore, interactions within classroom boundaries, with the teacher and classmates, where conversational action occurs influence students' learning medium and specifically affect their communicative behaviors. These interactions happen primarily via participation which stimulates students' intelligence, abilities to exchange opinions and thoughts academically and

elaborates levels of appropriate behaviors (Wentzel, Battle, Russell, & Looney, 2010). In this way, Harmer (2007) views that more engagement and participation of students in class foster their speech and elaborate their speaking proficiency due to the high extent of interaction with others competently.

Participation is seen as the factor that interferes in enhancing students' creative skills and critical thinking through getting involved in classroom talks, what affects their academic achievement and educational attainment. Besides, when learners express their ideas out loud and get the opportunity to speak inside the classroom, they achieve the level of better understanding and therefore learn to deal with different tasks and activities independently.

## **II.7. Factors Influencing Learners' Classroom Participation**

Classroom participation is an important factor that influences learning. In fact, learners' participation is affected by different factors that determine whether they are motivated or not. These factors include: Personal Characteristics, Proficiency Level, and Motivation.

First, Personal Characteristics; this means that there is a noticeable difference between students' personalities and how they treat various classroom situations. Here appears the effect of self-confidence on class participation (Weaver & Qi, 2005); in other words, students feel uncomfortable and frightened when they face the teacher's questions or when they are in a position of providing answers about a certain topic, due to the total perturbation and lack of communicative skills which are noticed during the class. Concerning class perturbation toward participation, Neer (1987) defined it as "the avoidance of participation prompted by evaluation apprehension or expectations of negative outcomes associated with participation" (p. 157). That is to say, students refuse to participate in classroom discussions because they feel that their own abilities are unsuitable and insufficient. Therefore, in order to build students' confidence, the teachers may follow certain strategies such as giving the students the opportunity to plan and arrange their ideas before the class.

Second, Proficiency level; the educational capabilities of the learners are considered as an important factor that shapes class participation. It is obvious that students with high level of abilities are more motivated to present their efficiency, creativity and intelligence to the teacher and classmates. However, students with low capabilities will have a lack of motivation to participate since they face a kind of hesitation and lack of self-confidence. The relationship between proficiency level and participation is explained through the statement of Ellis (1994):

"...there is no way of telling whether a "participation causes learning" or "proficiency causes participation" explanation is correct when a significant relationship is

discovered..., suggesting that the preferred interpretation ought to be that proficiency causes participation. That is, the more proficient the learners are, the more they get to participate. (pp.593-94)”

Third and last, Motivation, students are motivated in various manners to participate and show their integration within the classroom discussions. Some choose to participate actively according to the given topic or type of the material given by the teacher. Others take part because they feel comfortable attending with some teachers, rather than others, whose class is full of energy as they create the appropriate medium for classroom interaction and communication between classmates. This idea suggests another factor which influences participation, and which is related to the teacher’s qualities and way of treating his class. Once the teacher shows a sense of a friendly character –being a motivator, mentor and assistant–, students feel comfortable to show active participation and contribution.

In a few words, factors that affect learners’ classroom participation are a fundamental issue. This in consideration of the fact that there are various ways through which students choose or refuse to take the opportunity to display their participation within classroom discussions. Such these include age, gender, socio-cultural factors, class attendance, race, etc.

## **II.8. Benefits of Classroom Participation**

Classroom discussions and debates are the path through which the students have the chance to get themselves involved and engaged by participating in the process of asking and answering questions. In this way, their abilities to communicate will be improved (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005). Additionally, participating in class discussions tends to reduce the amount of memorization and rather elaborates the creative thinking and improvisation skills.

According to Wade (1994), the beneficial aspect about participation is the pleasure in exchanging opinions between classmates and in the way that they get effective learning through these discussions. Another advantage the students have in regard to group discussions is the increasing of collaborative learning, for the reason that team work shapes the sense of collaboration and partnership in terms of building social connections and relationships without difficulties. Students also benefit from participation in a way that they develop their critical and thinking processes while trying to process the given information. Like this they learn to manage real life situations, be able to handle different circumstances and solve different kinds of problems. To finish with, the teacher-student and student-student interaction through participation in wide discussions is generally seen as the factor which maximizes learning effectiveness in the way that each member of the learning medium influences the behaviours of (the) other(s) positively.

## **II.9. Language Learning and Classroom Participation**

Language is considered to be more than just a set of rules and linguistic patterns. It is rather a way of communicating and sharing ideas between members in different settings. Concerning this frame, it is obvious that there exists a relationship between language learning and classroom participation. Therefore, the interchangeability between these two concepts tends to explain that participation is an important factor in learning a foreign language. That is because the students need to be fully engaged in classroom discussions, take part in different activities and tasks and develop the ability to solve problems.

Regarding language teaching and learning, it is remarkable that various communicative approaches to teaching such as ‘Task-based theory’ and ‘Learning by doing theory for Dewey 1997’ have created a relation between the role of participation and interaction and language learning. Communicative theories explain that interaction of students within the educational medium tends to control their language use and develops their constructive lingual abilities. Additionally, participation gives students a chance to shift from beginners in a foreign language to high level learners and efficient speakers; as a result, they gain the capacity to perform better in classroom written tasks and interrogations. By contrast, students who show passive participation tend to have a non-productive lingual capabilities. Therefore, their academic attainment is negatively affected. Various studies paid attention to both communication and language, indicating that the instructor must deal with them in order to pave the way for students to participate appropriately in different kinds of classroom activities because the communicative proficiency is related to interaction that builds the appropriate environment for students to learn language.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the concept of students’ participation in EFL classrooms. The chapter defined participation and highlighted the two main types of classroom participation considering different researchers’ perspectives. In addition to the types of students’ behaviours and the three familiar modes of participation. Since participation is seen as the primary factor that affects properly the learning process, reference is made to different approaches and theories which gathered ideas concerning classroom interaction, context, classroom discourse and students’ effective learning zones. The chapter accounted also for the importance of classroom participation and its benefits in relation to students’ learning process and their personal achievement. Last but not least, determining the different factors that influence classroom participation took a part within the previous frame and ending up with stating the connection between language learning and classroom participation.



## **Chapter III: Field Investigation**

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## **Introduction**

Teachers and students are the two main elements of the teaching/learning process; thus, their attitudes and views play an essential role in developing this process. Interestingly, the present study aims at investigating EFL teachers and third year students' attitudes towards the effect of various types of SAs, particularly modern seatings, the U-Shape, clusters and circles on promoting students' participation in EFL classrooms. To do this, two questionnaires (one for teachers and the other for students) were administered to the subjects. In the theoretical part, we have conducted a literature review concerning the two main variables of the present research; namely, seating arrangement and students' participation in EFL classes. The present chapter, thus, sheds light on the method used for data collection, research means and sampling procedures. Moreover, it tackles the questionnaires in terms of their descriptions, analysis as well as discussion of the results obtained. Towards the end, the chapter provides a number of suggestions.

### **III.1. Research Means and Sampling**

#### **III.1.1 Means of Data Collection**

A descriptive method is adopted to achieve the stated aims of the present study. In order to gather data, we have opted for the use of questionnaires. Choice of this data collection means is essentially underlain by a number of reasons. Initially, owing to time constraints and given the state of instability at the university especially throughout the second semester, our initial determination to carry out an experiment—which requires a relatively expanded period of time – is thwarted. Another reason is the lack of modern seatings (like ready-made clusters) and their use in the context of our study. Also, questionnaires do not consume much time and energy, they enable collection of data in a very short period of time. Good and Scates (1954) argue that the “*questionnaire is used to inquire into the opinion and the attitude of a group; it is a major instrument for data gathering in descriptive-survey studies*”. Additionally, questionnaires have a number of positive points; in the words of Seltiz (1965, p. 15), “*...they are less expensive and require less skill to administer, and the respondents may feel more confident in using them because of their anonymity*”. Hence, the respondents feel more at ease while expressing their views and attitudes.

The present field work involves two questionnaires. The first one submitted for EFL teachers and the second one administrated to EFL students, at the department of English at Abess Laghrour –University of Khenchela. Divided into four major parts each, the two questionnaires are made up of closed ended and open-ended questions.

### **III.1.2 Population and Sampling**

The target population of this research is third year students at the Departement of English, University of Abess Lghrou –Khenchela. Thirty (30) students in the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020 were randomly selected to compose our sample, representing the whole population. The reason behind choosing third year students is that they rely more on project presentations and cooperative activities and tasks.

## **III.2. EFL Students' Questionnaire**

### **III.2.1 Description**

The questionnaire administrated to EFL students begins with an introduction that tends to inform students about the scope and aim of the present research, namely to investigate the effect of modern classroom SAs on promoting students' participation; in addition to some figures illustrating the selected SAs. The questionnaire comprises fifteen (15) questions; eight (8) of which are closed-ended multiple choice questions . Six (6) questions are open ended with a provided space for justification, explanation or further suggestions/ comments ,one ranking question. These questions are distributed into four parts: 'General Information' (Q1-Q2), 'Attitudes toward the actual Seating Arrangement' (Q3-Q8), 'Seating Arrangements and Participation' (Q9-Q14) , and 'Further Suggestions/ comments' (Q15).

### **Section I: Background Information (Q1\_\_Q2)**

This section seeks fundamentally to obtain general information about the respondents, namely their gender (Q1), and their choice to learn English (Q2).

### **Section II: Attitudes Toward the Actual Seating Arrangement (Q3\_\_Q8)**

This section solicits to investigate students' attitudes toward the currently applied SA (traditional formed classes). Therefore, several points are indicated : the importance of SA in EFL classrooms (Q3), the currently used type of SA (Rows, Columns, U-shape, clusters or Circles), the students's feeling of comfort with this type of SA (Q5), their attitudes towards TSA (Q6), difficulties they face (like losing interest) in TSA (Q7), and the students' place in the classroom (Q8).

### Section III: Seating Arrangements and Participation (Q9\_\_Q14)

This section is intended to examine the effect of TRS and MSA on promoting the students' participation in EFL classrooms (Q9, Q10) and assess whether participants have experienced these modern seatings or not (Q11). Students are also asked to range the given SAs from the most to the least encouraging for classroom participation (Q12). The thirteenth question is asked to see whether changing SA according to the nature of activity affects participation or not. The last question in this section (Q14) asks about the applicability of MSAs in EFL classrooms.

### Section IV: Further Suggestions (Q15)

In the final section, students are provided with a space to describe, concisely, how they receive the SA of their ideal classroom.

## III.2.2 Results and discussion

### Section I: Background Information

#### Item 1- Gender:

Table 2: Students' Gender

| Options | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--------|----------------|
| Male    | 12     | 39 %           |
| Female  | 19     | 61%            |
| Total   | 30     | 100%           |

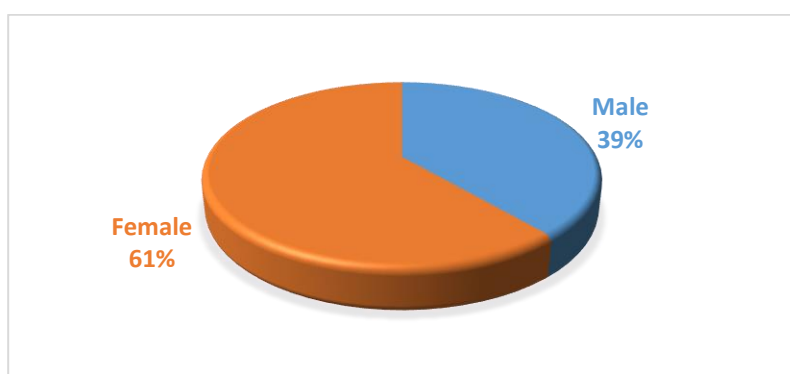


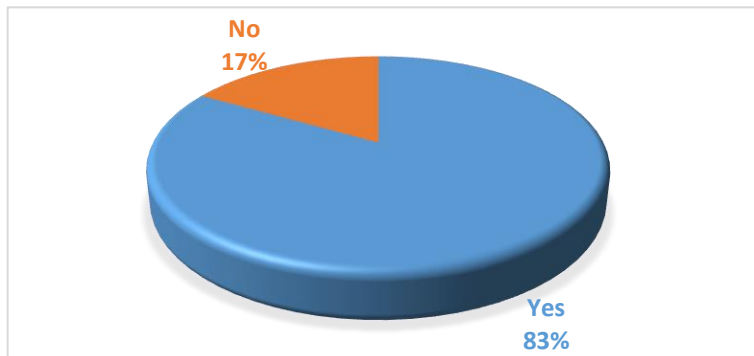
Figure 10: Students' Gender

The information obtained shows that the significant majority of third year LMD students (61%) who have participated in this questionnaire are females, while The minority (39%) are males.

**Item 2: Did you choose to learn English?**

**Table 3: Students' choice to Learn English**

| Options | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--------|----------------|
| Yes     | 25     | 83%            |
| No      | 5      | 17%            |
| Total   | 30     | 100%           |



**Figure 11: Students' choice to Learn English**

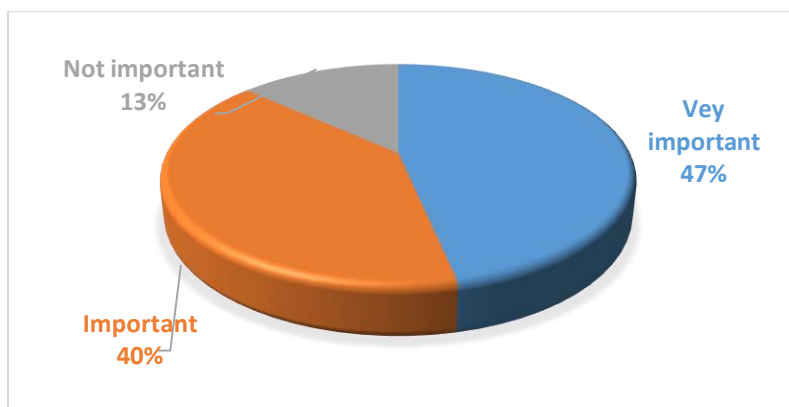
As displayed in table 3 and figure 11, the great majority of students (83%) chose to study English by their own, whereas only a minority (17%) of them indicated that they did not. Hence, while the smashing majority of the students are motivated to learn English as it was their personal choice, teachers ought to bear the responsibility of creating the appropriate, effective learning environment to keep them motivated by becoming more active elements in class. Reconsidering the idea of fixed TSAs and endeavouring to apply more flexible seatings is probably a wise decision for teachers to take.

**Section II: Attitudes Towards the Current Seating Arrangement**

**Item 3: How important do you think classroom seating arrangement is?**

**Table 4: Importance of the SA in EFL Classroom**

| Options        | Number | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|--------|----------------|
| Very Important | 14     | 47%            |
| Important      | 12     | 40%            |
| Not Important  | 4      | 13%            |
| Total          | 30     | 100%           |



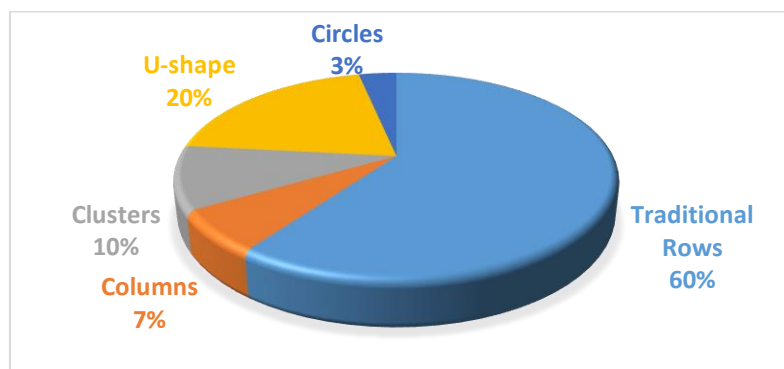
**Figure 12: Importance of the SA in EFL Classrooms**

The present question intends to gain information about the importance of the SA in EFL classrooms. From the data on the table above, it is apparent that a significant number of students are aware of the importance of SA whereas very few see classroom setups to be of no importance: 47% of the participants stated that classroom SA is very important, 40% of them believe that it is important, and the remaining 13% consider it as unimportant. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of students (87%) are apparently interested in the classroom SA.

**Item 4: In your classroom, which of the following seating arrangements is currently used?**

**Table 5: Currently used Seating Arrangement**

| Options                 | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Traditional Rows</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>60%</b>     |
| <b>Columns</b>          | <b>2</b>  | <b>7%</b>      |
| <b>Clusters</b>         | <b>3</b>  | <b>10%</b>     |
| <b>U-shape</b>          | <b>6</b>  | <b>20%</b>     |
| <b>Circles</b>          | <b>1</b>  | <b>3%</b>      |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>30</b> | <b>100%</b>    |



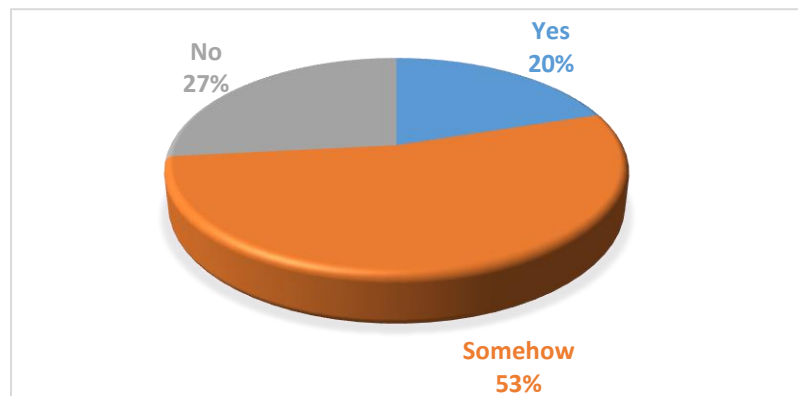
**Figure13 : Currently used Seating Arrangement**

The results on the table above reveal that traditional rows are the most used seating in EFL classrooms, with 60% of answers. Yet, for 20% of participants it is U-shape, for 7% it is columns, for 10% it is clusters, and for 3% it is circles. It is noteworthy to state that despite the negative attitudes students have towards this type of SA there is an inclusive use of it.. EFL Students need more active environment for learning, and this can best achieved via MSAs; Hence, we think that it is better to change the routine of fixed formed classes and try to apply some of MSAs.

**Item 5: Does this seating arrangement make you feel more at ease?**

**Table 6: Students’ Attitudes Toward TRS**

| <b>Options</b> | <b>N</b>  | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>     | <b>6</b>  | <b>20%</b>            |
| <b>Somehow</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>53%</b>            |
| <b>No</b>      | <b>8</b>  | <b>27%</b>            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>30</b> | <b>100%</b>           |



**Figure 14: Students’ Attitudes Toward TRS**

This question seeks information concerning students’ attitudes towards TRS. From table 6, we can clearly notice that more than half (53%) of respondents stated that they somehow feel at ease with TSA. 27% of the participants do not feel comfortable with the currently used SA. 20% find it more comfortable as long as they can listen and maintain eye contact with the teacher, which indicates that those students who opted for the first choice are front-seated students, and thus, they do not have problems concerning this type of SA. The results obtained here prove the fact that students are not totally satisfied with fixed formed classes (traditional seatings).

### **Justify your answer please**

Students who opted for the first option (*Yes*) gave some justifications concerning why they feel at ease with the traditional way of arranging tables and chairs. First, the most prominent reason is that most students are used to sit in traditional rows for many years. Second, the TRS helps them to see teachers and hear their instructions as well as concentrate more on the lesson.. In addition, students think that changing the classroom furniture has nothing to do with their way of learning. Some Students who share the same line of thought believe that trying the U-shape SA is much better at the university level. However, some students did not justify their answers. Students justifications are listed as follows:

- “The SA does affect my way of learning”
- “Since I can see and hear the teacher”
- “Since I can concentrate on the lesson”
- “Since it makes me feel comfortable”
- “Because I can grasp information easily”

Students who opted for the second option(*Somehow*) stated several reasons. First, they find it difficult to follow the lesson and maintain eye contact with the teacher while he/she explains the lesson. Second, some students stated that this type of SA demotivates them because of the large number of students. Some of the students’ reasons are following:

- “Because I cannot hear and see clearly the teacher ”
- “Because I cannot follow and make it difficult to me to understand the lesson because of the big number of students ”
  - “Because I cannot follow the lesson”

Students who opted the last choice (*No*) dislike TSAs for many reasons. First, students can better learn the language through cooperative work , and cooperative activities take place effectively in modern arranged classes as apposed to traditional classroom setups. Thus, they stated that it is better to try MSAs instead of TSAs. Second, students sometimes face difficulties like not hearing and seeing the teacher. Moreover, they stated that this type of SA does not encourage them to participate during class. Add on, it does not support group discussion. Besides, students seating at the back may feel bored and isolated from front-seated ones. Some students also stated that after trying some MSAs, particularly, the U-shape SA, they find them much more encouraging for classroom participation and teacher-students interaction. Instances of what they stated are:

- “Because sometimes I can’t see and hear the teachers’ voice”

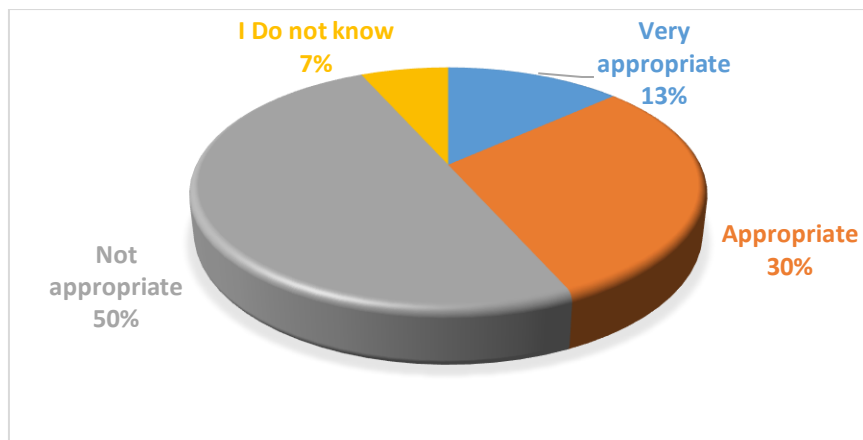


- “I prefer the U-Shape SA because it is good for interaction ”
- “We hardly form groups”
- “Because I cannot participate during class”
- “Since it is not helpful for classroom discussion ”
- “I would like to try other motivating SAs instead of traditional ones ”

**Item 6: How applicably appropriate do you think it is for EFL classrooms?**

**Table 7: Attitudes Toward the Application of TRS**

| Options         | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very Important  | 4         | 13%            |
| Appropriate     | 9         | 30%            |
| Not appropriate | 15        | 50%            |
| Ido not know    | 2         | 7%             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>30</b> | <b>100%</b>    |



**Figure 15 : Attitudes Toward the Application of TRS**

Obviously, the attained results for this question display that half of the respondents (50%) believe that TRS is not the most appropriate type to be applied in EFL classrooms. 30% of participants find it appropriate. For 13% of them, the current SA is very appropriate. Only 7% stated that they do not know if it is appropriate or not.

**Whatever the answer, please justify**

Noteworthy, five students out of 30 did not justify their answers. Those who opted for the appropriateness of TRS for EFL classrooms (thirteen students) believe that it is helpful for

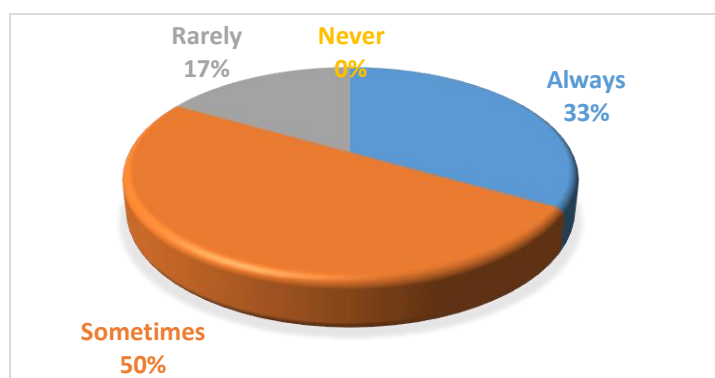
concentration and makes it easy for them to follow teachers' instructions. Others think that it is the best SA since it is the only seating they are used to.

An important number of students who choose the third option (*Not appropriate*) trust that this SA is not appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, they believed that the applied type of seating has many shortcomings, and thus, does not provide EFL learners with the appropriate productive environment for effective teacher-student and student-student interaction. In this regard, Harmer (1998) states that when students' seat face the back of their friends seats is called "safe sitting" which would generate low interaction students. Secondly, some students noted that TSA not only affects students' way of learning but also the teacher's method of teaching. Moreover, students stated that TSA make them passive elements; they do not participate and cannot interact with each other. Add on, some students added that each of them prefers one type of SA or another, and therefore, one type cannot serve for all students, and all activates. However, Students who chose the last option (*I do not know*) provided no justifying statements.

**Item 7: Does this seating arrangement distract you or cause you to lose interest in class?**

**Table 8: Difficulties related toTRS**

| Options   | Number | Percentage (%) |
|-----------|--------|----------------|
| Always    | 10     | 33%            |
| Sometimes | 15     | 50%            |
| Rarly     | 5      | 17%            |
| Never     | 0      | 0%             |
| Total     | 30     | 100%           |



**Figure 16: Difficulties related toTRS**

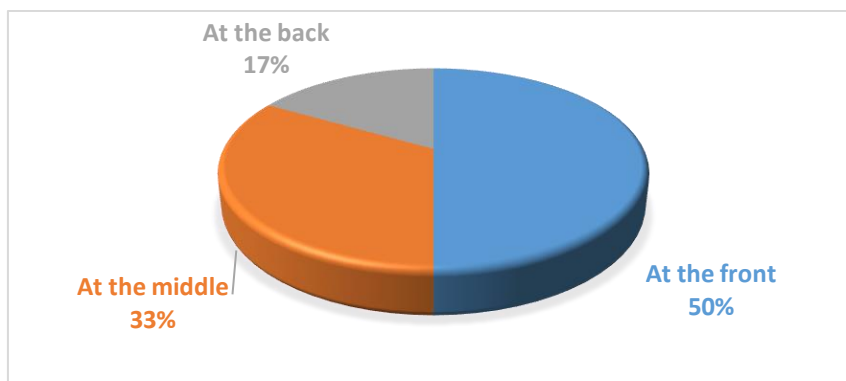
Obviously, the results gained in response to this question show that half of the respondents (50%) lose interest from time to time in class within the frames of TSA. Whereas 33% of

students declared that they always feel distracted with this type of seating, 17% stated that they rarely face difficulties in association with this seating. It is very likely that the latter are front-seated students. The last option (*Never*) is left out of choice from the part of the participants. The results of this question confirm those of the previous one : students do not feel comfortable with TRS as long as they face difficulties associated with it.

**Item 8: In the classroom, you usually sit:**

**Table 9: Students' Place inside the Classroom**

| Options              | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>At the front</b>  | <b>15</b> | <b>50%</b>     |
| <b>at the middle</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>33%</b>     |
| <b>At the back</b>   | <b>5</b>  | <b>17%</b>     |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>30</b> | <b>100%</b>    |



**Figure 17: Students' Place inside the Classroom**

As the table indicates, half of participants (50%) are front-seated students, whereas, 33% are middle -seated students. However, the rest of the students (17%) prefer to sit at the back of the classroom. These results indicate that even some of front-seated students and middle-seated students do not find TSAs to be the most appropriate SAs for EFL classes (see the two previous question)

**Please, explain why?**

Interestingly, Students have given some justifications concerning their seating location in the classroom. Most of the students who opted for the first choice (*At the front*) prefer to sit at the front for several reasons. Firstly, they argue that sitting at the front gives them the opportunity to hear and see the teacher clearly. Second, it enables them to concentrate and understand the lecture well. Another reason is that students at the front can easily interact with

the teacher. Moreover, front- seated students can avoid the noise coming from the back, so that they can focus more on the teachers' explanation. However, nine (9) students did not justify their answers. The main points raised by the students to explain their answers are as the following:

- “Because I can focus on the lesson”
- “I can see and hear the teacher”
- “It help me to avoid noise at the back”

The explanations provided regarding the second choice (*at the middle*) are quite similar to the above raised points. Students have provided two main reasons to justify their choices. In the first place, they stated that sitting at the middle makes them feel more comfortable and helps them focus more as well as grasp information more easily. Another reason middle-seated students stated to explain their choice is that they prefer to sit at the middle of the classroom to avoid the noise students make at the back. Instances of what they stated are:

- “ Because I can focus and follow the teacher”
- “Because I feel comfortable at the middle”
- “Because I like siting at the front of the classroom”
- “To avoid noise at the back”

Students who opted for the last choice (*At the back*) have provided only two reasons to explain their choices. Firstly, they stated that they like sitting at the back. Secondly, they prefer sitting back there because they are merely shy students. The answers they provided are:

- “ Because I like to sit at the back”
- “Becuse I'm shy student”
- I feel comfortable at the back”

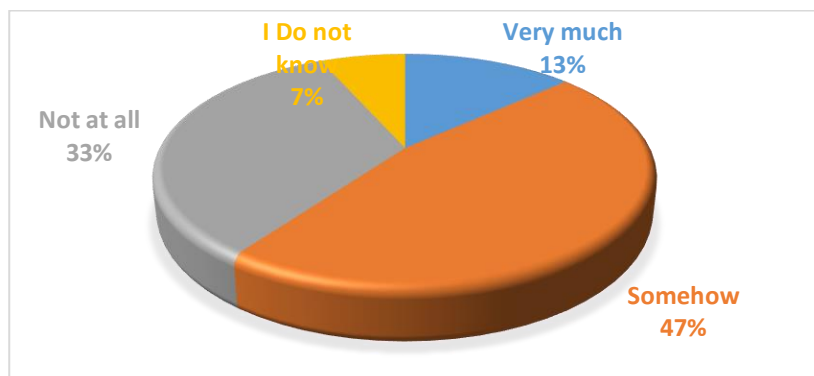
To conclude this section, and for later purposes of gauging and discussing the results, it is worthy to range some of the significant statistics in light of the answers so far obtained. First, it is noticed that the highest percentage of students (87%) believe that the SA in EFL classrooms is of a great importance. Second, 80% of the students find that TSAs are uncomfortable mainly because they lead to a very noisy class, causing difficulty to follow the teacher. Unsurprisingly, while half the number of the students (50%,) declared that the traditional seatings are not appropriate , 83% stated that they face difficulties with the TSAs.

### Section III: Seating Arrangements and Participation

**Item 9: In your opinion, how relevant is traditional seating arrangement to learners' participation rate during class?**

**Table 10: students' Attitudes Towards TSAs**

| Options       | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very much     | 4         | 13%            |
| Somehow       | 14        | 47%            |
| Not at all    | 10        | 33%            |
| I do not know | 2         | 7%             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>30</b> | <b>100%</b>    |



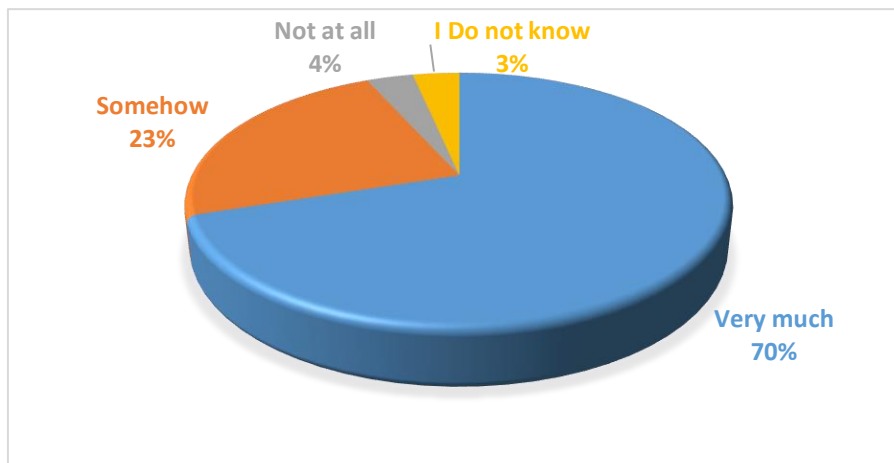
**Figure 18: students' Attitudes Towards TSAs**

This question seeks information concerning students' attitudes towards TSAs. The results in the table above demonstrate that 47% of students answered that they find TSAs somehow encouraging for classroom participation. 33% of respondents totally dislike the TSA and therefore they opted for the option stating that traditional seatings do not encourage them to participate during class. Whereas only 13% of the respondents stated that they are highly encouraged to interact with TSAs, the rest (7%) stated that they do not know whether it encourages them to participate or not.

**Item 10: In your opinion, how relevant are modern seatings to learners' motivation to participate during class?**

**Table 11: Students' Attitudes Toward MSAs**

| Options      | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very much    | 21        | 70%            |
| Somehow      | 7         | 23%            |
| Not at all   | 1         | 4%             |
| Ido not know | 1         | 3%             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>100%</b>    |



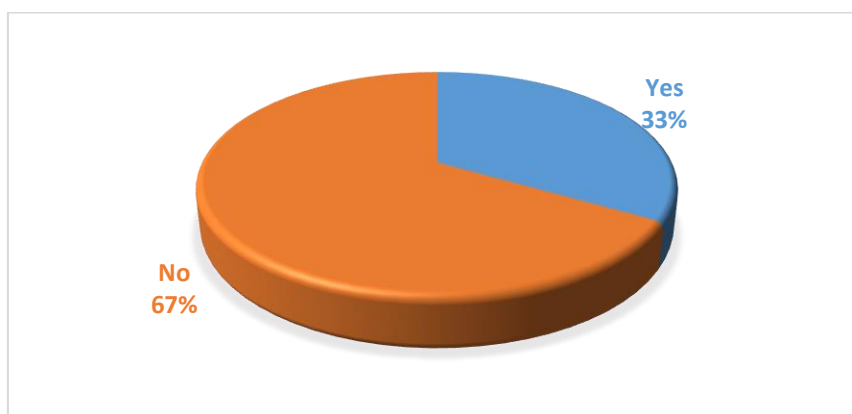
**Figure 19: Students' Attitudes Toward MSAs**

This question aims to gain information concerning students' attitudes towards MSAs. From table 11, we can clearly notice that over than two thirds of the students (70%) believe that MSA encourages them to participate to a great extent, whereas only 4% believe the opposite. However, 23% stated that they somehow feel encouraged to participate with this type of SA. The rest of participants (3%) stated that they do not know whether modern seatings encourage them to participate or not. On the basis of the obtained results of (Q10), we deduce that the great majority of students find MSAs very encouraging to classroom participation.

**Item 11: Have your teachers ever used any of the modern seatings?**

**Table 12: Trying SAs other than TSAs**

| Options | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--------|----------------|
| Yes     | 10     | 33%            |
| No      | 20     | 67%            |
| Total   | 30     | 100%           |



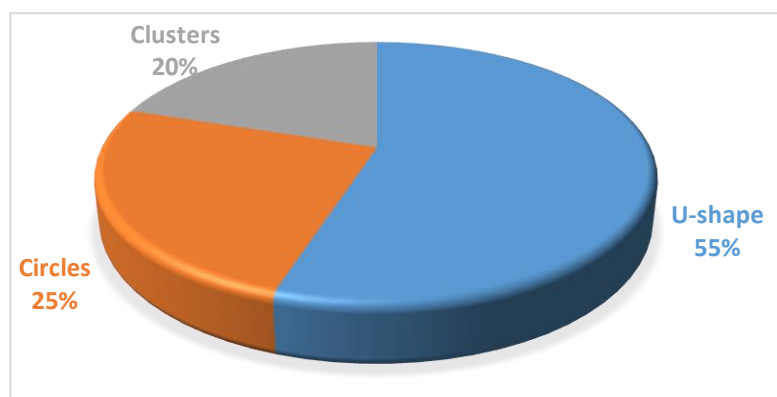
**Figure 20: Trying SAs other than TSAs**

As it is shown in the table, according to the majority of our sample (69%), teachers did not try any of the modern seatings. Whereas, the remaining minority of students (31%) stated that they have experienced some of MSAs with their teachers. In the light of the obtained results, we deduce that there is some change concerning the classroom furniture, yet not a common change.

**If yes, name it/them**

**Table 13: MSA Applied in the Classroom**

| Options  | Number | Percentage (%) |
|----------|--------|----------------|
| U-shape  | 11     | 55%            |
| Circles  | 5      | 25%            |
| Clusters | 4      | 20%            |
| Total    | 20     | 100%           |



**Figure 21: MSA Applied in the Classroom**

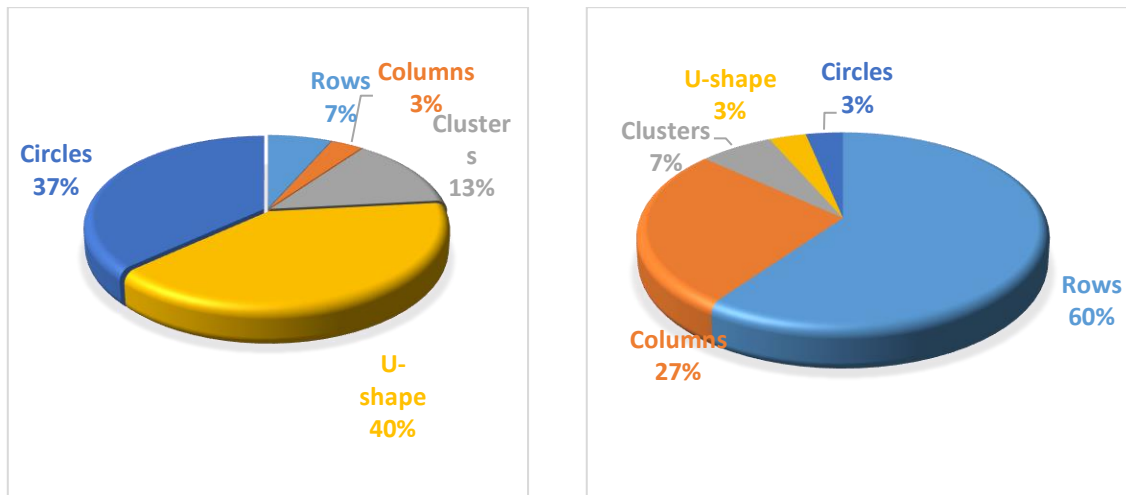
This question aims at gaining information about the mostly used modern seatings in the Department of English. As the table 13 and figure 13 display, the U- shape is the most applied SA (55%), followed by Circles (25%), then Clusters (20%). This leads us to say that EFL teachers generally find U-shape as the most useful and practical SA for EFL classrooms.

**Item 12: Using numbers (1 through 5 respectively), range the following seating arrangements from most to least encouraging for classroom participation?**

**Table 14: Ranking SAs from the most to least encouraging for classroom participation**

| Option          | The First SA |      | The Second SA |      | The Third SA |      | The Fourth SA |      | The Fifth SA |      |
|-----------------|--------------|------|---------------|------|--------------|------|---------------|------|--------------|------|
|                 | N            | %    | N             | %    | N            | %    | N             | %    | N            | %    |
| <b>Rows</b>     | 2            | 7%   | 2             | 7%   | 1            | 3%   | 7             | 23%  | 18           | 60%  |
| <b>Columns</b>  | 1            | 3%   | 2             | 7%   | 3            | 9%   | 17            | 57%  | 8            | 27%  |
| <b>Clusters</b> | 4            | 13%  | 4             | 13%  | 15           | 43%  | 4             | 14%  | 2            | 7%   |
| <b>U-shape</b>  | 12           | 40%  | 11            | 36%  | 5            | 14%  | 1             | 3%   | 1            | 3%   |
| <b>Circles</b>  | 11           | 37%  | 11            | 37%  | 6            | 31%  | 1             | 3%   | 1            | 3%   |
| <b>Total</b>    | 30           | 100% | 30            | 100% | 30           | 100% | 30            | 100% | 30           | 100% |





**The U-shape (the most encouraging) Traditional Rows (the least encouraging)**

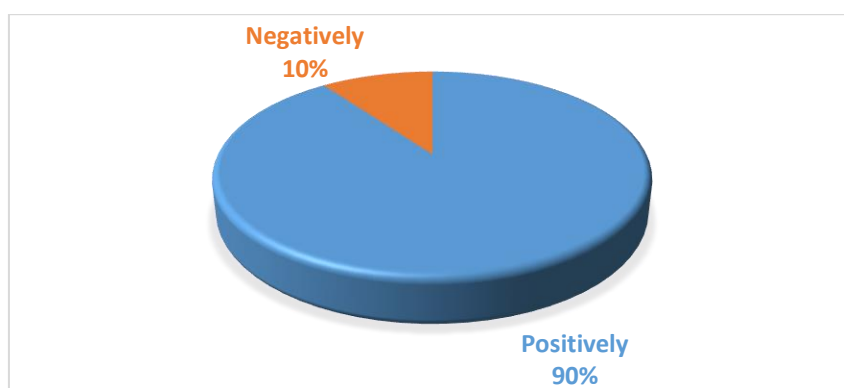
**Figure 22: Ranking SAs According to their effect on classroom participation**

When asked to rank the SAs from most to least encouraging for classroom participation, the participants provided answers that can be exposed in the following order of percentages: 40% for U-shape, 37% for circles ,13% for clusters, 7% for rows, and 3% for columns. Importantly, in the fifth classification, a considerable number of participants (60%) agreed that TRS is the least encouraging SA for classroom participation, however, the rest of students (3%) classified the U-shape as the least encouraging SA; this supports what has been previously found in the obtained results in Q11.

**Item 13. If seating arrangement changed depending on the nature of the activity, will participation be affected:**

**Table 15: The effect of Changing SA according to The Nature of Activities on Students' Participation.**

| Options    | Number | Percentage (%) |
|------------|--------|----------------|
| Positively | 27     | 90%            |
| Nigatively | 3      | 10%            |
| Total      | 30     | 100%           |



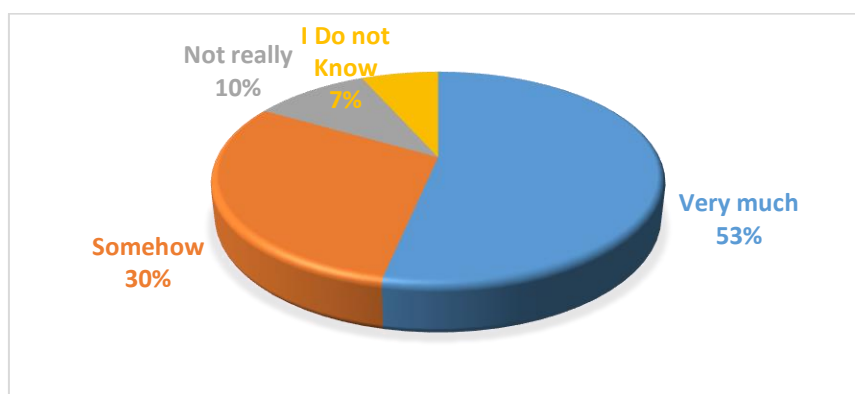
**Figure 23: The effect of Changing SA according to The Nature of Activities on Students' Participation.**

Table 15 shows that most of the respondents (90%) believe that changing the classroom setups (SA) according to the nature of activities would promote positively their participation rate in class. The rest (10%) stated that changing the classroom SA does not affect their participation during class. Interestingly, this leads us to say that students are actually aware about the importance of SA on fostering their participation in EFL classes.

**Item 14: In your view, to what extent can modern seatings be applicable in EFL classrooms?**

**Table 16: Application of MSAs at the Department of English**

| options       | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|--------|----------------|
| Very much     | 16     | 53%            |
| Somehow       | 9      | 30%            |
| Not really    | 3      | 10%            |
| I do not know | 2      | 7%             |
| Total         | 30     | 100%           |



**Figure 24: Application of MSAs at the Department of English**

Results show that while more than half (53%) of the students believe that MSAs can significantly be applied in EFL classrooms, only 10% of them believe that modern seatings are not applicable. Moreover, 30% stated that MSAs can be applicable to some extent. However, the remaining number of respondents (7%) do not know whether these modern SAs can be applied or not. It can be understood from these results that most of the students are actually looking for a change in the classroom furniture, and believe that MSAs would positively affect their way of learning.

**Whatever you answer is, please say why.**

Sixteen (16) students did not justify their answers. Students who chose the first option (*Very much*) believe that MSAs create a new way of interaction and are likely to foster their participation in a more dynamic atmosphere where communication can highly take place. Therefore, they put it clearly that the idea of MSAs should be considered by EFL teachers. According to them, the change in classroom setups is much needed and MSAs are better to try despite the problems that may be faced in the classroom. Furthermore, some students stated that different lectures and activities require applying various types of SA.

On the other hand, respondents who opted for the second option (*Somehow*) believe that applying MSAs at the department of English is not really possible because of the large number of students which may demotivate EFL teachers to apply modern seatings.

Similarly, students who chose the third option (*Not at all*) provided arguments similar to the one previously discussed. According to them, the application of MSAs is not possible because of the obstacles teachers may face like the overcrowded classes and classroom size. However, students who opted for the last option stated they do not know whether MSAs can take place in EFL classrooms or not.

All in all, while the majority of the participant students (70%) believe that MSAs are very motivating for classroom participation, some of them are applied by EFL teachers. The percentages indicated regarding their appliance run as follows: U-shape (55%), Circles (25%), and Clusters (20%). Interestingly, a great number of students (90%) believe that changing the classroom setups (SA) according to the nature of activities would foster positively their participation. Most importantly, the U-shape proved to be the most encouraging SA for classroom participation classification (40%), however, traditional Rows as the least encouraging SA (60%). Furthermore, 53% of the students agree that MSAs can be applied in EFL classrooms.

## **Section IV: Further Suggestions**

### **Item 15: Describe how an ideal EFL classroom seating arrangement would be like.**

Seven (7) students did not answer this section. However, those who did, provided interesting descriptions. First, most of the students see MSAs as most appropriate for EFL classrooms, and thus, teachers need to apply them through the whole year. According to them, the U-shape and circles are the best SAs for classroom participation, engagement and better understanding of the lecture. Some students mentioned other modern types like the Theater and Bow SAs. Other students opted for regular change of the classroom furniture. According to them, what creates an ideal classroom is the variation of modern seatings in the class; they stated that classroom activities are varied and, therefore, it is the teachers' duty to change the SA whenever needed. Furthermore, some students brought on the surface the idea that different SAs can be applied in the same session, so that the objectives of the lesson can be better achieved. Interestingly, We can clearly notice that most students have positive attitudes towards MSAs, especially, the U- shape and Circles SAs.

Briefly, this section leads to the conclusion that EFL students are of two categories. The first category represents those who desire a complete change of the classroom setups. The second category stands for those who want a regular change of classroom setups according to the nature of the lecture.

### **III.3. Population and Sampling**

The target population of the present study includes EFL teachers at the Department of English, University of Abbes Laghrour –Khenchela. Ten (10) teachers in the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020 were chosen randomly. We have choose EFL teachers because we believe that changing the classroom furniture is one of the teachers' responsibilities in class. They are responsible to change SA in such way that suits the nature of activities and learners' needs.

### **III.4. Teachers' Questionnaire**

#### **III.4.1 Description**

The questionnaire submitted to the teachers begins with an introduction that informs teachers about the scope of the present research and its main aim, namely to investigate the effect of modern classroom SAs on promoting students' participation, in addition to some figures illustrating the selected SAs. The introduction is followed by sixteen (15) questions, nine (9) questions are close-ended questions that include multiple choices. Six (6) questions are open-

ended with a provided space to explain their choices or to add further suggestions/ comments. These questions are structured in four blocks: ‘Background Information’ (Q1-Q2), ‘Traditional seating arrangement’ (Q3-Q8), ‘Modern Seating Arrangement’ (Q9-Q14), and ‘Further Suggestions/ comments’ (Q15).

### **Section I: Background Information (Q1\_\_Q2)**

This section tends to collect general information about the participants, specifically their educational level (Q1), and their teaching experience (Q2).

### **Section II: Traditional seating arrangement (Q3\_\_Q8)**

This section seeks to explore teachers’ different attitudes in regard to traditional ways of seating in EFL classrooms. For this reason, the following matters are noted: the importance of SA in EFL classrooms (Q3), the currently used SA (Rows, Columns, U-shape, clusters or Circles) (Q4), between the dependence on one classroom SA and the variation (Q5), the action-zone of teacher-students interaction in the classroom (Q6), teachers’ opinions about students’ comfort with the TRS (Q7), and the teachers with the control of class regarding SA (Q8).

### **Section III: Modern Seating Arrangement (Q9\_\_Q14)**

This section is expected to investigate teachers’ level of recognition of MSAs (Q9) and their application of this type of seatings (Q10). Teachers’ opinions about students’ participation via modern seating arrangements is discussed in the eleventh question. Teachers are also asked to rank SAs from the most to least encouraging for classroom participation (Q12). Question thirteen is provided to explore whether changing SA according to the nature of activity affects participation or not. The last question (Q14) in this section is about the application of MSAs in EFL classrooms.

## Section IV: Further Suggestions (Q15)

The concluding section is where the teachers are requested to provide any additional comments or suggestions regarding the subject.

### III.4.2 Results and discussion

#### Section I: Background Information

Item 1: What is your educational level?

Table 17: Teachers' Educational Level

| Options         | Numbers   | Percentage% |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| MA (Magister)   | 9         | 90%         |
| PHD (Doctorate) | 1         | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> |

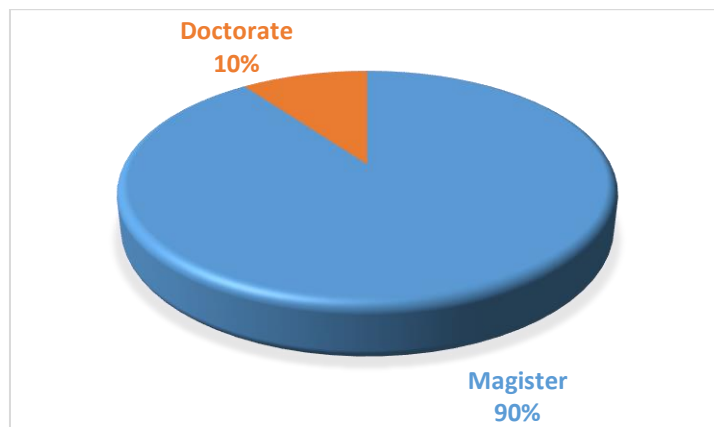


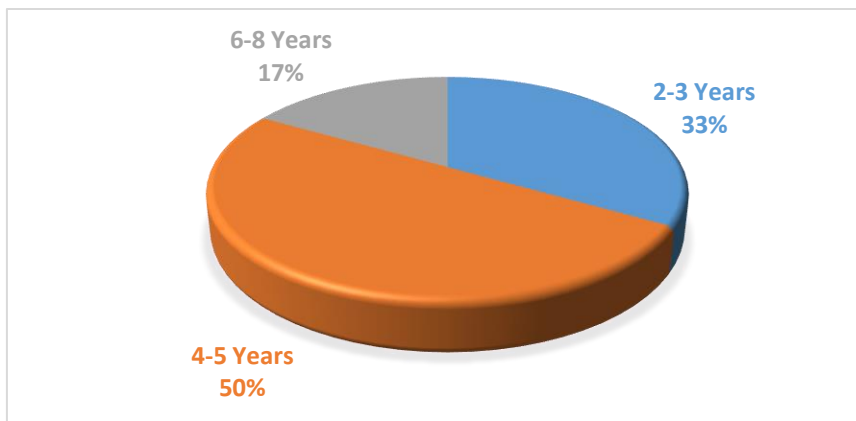
Figure 25: Teachers' Educational Level

Interestingly, the information presented in the table shows that the significant majority of respondents (90%) have got a Magister Degree, while one teacher (10%) holds a Doctoral Degree.

**Item 2: How long have you been teaching English?**

**Table 18: Teachers' Teaching Experience**

| Option    | Number | Percentage% |
|-----------|--------|-------------|
| 2-3 Years | 2      | 33%         |
| 4-5 Years | 5      | 50%         |
| 6-8 Years | 3      | 17%         |
| Total     | 10     | 100%        |



**Figure 26: Teachers' Teaching Experience**

Importantly, this question is raised to get information about teachers' experience in teaching English. As presented in table 18 and figure 26, half of the respondents (50%) have between 4-5 years' experience of teaching English as a foreign language. Moreover, 33% of the participants spent only between 2-3 years in this profession. The remaining teachers (17%) have between 6-8 years of teaching experience. Consequently, this leads us to say that most of teachers (67%) have enough experience in teaching English.

## Section Two: Traditional Seating Arrangement

Item 3: How important do you think classroom seating arrangement is?

Table 19: Importance of the SA in EFL Classroom

| Options        | Number | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|--------|----------------|
| Very Important | 4      | 40%            |
| Important      | 6      | 60%            |
| Not Important  | 0      | 0%             |
| Total          | 10     | 100%           |

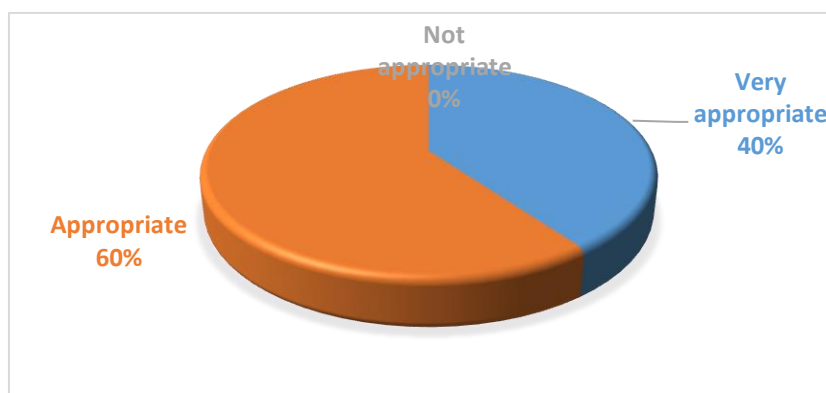


Figure 27: Importance of the SA in EFL Classroom

This question aims at getting information about the importance of the SA in EFL classrooms. It is clearly noticed from the table above that the teachers' responses as a whole consider the SA as an important factor in the classroom: around 60% of teachers believe that classroom SA is of a great importance, while the remaining 40% agreed that SA is important; however, the third option (Not important) is disregarded from the teachers' choices. This indicates that most EFL teachers are attentive to the great significance and value of the SA.

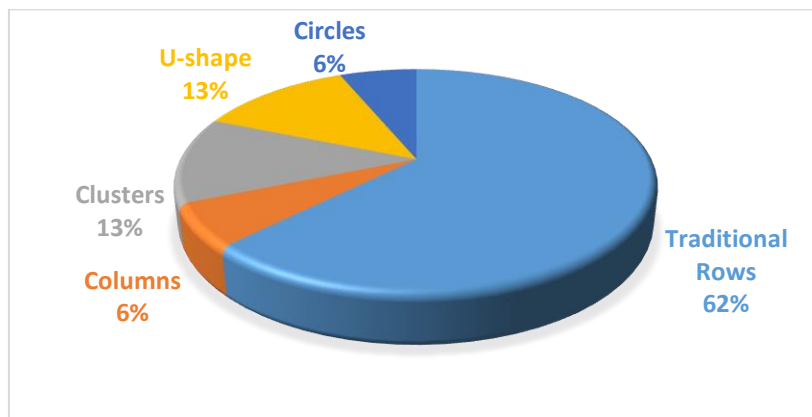


**Item 4: Which of the following seating arrangements do you use in the classroom?**

**N.B: Some participants have chosen more than one option in the same question**

**Table 20: Currently used Seating Arrangement**

| Options                 | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Traditional Rows</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>62%</b>     |
| <b>Columns</b>          | <b>1</b>  | <b>6%</b>      |
| <b>Clusters</b>         | <b>2</b>  | <b>13%</b>     |
| <b>U-shape</b>          | <b>2</b>  | <b>13%</b>     |
| <b>Circles</b>          | <b>1</b>  | <b>6%</b>      |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>16</b> | <b>100%</b>    |



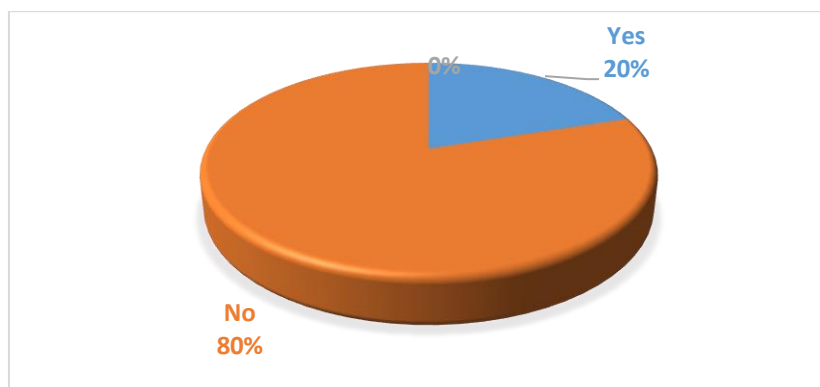
**Figure 28: Currently used Seating Arrangement**

Obviously, from the results on the table above, it is implied that teachers admitted the use of traditional rows in EFL classrooms to the highest degree, with 62% of answers. Still, while clusters and U-shape scored the same percentage (13% each), columns and circles are represented by 6% each. This implies that although teachers' choices are mostly directed to traditional rows, there is a tendency for using modern SAs as well. Therefore, in order to create an active learning environment, it is preferable that EFL teachers focus more on applying MSAs.

**Item 5: Do you apply only one specific type of seating arrangement throughout the year?**

**Table 21: Dependence on a specific type of Seating Arrangement**

| Option | Number | Percentage% |
|--------|--------|-------------|
| Yes    | 2      | 20%         |
| No     | 8      | 80%         |
| Total  | 10     | 100%        |



**Figure 29: Dependence on a specific type of Seating Arrangement**

The responses to this question, as presented in table 21, reveal that only 20% of the teachers depend on one specific type of SA all over the year. Importantly, a great majority of the sample (80%) opted for (*No*) option; that is to say, most of the teachers are in favour of changing the routine of classroom setups. Alternating between TSAs and MSAs is more preferable for them. Considering the attained results, we assume that EFL teachers are more in favour of changing classroom seating arrangements rather than being attached to one specific type.

**Please explain why**

Concerning the opposition between depending on one specific type of SA and changing the ways of seating in the classroom, teachers have provided a range of arguments and interesting justifications. The majority of teachers who opted for the second choice (*no*) are in favour of changing classroom setups for different reasons. While some of them share the same belief that changing classroom seating arrangements is a way to motivate students, build a student-centred learning medium and create an effective interaction, others explain that varying classroom SAs depends on several factors, including students' number, type of subject, teacher's course objectives and timing. However, only one participant did not justify his/her response. The responses provided by the teachers are:

- “Seating arrangement plays an important role in motivating students and in creating a learner-centred classroom”
- “It depends on the number of students, timing, nature of subject, etc., that one encounters”
- “First and foremost, it depends on the course type like to mention team work or discussion...as well as to break the routine, besides to create acceptable interaction”
- “The seating arrangement differ according to the module to be taught, the attitudes involved as well as the objectives underlined by teacher”
- “Varying the ways seatings are arranged breaks routine and motivates students more”
- “It depends on the course”
- “It differs from one subject to another and also according to the number of students”

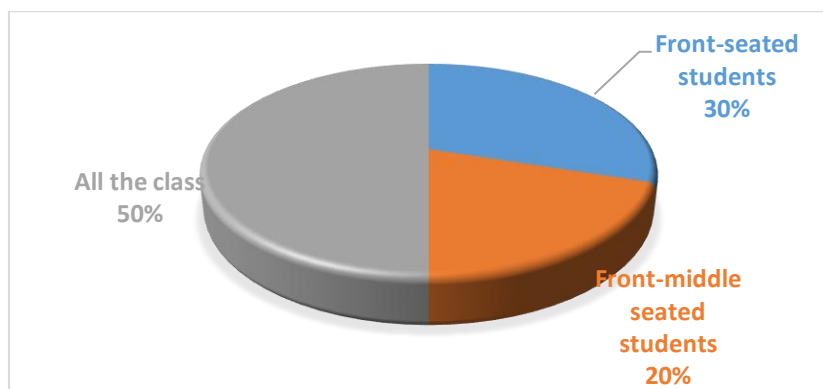
The two remaining teachers who opted for the first choice (*Yes*) admitted that they depend only on one particular type of seating arrangement throughout the year for some stated reasons. Firstly, they stated that classroom size may be an obstacle in changing class setting every time. Secondly, they argued that it is a time-taking process to rearrange classroom furniture each time. Additionally, they stated that they are obliged to apply one fixed type of SA because of the large number of students. Furthermore, some mentioned that they are used to this type of SA. The answers they provided are as follows:

- “Because of classroom size and the large number of students”
- “Time consuming task to arrange seating every time”

**Item 6: In the seating arrangement you are currently using, you usually work with**

**Table 22: The Action-Zone of Teacher-Students Interaction**

| <b>Option</b>                        | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Front- seated students</b>        | <b>3</b>      | <b>30%</b>         |
| <b>Front- Middle seated students</b> | <b>2</b>      | <b>20%</b>         |
| <b>All the class</b>                 | <b>5</b>      | <b>50%</b>         |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>10</b>     | <b>100%</b>        |



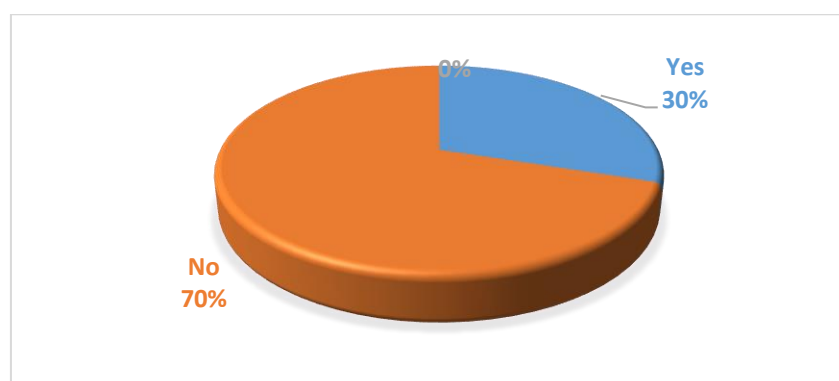
**Figure 30: The Action-Zone of Teacher-Students Interaction**

The question above exposes information concerning teacher-students interaction inside the classroom in regard to seating arrangements. As presented in table 22, half of teachers (50%) usually work with the whole class depending on the SA they use, while 30% of teachers commonly interact only with front-seated students. However, the rest of teachers (20%) find themselves in the interaction zone with front-middle seated students.

**Item 7: Does traditional Rows seating arrangement make your students feel more at ease?**

**Table 23: Teachers' opinions about Students' Comfort with the TRS**

| Option       | Number    | Percentage% |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes          | 3         | 30%         |
| No           | 7         | 70%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> |



**Figure 31: Teachers' opinions about Students' Comfort with the TRS**

Data in table 23 are about teachers' opinions in regard to students' comfort with TRS. It is crystal clear that a significant number of teachers (70%) believe that TRS does not cause any kind of comfort or relaxation to their students; however, the rest (30%) consider it as comfortable. The results obtained from the table supports what has been found regarding item 5; teachers' preference of changing classroom SAs is due to the lack of comfort in one type of it (TRSs).

### **How?**

Remarkably, four teachers out of 10 did not provide justifications to their answers. Those who chose (*No*) as an answer believe that TRS is against students' comfort for several reasons. Firstly, they believe that students themselves prefer other types of SA in order to have access to a much more active and productive environment; hence, their chances to participate and interact are likely to be increased. Secondly, teachers stated that such SA would be a reason for listening issues and a lack of access to the subject being taught. In addition to this, one teacher believed that students' comfort zone regarding SA depends on the nature of the subject or the course to be taught. Samples of teachers' justifications are:

- “They prefer to be in a U-Shape other than otherwise, as they all are granted the same chances of interesting”
- “Most students won't get the chance to participate because simply they think that they are not motivated by teachers”
- “For instance, in the oral session students generally tend to work in groups, in other words, they mostly like to be exposed directly to each other(i.e. altogether)”
- “some of students do not have a chance to have access to session content, even would experience listening problems”

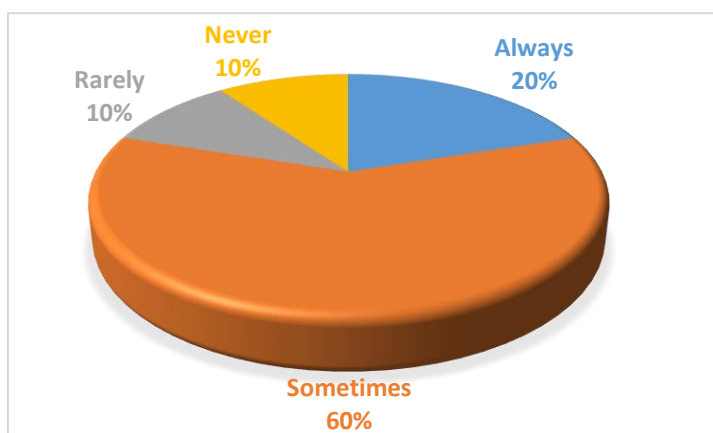
Teachers who chose the first option declare that their students feel more at ease with the use of TRS for one particular reason. They think that changing this type of SA affects students' efficiency since they are used to it. Their responses are as the following:

- “They are accustomed to this sort of seating; changing it may affect their productivity”
- “Because they are habituated to it”

**Item 8: Does this seating arrangement cause you to lose control of class?**

**Table 24: Teachers' Attitudes towards TSA**

| Option    | Number | Percentage% |
|-----------|--------|-------------|
| Always    | 2      | 20%         |
| Sometimes | 6      | 60%         |
| Rarely    | 1      | 10%         |
| Never     | 1      | 10%         |
| Total     | 10     | 100%        |



**Figure 32: Teachers' Attitudes towards TSA**

The question is about the extent to which teachers could keep control of the classroom when using TRS. As the above table presents, more than half of sample (60%) asserted that because of this type of SA they sometimes lose control of class. 20% of the teachers answered that this type is always a reason for a class that is out of supervision. While 10% of the respondents indicated that they rarely face such a problem in their class, the remaining percentage (10%) represents the teachers who have been perfectly able to control and manage their TRS-arranged classrooms.

In conclusion, this section provided significant statistics which are better to be ranked for subsequent results and data. First, it is apparent that a high percentage of teachers (60%) believe that SAs are an important factor in EFL classrooms. Second, although there exists a significant number of teachers (62%) who apply the traditional rows seating arrangement, there appears among them a tendency of changing this type of SA into MSAs. This implies, most of teachers (80%) are in favour of changing classroom SAs in order to create a more comfortable and interactive learning medium depending on several factors.

### Section III: Seating Arrangement and participation

Item 9: Which of the following modern seatings are you familiar with?

Table 25: Familiarity with modern SAs

| Option       | Clusters |             | U-Shape |             | Circles |             |
|--------------|----------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|
|              | Number   | Percentage% | Number  | Percentage% | Number  | Percentage% |
| Familiar     | 6        | 60%         | 7       | 70%         | 6       | 60%         |
| Not familiar | 4        | 40%         | 3       | 30%         | 4       | 40%         |
| Total        | 10       | 100%        | 10      | 100%        | 10      | 100%        |

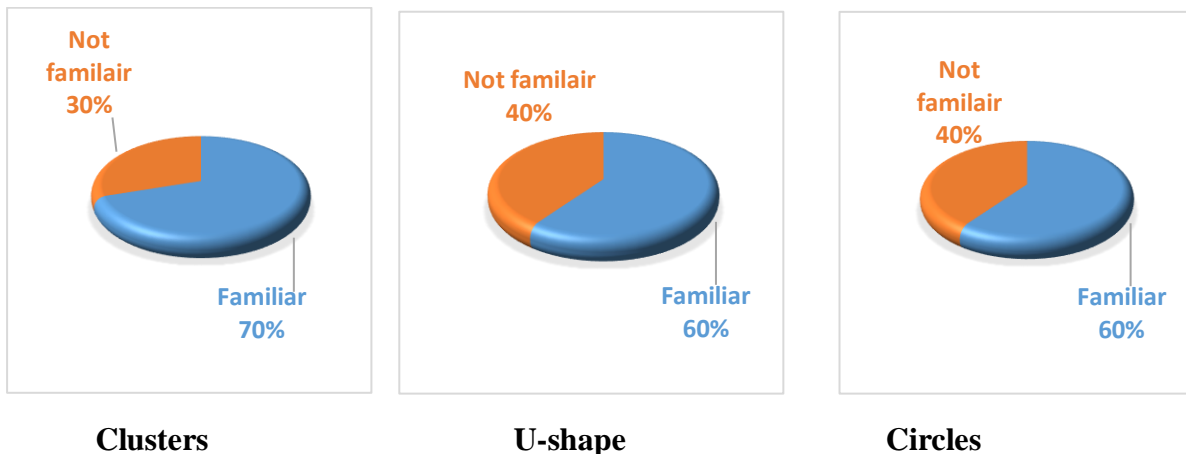


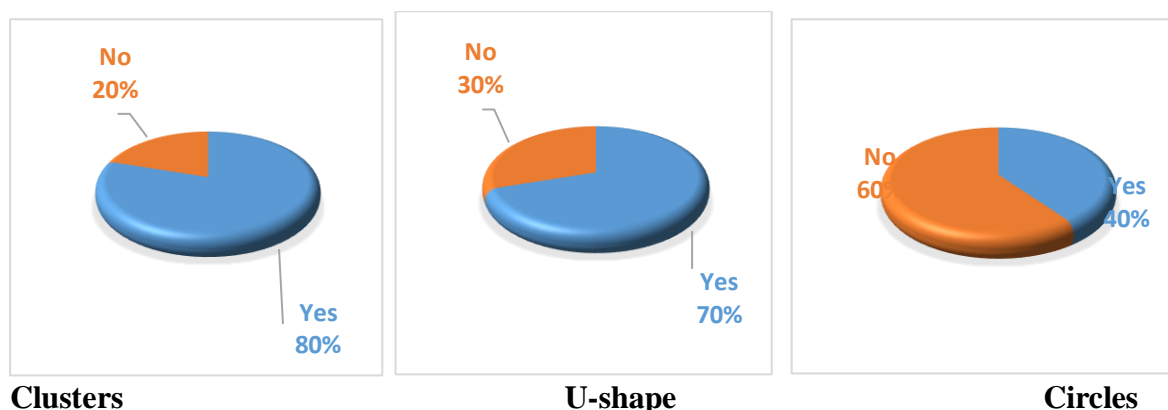
Figure 33: Familiarity with modern SAs

The given question tends to obtain information about the familiarity of particular MSAs according to teachers. The table and the figure above illustrate that U-Shape is the most recognized seating arrangement in EFL classrooms, with 70% of choices, but the rest (30%) claim that it is not familiar. 60% of teachers declare their recognition of clusters, while the other 40% stated that it is not familiar. Circles is presented as familiar to 60% and unfamiliar to 40%. From the obtained results we note that most of teachers are familiar with the chosen modern seatings.

**Item 10: Have you ever used any of the modern seatings?**

**Table 26: Application of MSAs**

| Option       | Clusters  |             | U-shape   |             | Circles   |             |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
|              | Number    | Percentage% | Number    | Percentage% | Number    | Percentage% |
| Yes          | 8         | 80%         | 7         | 70%         | 4         | 56%         |
| No           | 2         | 20%         | 3         | 30%         | 6         | 44%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> |



**Figure 34: Application of MSAs**

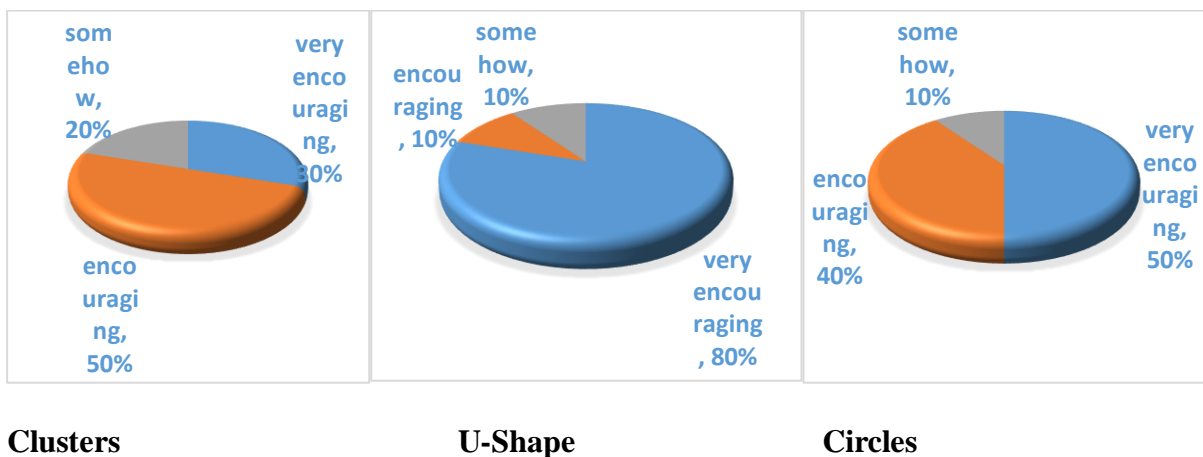
The above question is about the tendency of applying MSAs in EFL classrooms. On the basis of the obtained results in table 26 and figures 34, it is noticeable that clusters are the most used SA with 80% of answers, and only 20% of teachers do not usually use it in class. U-shape is chosen by 70% of users; 30% do not apply this type. Out of the total number, circles are used by 56% of the respondents. This implies that EFL teachers have an alternation of use between the three types of SAs; they find that both clusters and U-shape are the most beneficial and applicable in EFL classrooms.



**Item 11: How encouraging do you think modern seating arrangements are for students' participation during class?**

**Table 27: Teachers' Opinions about Students' Participation via Modern Seating Arrangements**

| Option           | Clusters  |             | U-shape   |             | Circles   |             |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
|                  | Number    | Percentage% | Number    | Percentage% | Number    | Percentage% |
| Very encouraging | 3         | 30%         | 8         | 80%         | 5         | 50%         |
| Encouraging      | 5         | 50%         | 1         | 10%         | 4         | 40%         |
| Somehow          | 2         | 20%         | 1         | 10%         | 1         | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b> |



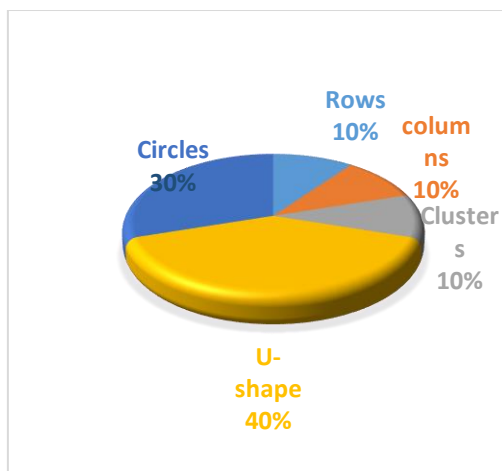
**Figure35: Teachers' Opinions about Students' Participation via Modern Seating Arrangements**

The table presents teachers' opinions towards students' participation in the frame of MSA. It is clearly noticed from table 27 above that U-shape is the most encouraging type for students' participation in the class with the percentage of 80%, 10% see it as encouraging, whereas only (10%) believe that it is somehow encouraging. Circles are considered as very encouraging by 50%, 40% see it as also encouraging, while 10% of the teachers think that it is only somehow encouraging. 30% stated that clusters are very encouraging for students' participation, 50% consider it as also encouraging, whereas only 20% of teachers think that it is somehow encouraging. Interestingly, the obtained results supports what has been illustrated previously in item 10, and indicate that teachers have positive attitudes towards MSAs.

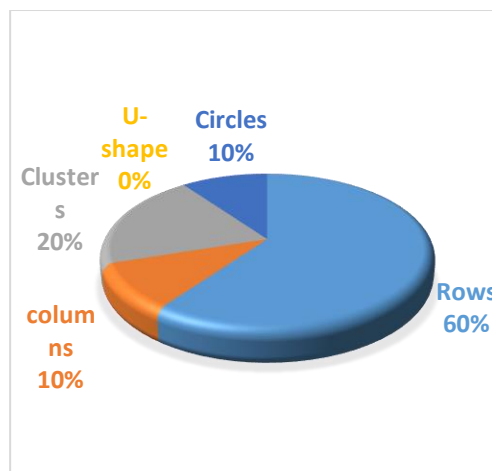
**Item 12: Using numbers (1 through 5 respectively), range the following seating arrangements from most to least encouraging for classroom participation?**

**Table 28: Ranking SAs from the most to least encouraging for classroom participation**

| Option       | The Most Motivating SA |             | The Second SA |             | The Third SA |             | The Fourth SA |             | The Least Motivating SA |             |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|              | N                      | %           | N             | %           | N            | %           | N             | %           | N                       | %           |
| Rows         | 1                      | 10%         | 0             | 0%          | 1            | 10%         | 1             | 10%         | 6                       | 60%         |
| Columns      | 1                      | 10%         | 1             | 10%         | 2            | 20%         | 6             | 60%         | 1                       | 10%         |
| Clusters     | 1                      | 10%         | 1             | 10%         | 5            | 50%         | 2             | 20%         | 2                       | 20%         |
| U-Shape      | 4                      | 40%         | 3             | 30%         | 1            | 10%         | 0             | 0%          | 0                       | 0%          |
| Circles      | 3                      | 30%         | 5             | 50%         | 1            | 10%         | 1             | 10%         | 1                       | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>10</b>              | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b>     | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b>    | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b>     | <b>100%</b> | <b>10</b>               | <b>100%</b> |



**U-Shape (the most encouraging)**



**Traditional Rows (the least encouraging)**

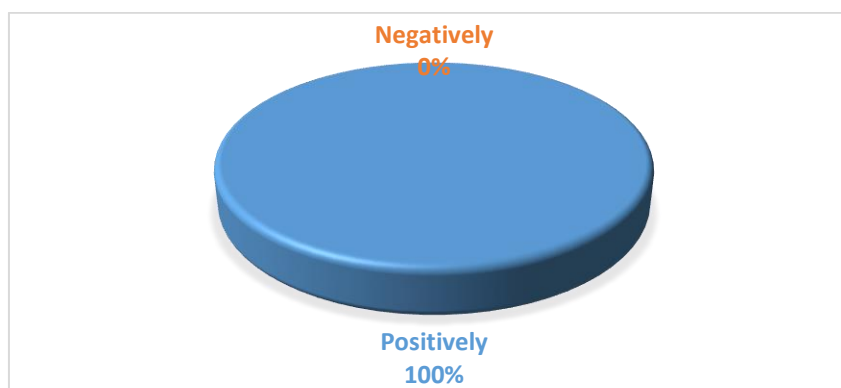
**Figure 36: Ranking SAs from the most to least encouraging for classroom participation**

The responses to this question as it is shown in the table above, suggest a certain order of SAs from most to least encouraging for classroom participation. The percentages are revealed as follows: 40% for U-Shape, 30% for circles, 10% for clusters, 10% for columns, and 10% for rows. Obviously, 60% of participants have classified traditional rows in the fifth order as the least encouraging SA for classroom participation, followed by clusters (20%), then columns (10%) and circles (10%). However, the U-shape was not classified or seen as the least encouraging SA for students' participation.

**Item 13: If seating arrangements changed depending on the nature of the activity, will participation be affected: Positively/Negatively**

**Table 29: The effect of changing SA according to the nature of activities on students' participation.**

| Options    | Number | Percentage (%) |
|------------|--------|----------------|
| Positively | 10     | 100%           |
| Negatively | 0      | 0%             |
| Total      | 10     | 100%           |



**Figure 37: The effect of changing SA according to the nature of activities on students' participation.**

Table 30 and figure 37 show that the teachers in their totality (100%) believe that changing SA according to the nature of activities would positively enhance the students' level of participation in the classroom. That is to say, EFL teachers are conscious about the existing effects of SAs on students' classroom participation.

**Please, explain how**

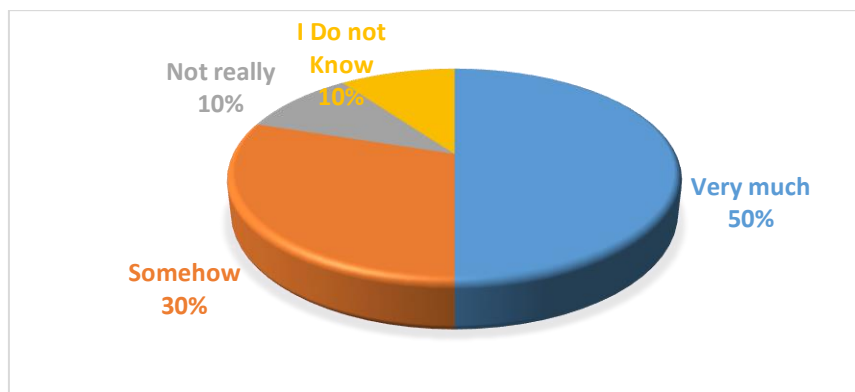
Two teachers did not justify their answers. Those who provided justifications and their different opinions concerning the effects of changing SAs on students' participation expressed very interesting answers. Firstly, teachers believe that each type of SA suits a particular activity; thus, the variation of SAs on the bases of the nature of provided tasks and lectures would create a more concentrated students. Moreover, this change in SAs would increase students' participation and motivation to become more active participants in classroom. Furthermore, teachers in this regard claim that certain activities and sessions require specific ways of arranging classroom setups via MSAs in order to set up the floor for students to perform and participate better. Samples of teachers' responses are as the following:

- “The nature of the task would impose a particular SA, because sometimes it’s a necessity to work in small groups, while another time the whole class should work and interact together”
- “Some session (like O. Exp) depend much on the SA. Students in the front positions tend to be more active”
- “Activities that are interactional by nature require a U-shape because learners need to see one another presenting and debating. The traditional way of seating, however is more convenient if the teacher is lecturing”
- “When students are seated in an arrangement that suit the activity in question, students feel more integrated and concerned with the task/activity”
- “Students will feel more relaxed to participate and to perform better”
- “It depends on the nature of the lecture”
- “Group work is not like the individual work”

**Item 14: In your view, to what extent can modern seatings be applicable in EFL classrooms?**

**Table 30: Application of MSAs at the Department of English**

| Options       | Number    | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| Very much     | 5         | 50%            |
| Somehow       | 3         | 30%            |
| Not really    | 1         | 10%            |
| I do not know | 1         | 10%            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>10</b> | <b>100%</b>    |



**Figure 38: Application of MSAs at the Department of English**

The results obtained on the table above show that half (50%) of teachers see that MSAs can be extensively applied in EFL classrooms, while 10% of them believe that modern seatings cannot be applied. Besides, 30% claimed that MSAs are somehow applicable in EFL classrooms. However, the rest (10%) of teachers stated that they do not know whether MSAs are applicable to EFL classrooms or not.

**Whatever your answer is, please say why**

Three teachers did not justify their answers. The ones who opted for the first choice (*Very much*) stated that applying MSAs enhances and fosters the teaching-learning process, through creating a balanced learning medium between all classroom students. Moreover, some teachers believe that since each activity requires a certain type of arranging classroom furniture, it is best to involve new modern seatings. Additionally, they stated that students in the classroom are in demand of new and creative methods of interaction and learning, and these can be reached through using MSAs.

But despite that, teachers who opted for the second choice (*Somehow*) think that MSAs are in some way not easily applicable due to classroom size; certain types of seating do not suit over-crowded classes. Likewise, teachers who opted for the third choice (*Not really*) provided answers in the same line of thought with the ones previously stated. According to them, the application of MSAs is challenging because of the large number of students, time limitations and classroom space. Yet, respondents who opted for the last option declare that they do not know about the application of MSAs in EFL classrooms. Samples of teachers' justifications are:

- “Some institutional factors will render the application of this modern arrangements somehow challenging. It is hard for instance, to apply circles in an over-crowded class”
- “Short time, we don't really care how they are seated”
- “Using the modern seating methods will enhance and facilitate the process of teaching and learning for it will give more space and equality for all learners”
- “Number of students is large, time limitations”
- “the objectives behind each activity will impose a particular arrangement”
- “classroom size”

## Section IV: Further Suggestions

**Item 15: Please express any additional comments or suggestions in the space below.**

Four teachers did not provide comments in this section. The six remaining did provide interesting suggestions. First, most of them see the variation and change in classroom setups as the best way to create the suitable environment in which students become more engaged. Therefore, the majority of teachers are advised to apply the different types of SAs periodically in EFL classes. Moreover, some teachers believe that the traditional way of seating better be avoided since it creates a more teacher-centred classroom and leads to an ignorance of students' active participation. Thus, it can be replaced by the use of MSAs which are more suitable for EFL classrooms. Furthermore, some teachers suggested the U-shape as an efficient MSA, for the reason that it provides a more positive atmosphere for learning, in such a way that it creates a sense of equality among all learners in class that enables them to participate and perform better in a relaxed manner. Remarkably, we can detect the high level of tendency that EFL teachers have toward MSAs and the efficiency of the latter regarding EFL classrooms and students' level of performance.

Concisely, this section exposes the fact that EFL teachers are more in favour of the MSAs' application in classrooms, and they are aware of its importance, even though they are not using it constantly at the present time.

### Comparison of Findings

The analysis of students' questionnaire is similar to that of teachers. Firstly, it is demonstrated that most of students and all EFL teachers who participated in this study believe that SA is of great importance in EFL classrooms. Secondly, the majority of the students feel uncomfortable with the applied TSA. Moreover, half of the students share negative attitudes concerning the appropriateness of TSA in EFL classes. Added to this, in this chapter, it is clearly shown that the significant majority of students face difficulties (like losing interest) with the currently used SA. Most importantly, a considerable number of students find MSAs very motivating to classroom participation (item 10) while only a minority opted for TSA (item 11). Moreover, both teachers and students agreed that changing SA according to the nature of activities can affect positively classroom participation. Furthermore, the U-shape is agreed to be the first and most encouraging SA for students participation (, while the the TRS is believed to be the least encouraging SA).

## **Conclusion**

The present chapter has provided an analysis of both students' and teachers' questionnaires in order to investigate the effect of modern seating arrangements on promoting the students' participation in EFL classrooms. The results obtained from students' questionnaire indicates that most of third year LMD students are actually aware of the importance of SA in EFL classrooms. They even stated that they do not feel at ease with the use of TSAs, while MSAs are most preferable. Furthermore, they agreed with teachers that the U-shape is the most applicable and encouraging SA for classroom participation. However, through the results obtained from the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire, we have found that most of EFL teachers depend on one specific type of SA, add on, they agreed that TRS is not suitable for EFL classrooms. Despite the teachers' familiarity with modern seatings, and negative attitudes they have towards TSA, yet they keep using it. This leads to the conclusion that the lack of awareness is not the reason behind the non- application of MSAs.

## **Recommendations and Suggestions**

Language is communicative by nature, therefore, the process of language learning requires a more interactive and productive environment to take place efficiently. Thus, seating in one specific type of SA for the whole year cannot be helpful to achieve better learning . However, to promote students' interaction and participation rate during class, teachers can periodically vary the classroom SA according to the nature of the lecture, type of courses and tasks in hand. As it is proved by the present study, the idea of the application of fixed SA does not serve the different stated objectives of the lecture. Hence, the idea of fixed formed classes should be reconsidered by all EFL teachers. Importantly, Most of teachers and students have got good attached ideas that should be put into practice to create the required learning environment .

On the basis of the findings obtained from the present study we suggest the following:

First, most of EFL teachers stated that they depend on one specific type of SA because of the obstacles, such as time limitation, that stand against the application of other modern seatings. As a solution to this problem we can suggest for EFL teachers the following: first, the working staff of the university can contribute to the change of furniture, or, with collaboration of students, teachers can easily arrange the classroom setups. However, before choosing the suitable SA, teachers should take into consideration students' level, the size and courses type.

Second, the idea of changing the classroom setups from time to time should be taken into consideration by the administration, thus, modern arranged classes are needed. Therefore, We

suggest that EFL teachers and administration staff form modern classes with modern furniture (MSAs) for a particular group of EFL students. This may greatly motivate the rest of students to be amongst that group in a more interactive environment that is in favour of active participation. Furthermore, encouraging the students who do better in modern seating arrangements can motivate other classmates to be positive in the new seating arrangement. EFL teachers should encourage their students' participation because participation is considered as one of the most important factors in learning English.

Overall, this study is useful not only for students to help them promote their participation in EFL classrooms, but also facilitate for teachers the process of teaching. Further research should be done to investigate the effect of creating a suitable classroom atmosphere for students' participation in EFL classrooms

## **General conclusion**

In this dissertation, we have attempted to investigate the effect of MSAs on promoting the students' participation in EFL classrooms at the Department of English- University of Abbes Laghrour.

In the first chapter, we have tackled classroom SA as a part of classroom management. Add on, we shed light on its different types, particularly, the U-Shape, Circles, and Clusters, as well as their advantages and disadvantages. The three types are proved to have great advantages in promoting students' participation more than traditional ones. In the second chapter, we have extensively dealt with participation, namely its definition, types, and various theories and approaches, as well as the importance of this concept in EFL classrooms, and its effect in the teaching learning process were tackled.

The third chapters represent the practical part of this research. We opted for questionnaire as one of data collection tools; two questionnaires were administrated to both EFL teachers and third year students. The aim behind addressing both participants is to know the effect of MSAs on students' participation, how classroom agents perceive MSAs link to students' participation, and the most practical and useful seating arrangement in EFL classrooms, in addition to making a comparison between teachers' and students views to see whether they share the same view point concerning the classroom SA.

The obtained results validate our hypothesis. Via the analysis of the data obtained from the two questionnaires, we have come to the point that both EFL teachers and students share the same perceptions towards the positive effect of MSAs, especially the U-shape, on promoting



the students' participation. It is agreed that the U-shape is the most practical and useful SA in EFL classrooms. Moreover, the participant classified traditional seatings as least encouraging for classroom participation. Furthermore, it is argued that changing SA according the different classroom activities positively promotes classroom participation. Therefore, on the basis of these results, the hypothesis of the present study which states that applying modern seating arrangements effectively promotes students' participation in EFL classrooms is confirmed.

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### **On-line Resources:**

<https://englishpost.org/classroom-setting-arrangements/>

<https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/ClassroomSeatingArrangements>

<http://teachingonpurpose.org/journal/the-importance-of-classroom-design/>

<https://ctl.yale.edu/ClassroomSeatingArrangements>

<http://www.tesolclass.com/classroom-management/classroom-seating-arrangements/>

[https://www.unco.edu/cebs/teacher-education/undergraduate-programs/classroom\\_management.aspx](https://www.unco.edu/cebs/teacher-education/undergraduate-programs/classroom_management.aspx)

<https://blog.ampli.com/2014/03/classroom-layouts-seating-arrangements-for-effective-learning.html>

[https://www.displays2go.com/Article/Effective-Classroom-Seating-Arrangements-32?fbclid=IwAR0J21GMj-](https://www.displays2go.com/Article/Effective-Classroom-Seating-Arrangements-32?fbclid=IwAR0J21GMj-4vFKC5CBA6F0dmXZF4xB7gaVyjfATH3RY1_Eh8nC4wWK4EUo0)

[4vFKC5CBA6F0dmXZF4xB7gaVyjfATH3RY1\\_Eh8nC4wWK4EUo0](https://www.displays2go.com/Article/Effective-Classroom-Seating-Arrangements-32?fbclid=IwAR0J21GMj-4vFKC5CBA6F0dmXZF4xB7gaVyjfATH3RY1_Eh8nC4wWK4EUo0)

[https://fr.slideshare.net/KarinaTukhasova/classroom-arrangement-68000246?qid=8ec5448f-c2fb-443f-b530-39839acd6e47&v=&b=&from\\_search=4](https://fr.slideshare.net/KarinaTukhasova/classroom-arrangement-68000246?qid=8ec5448f-c2fb-443f-b530-39839acd6e47&v=&b=&from_search=4)

[https://www.advancementcourses.com/blog/maximizing-learning-through-effective-classroom-seating-arrangements?fbclid=IwAR0yRV7FRnWs\\_thXro\\_it17c3ffGcgVtT3VLNnVaY CZ85azrDyraHUPtR0s](https://www.advancementcourses.com/blog/maximizing-learning-through-effective-classroom-seating-arrangements?fbclid=IwAR0yRV7FRnWs_thXro_it17c3ffGcgVtT3VLNnVaY CZ85azrDyraHUPtR0s)

<http://www.victoriaestrella.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/web-site-4.2-schlossberg-transition-theory.pdf>

<http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/18977/1/Unit-30.pdf>

<https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Teaching-and-Learning-Centre/Assets/Documents/Using-class-participation-to-develop-student-engagement-FINAL.pdf>

<https://www.facultyfocus.com › Articles › Teaching and Learning>

<https://www.ascb.org/careers/taking-terror-random-call/>

<https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Teaching-and-Learning.../Class-participation>

<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching.../promoting-effective-participation>

[https://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/shore/shore056.shtml](https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/shore/shore056.shtml)

### **Dictionaries:**

- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.



## **Appendices**

## **Appendix I: Students' Questionnaire**

### **Dear Students:**

We would be grateful if you could answer this questionnaire that is part of a research work; it aims at investigating the effect of modern seating arrangements on promoting the students' participation in EFL classrooms. Please provide sincere answers.

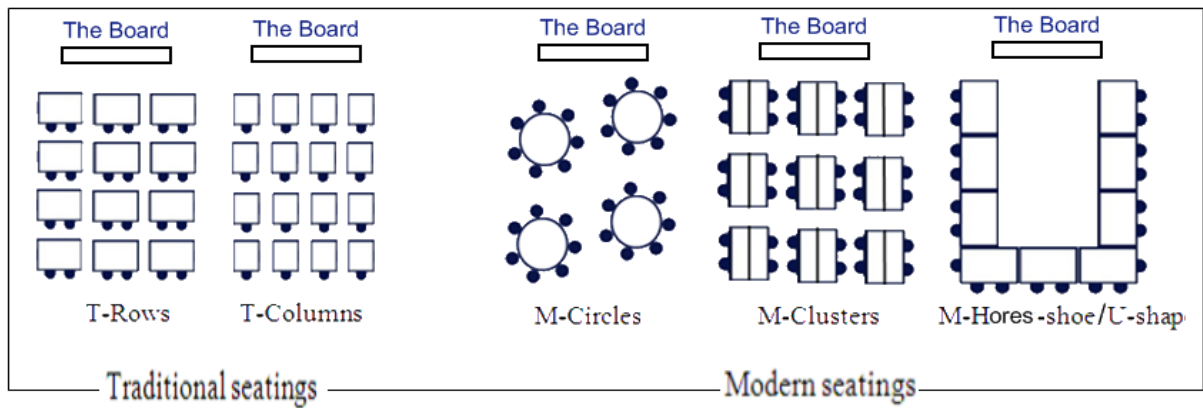
Please tick the appropriate box (es) and write statements when needed.

**- Designed by:**

- Miss Takouachet Djedda

- Miss Saadi Samira

**N.B:** The arrangements referred to in this questionnaire are as follows:



### Section One: Background Information

1. What is your gender?

Female

Male

2. Did you choose to learn English?

Yes

No

### Section Two: Attitudes toward the actual Seating Arrangement

3. How important do you think classroom seating arrangement is?

Very important

Important

Not Important

4. In your classroom, which of the following seating arrangements is currently used?

Traditional Rows

Clusters

Circles

Columns

U-shape

5. Does this seating arrangement make you feel more at ease?

Yes

No

Somehow

Justify your answer please

.....

6. How applicably appropriate do you think it is for EFL classrooms?

Very appropriate

Appropriate

Not appropriate

Do not know

Why? .....

7. Does this seating arrangement distract you or cause you to lose interest in class?

Always  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

8. In the classroom, you usually sit:

At the front  At the middle  At the back

Please, explain why?

.....

### Section Three: Seating Arrangements and Participation

9. In your opinion, how relevant is traditional seating arrangement to learners' participation rate during class?

Very much  Somehow  Not at all  I Do not know

10. In your opinion, how relevant are modern seatings to learners' motivation to participate during class?

Very much  Somehow  Not at all  I Do not know

11. Have your teachers ever used any of the modern seatings?

Yes  No

If yes, name it/them: .....

12. Using numbers (1 through 5 respectively), range the following seating arrangements from most to least encouraging for classroom participation?

Traditional Rows  Clusters  Circles   
Columns  U-shape

13. If seating arrangement changed depending on the nature of the activity, will participation be affected:

Positively

Negatively

14. In your view, to what extent can modern seatings be applicable in EFL classrooms?

Very much

Somehow

Not really

I Do not Know

Whatever you answer is, please say why.

.....

**Section Four: Further Suggestions**

15. Describe how an ideal EFL classroom seating arrangement would be like:

.....

.....

.....

.....



Thank you for your collaboration



## Appendix II: Teachers' Questionnaire

### Teachers' Questionnaire

**Dear Teachers:**

We would be grateful if you could answer this questionnaire that is part of a research work; it aims at investigating the effect of modern seating arrangements on promoting the students' participation in EFL classrooms. Please provide sincere answers.

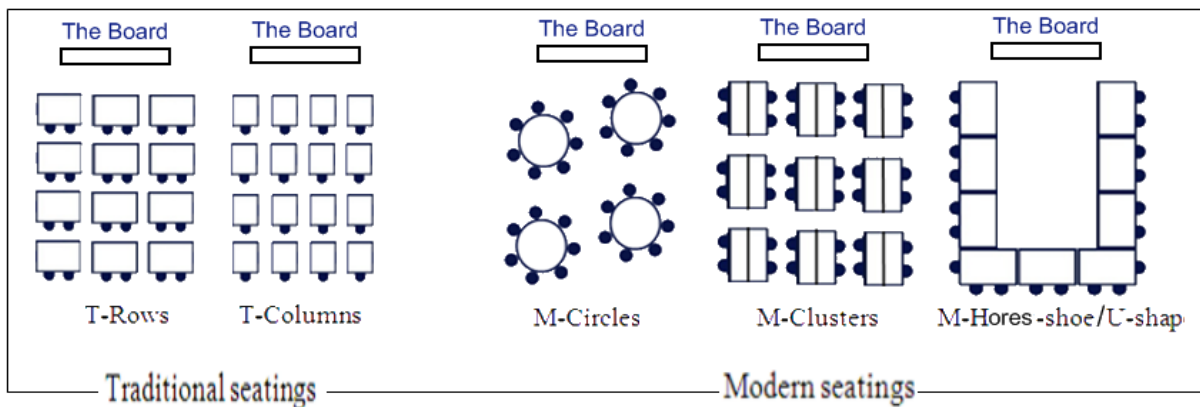
Please tick the appropriate box (es) and write statements when needed.

- **Designed by:**

- Miss Takouachet Djedda

- Miss Saadi Samira

**N.B:** The arrangements referred to in this questionnaire are as follows:



### Part One: Background Information

1. What is your educational level ?

a- MA(Magister)                       b- PhD (Doctorate)

2. How long have you been teaching English?

.....

### SectionTwo: Traditional Seating Arrangement

3. How important do you think classroom seating arrangement is?

Very important     Important     Not Important

4. Which of the following seating arrangements do you use in the classroom?

Traditional Rows     Clusters     Circles   
Columns     U-shape

5. Do you apply only one fixed type of seating arrangement throughout the year?

- Yes                       - No

Please explain why

.....  
.....  
.....

6. In the seating arrangement you are currently using, you usually work with :

Front seated students

Front-middle seated students

All the class

Other: please specify; .....

.....

7. Does traditional Rows seating arrangement make your students feel more at ease?

Yes                       No

How?.....  
.....  
.....



8. Does this seating arrangement cause you to lose control of class?

Always  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

**Section Three: Seating Arrangement and participation**

9. Which of the following modern seatings are you familiar with ?

|           |          |                          |              |                          |
|-----------|----------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Clusters: | Familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not Familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| U-shape:  | Familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not Familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Circles:  | Familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not Familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. Have you ever used any of the modern seatings?

|           |     |                          |    |                          |
|-----------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Clusters: | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| U-shape:  | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Circles:  | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. How encouraging do you think modern seating arrangements are for students' participation during class?

|           |                  |                          |             |                          |         |                          |
|-----------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Clusters: | Very encouraging | <input type="checkbox"/> | encouraging | <input type="checkbox"/> | Somehow | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| U-shape:  | Very encouraging | <input type="checkbox"/> | encouraging | <input type="checkbox"/> | Somehow | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Circles:  | Very encouraging | <input type="checkbox"/> | encouraging | <input type="checkbox"/> | Somehow | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. Using numbers (1 through 5 respectively), range the following seating arrangements from most to least encouraging for classroom participation?

|                  |                          |          |                          |         |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Traditional Rows | <input type="checkbox"/> | Clusters | <input type="checkbox"/> | Circles | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Columns          | <input type="checkbox"/> | U-shape  | <input type="checkbox"/> |         |                          |

13. If seating arrangements changed depending on the nature of the activity, will participation be affected:

Positively  Negatively

Please, explain how:

.....

.....

.....

.....

14. In your view, to what extent can modern seatings be applicable in EFL classrooms?

Very much       Somehow       Not really       I Do not now

Whatever your answer is, please

.....

**Section four : Further Suggestions**

15. Please express any additional comments or suggestions in the space below.,

.....

.....

.....

.....



**Thank you for your collaboration**



## ملخص

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على كيفية ترتيب مقاعد جلوس الطلبة داخل قاعات الدراسة كعامل مهم ومؤثر في مشاركة الطلبة و تفاعلهم داخل القسم. و على إثر ذلك تم اقتراح بعض الطرق الحديثة لتنظيم مقاعد جلوس الطلبة والمتمثلة في : "الجلوس على شكل مربعات" و "الجلوس على شكل حدوة حصان" و اخيرا "الجلوس على شكل دوائر"، و التي نرى ان لها دورا إيجابيا في تشجيع الطلبة على المشاركة اثناء الدرس. و في هذا الصدد، تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى التحقق من فاعلية هذه الترتيبات الجديدة على مشاركة الطلبة في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية. إفترضنا في مقدمة البحث ان تطبيق ترتيبات الجلوس الحديثة في اقسام اللغة الإنجليزية من شأنه ان يشجع الطلبة على المشاركة اكثر، ولقد تم التأكد من صحة هذه الاخيرة من خلال النتائج المحصل عليها من خلال تحليل الإستبانيين الموجهين الى كلا من أساتذة و طلبة السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية. أ وقد انتهت الدراسة الى أن ترتيبات الجلوس الجديدة لها تأثير إيجابي على مشاركة و تفاعل الطلبة في الصف؛ و أثبتت نتائج البحث ايضا ان تصورات كل من الأساتذة و الطلبة حول إيجابية ترتيبات الجلوس الحديثة في تعزيز مشاركة الطلبة و خلق الجو المناسب في اقسام الدراسة متطابقة. علاوة على ذلك، يرى كلا الفريقين أن لتغير طريقة الجلوس وفق طبيعة النشاطات المعطاة خلال الحصص له تأثير ايجابي على مشاركة الطلبة. ثم إنه يتفق كلا من الأساتذة والطلبة على ان الجلوس على شكل حدوة الحصان هو الترتيب العملي الأكثر تعزيزا لمشاركة الطلبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

ترتيبات الجلوس في قاعات الدراسة، الجلوس على شكل حدوة حصان، الجلوس على شكل دوائر، الجلوس على شكل مربعات، المشاركة، أساتذة و طلبة اللغة انجليزية.