

Classroom Management



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FLTA Summer Orientation

Wednesday, August 9, 2017

Michigan State University

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Session Overview



- What to expect from students
- Classroom layout
- Error correction
- Lesson pacing
- Teacher/student interactions

My assumptions:

- There is a broad spectrum of language teaching experience among the people in this room.
 - Context (school or university, lead teacher or teacher assistant, etc.)
 - Length of service (a few months to many years)
- Classroom dynamics in the U.S. may differ from those you have experienced in your country.



Goal for this session:

To help you feel **comfortable**,
competent, and **confident** in your new
classroom



- One overarching question will guide our work:

“How might I organize my classroom and my lessons to best support language learning?”

Let's start with:



- **What to expect from students**
- Classroom layout
- Error correction
- Lesson pacing
- Teacher/student interactions

What should I expect from U.S. students?

- Extra motivation because you are here
- The potential for different attitudes towards:
 - Rewards for doing work
 - Technology (cell phones, laptops, etc.)
 - Attendance and punctuality



Let's move on to:



- What to expect from students
- **Classroom layout**
- Error correction
- Lesson pacing
- Teacher/student interactions

Classroom Layout

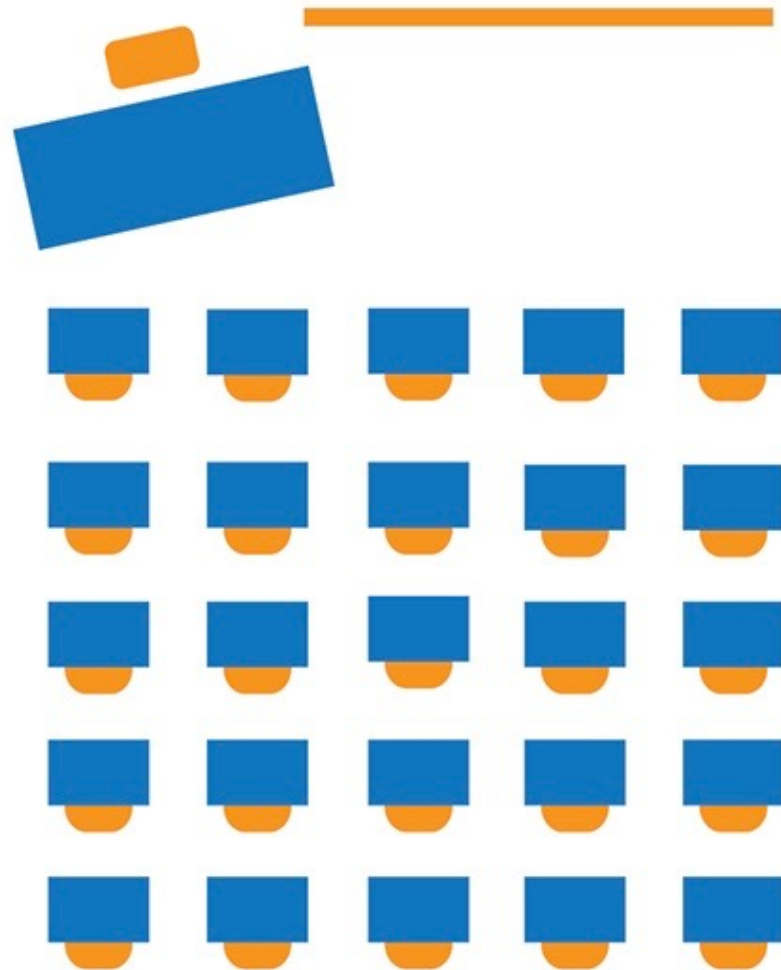


Consider the following three classroom configurations.

- Which have you experienced
 - as a language student?
 - as a language teacher?
 - as a student of another subject?

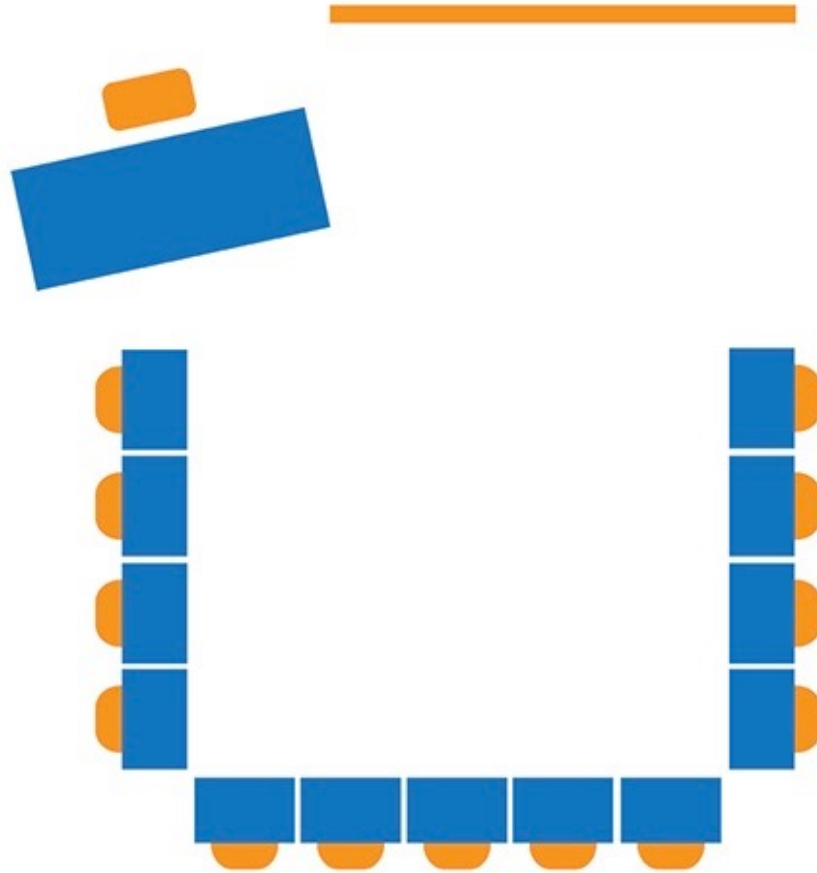
Classroom Layout

Rows/Columns



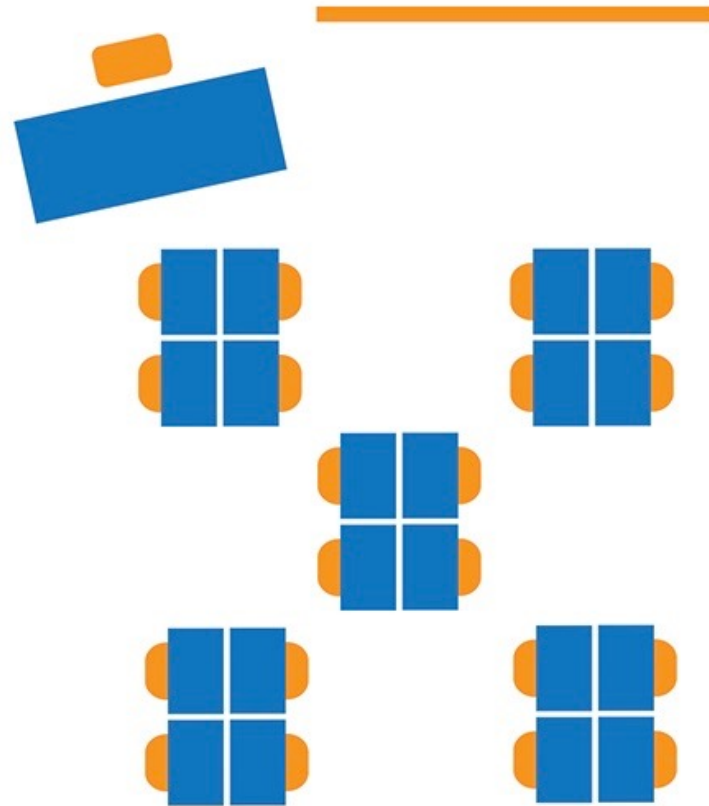
Classroom Layout

Horseshoe/U-Shape



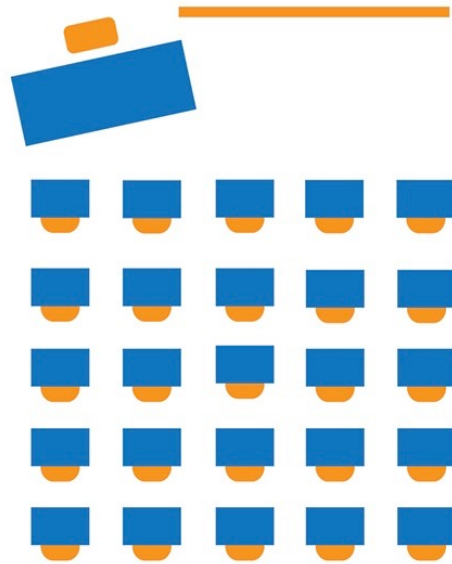
Classroom Layout

Clusters

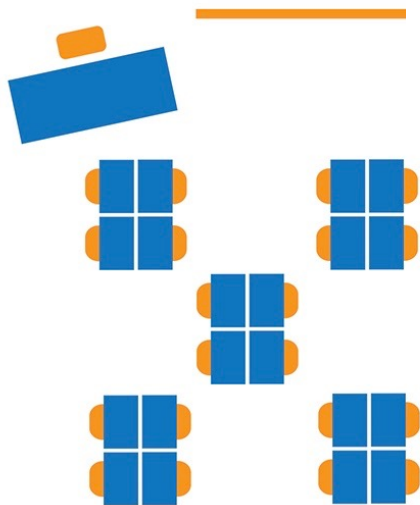


Classroom Layout

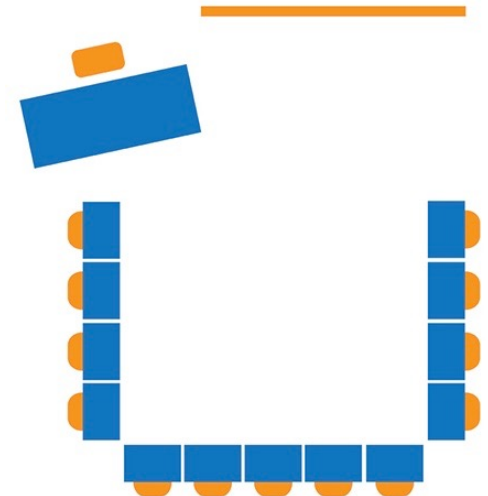
Rows/Columns



Clusters



Horseshoe/U-Shape



Activity 1: Classroom Layout



- Now work with a partner to complete the first activity on your handout.
- You have 7 minutes to discuss all three configurations.

Classroom Layout



Teacher-Centered Instruction

Independent Learning Format

Suitable for All Class Sizes

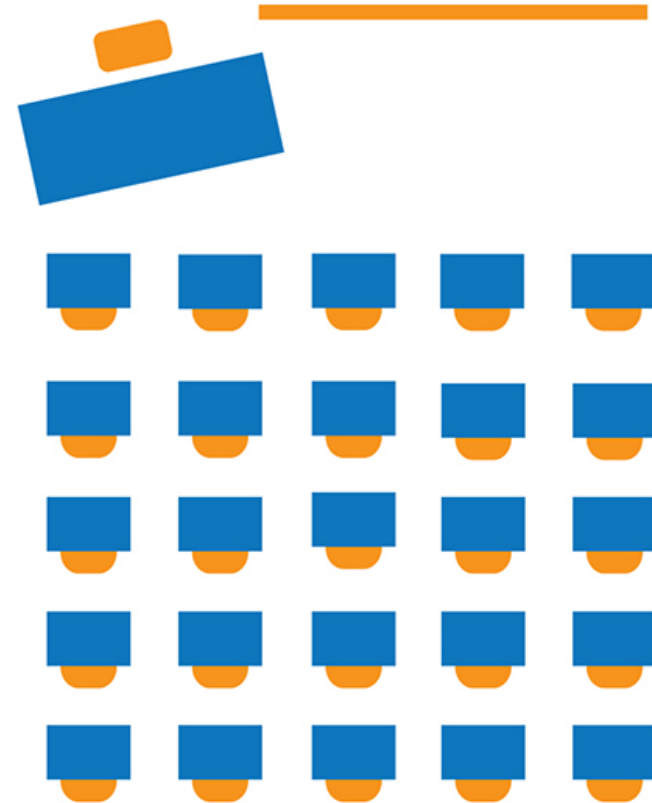
Pros

- Encourages individual work and productivity
- Minimizes disruptions and cheating
- Effective for demonstrations, test taking, and presentations
- Easier to supervise

Cons

- Discourages student-centered discussion and group work
- Easier to students to lose focus
- Uneven distribution of interaction amongst class
- Difficult for teachers to move easily from student to student

Rows/Columns



Classroom Layout



Teacher- and
Learner-Centered
Instruction

Large Group Format

Best for Small- and
Medium-Sized Classes

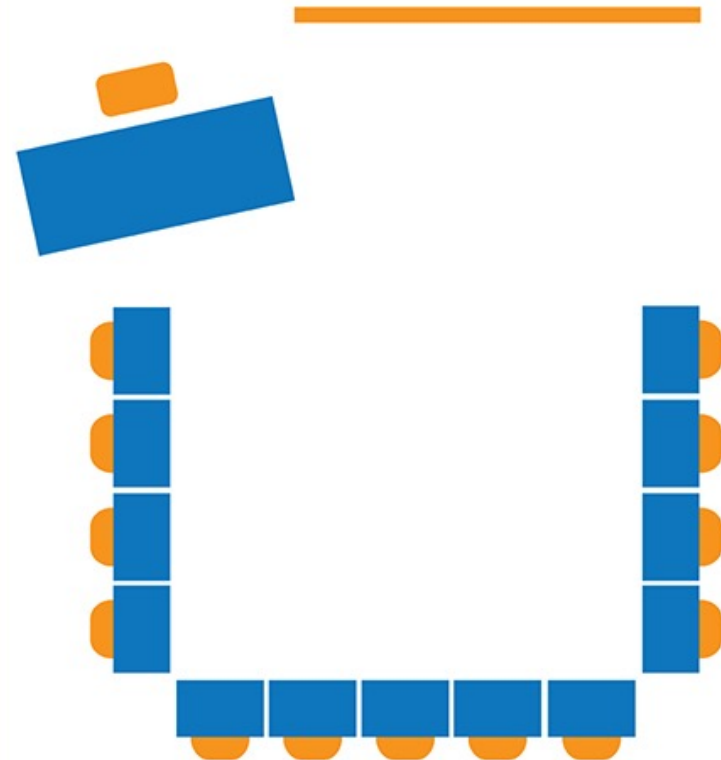
Pros

- Easier to interact with entire class
- Encourages discussion and participation
- Fosters connection between students and educator
- Large area for presentations and demonstrations

Cons

- Not suitable for work in small groups
- May overwhelm shy students
- May be difficult to control behavior
- Larger classes may have difficulty engaging in discussions

Horseshoe/U-Shape



Classroom Layout



Predominantly
Learner-Centered Instruction

Small Group Format

Suitable for All Class Sizes

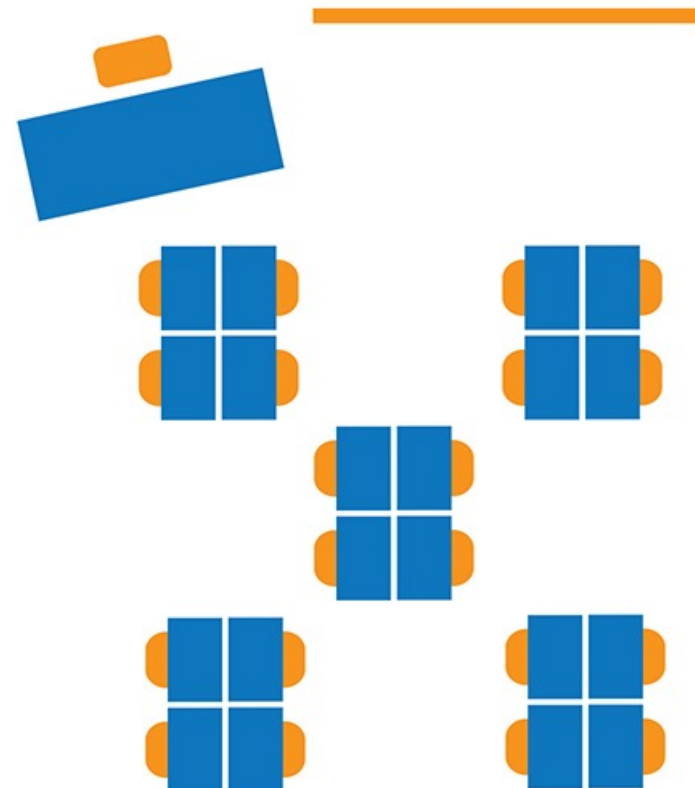
Pros

- Encourages interaction of all students
- Creates a more personal and safe environment for students to convey their ideas
- Promotes cooperation and teamwork
- Develops reflection, problem solving, and communication skills
- Flexibility to strategically form groups
- Suitable for small spaces

Cons

- Increased noise level, distractions, and off-task behavior
- Decreased productivity
- Less individual accountability
(ex. strongest student may do the bulk of the work)
- Harder to assess students' abilities and level of understanding

Clusters



Classroom Layout

Could you teach a language class in this room?



Classroom Layout

Things to consider when making layout decisions:

1. Can you see the faces of all students, and can they all see you?
2. If you plan to use the board, can all the students see it?
3. Can the students see one another?
4. Can you move around the room easily to monitor effectively?



Moving on to:

- What to expect from students
- Classroom layout
- **Error correction**
- Lesson pacing
- Teacher/student interactions



Error Correction

Language learners make mistakes!



But which errors should teachers correct? And how should we correct them?

Activity 2: Error Correction



- Now work with another partner (your neighbor on your other side) to complete the second activity on your handout.

- You have 10 minutes to discuss all three interactions.

Error Correction



- Things to consider when deciding which learner errors to correct:
 - Are you targeting fluency or accuracy?
 - Is the error a new error, or one the learner commonly makes?
 - Will a correction be motivating or discouraging?

Error Correction



Error Correction Type: **Recast**

- Recast example:

Student: "After class, I back to my dorm."

Teacher: "Oh, you're *going back* to your dorm after class?"

- Recast description: The teacher provides the correct/target form, often as a clarification that fits naturally into the conversation.

Error Correction



Advantages of a **recast**:

- unobtrusive, non-confrontational; doesn't interrupt the flow of the conversation

Disadvantages of a **recast**:

- learner may not notice it occurred (or may not pick up on the teacher's intent to correct an error)

Error Correction

Error Correction Type: **Prompt**

- **Prompt** example:

Student: “After class, I back to my dorm.”

Teacher: “No, not ‘I back to my dorm’... after class you’re **doing** what?”

- **Prompt** description: The teacher draws attention to the error and then tries to elicit the correct form.



Error Correction



Advantages of a **prompt**:

- more likely to be noticed by the learner, requires learner to provide the correct form

Disadvantages of a **prompt**:

- somewhat disruptive/obtrusive to flow of communication

Error Correction

Error Correction Type: Metalinguistic Feedback

- Example: **Student:** "After class, I back to my dorm."

 Teacher: "Remember, 'back' is not a verb. You need a verb in your sentence."

■ Description: The teacher draws attention to the error by providing analysis of the type of error.



Error Correction



Advantages of **metalinguistic feedback**:

- very explicit, draws learner attention to general error patterns (not just one particular error in one instance), requires learner to provide correct form

Disadvantages of **metalinguistic feedback**

- disrupts the communicative nature of the task

Error Correction

Consider asking for learner input.
How much error correction are
they ready for?



A little bit on:

- What to expect from students
- Classroom layout
- Error correction
- **Lesson pacing**
- Teacher/student interactions



Lesson Pacing



- Create a sense of urgency, but use comprehension checks to avoid leaving students in the dust.
 - Consider using a timer
- Make learning goals clear and explicit.
 - “Our job today is to...”
 - “We will do this by...”
- Know your next step and have materials ready.
- Present instructions visually.

The connection between lesson pacing and language learning

- What do we know about effective language learning activities?
 - Learners need to have language input that is slightly above their current proficiency level (Krashen's "i+1")
 - Learners need lots of opportunities to use the language for meaningful, relatable reasons
- Learners need lots of opportunities for interaction
 - ... sometimes with learners at their own level
 - ... sometimes with more proficient speakers



Moving on to:

- Classroom layout
- Error correction
- Lesson pacing
- **Teacher/student interactions**



Activity 3:

Student/Teacher Interactions



- On your desk are 4 scenarios that are fairly common in the university language classroom.
- At your tables, work with a partner and divide the 4 scenarios between you so that each group has a different scenario.
- Use your sheet to take notes. First, think about what you would do. Second, reflect on this situation and think about what you could learn from it as the teacher.
- Be prepared to summarize your discussion to the rest of the group *in 2-3 sentences at the most*.
- After 15 minutes of discussion, we will look at possible reactions to each scenario.

Example Scenario

It is the 2nd week of class and John has come late to the majority of classes so far this semester. The rest of the class has generally been on time.

What do you do?

Would you:



- a) Not say anything yet. It's early in the semester and his behavior may change.
- b) Make a general announcement to the class explaining how disrespectful it is to be late.
- c) Take him aside and ask if there is a problem. Explain the consequences of continued tardiness.

Scenario 1

Would you:

- a) Give Nelia an extra credit assignment worth the same amount of points as the missed exam.
- b) Explain to Nelia the difference between her situation and Rana's situation.
- c) Explain to Nelia that her priority should be school, not work.



Reflection

Scenario 2

Would you:

a) Pause the slide show and ask the students to use each of the first 10 new words in a role play with a partner.

b) Clap your hands together and ask them to sit up and pay attention.

c) Stop the lesson. Ask them what is wrong and why they aren't paying attention to the material.



Reflection

Scenario 3

Would you:

- a) Explicitly teach the commands again in English. For the first week after the midterm, emphasize the commands and say them much slower than usual.
- b) Go back to giving directions and commands in the target language and then in English.
- c) Continue to use only the target language and meet with the students who aren't following directions outside of class to understand the problem better.



Reflection

Scenario 4

Would you:

- a) Be sure to call on Shawn in class every day so that he will at least participate in class a little bit.
- b) Tell Shawn that his grade will suffer if he does not participate in class.
- c) Make Shawn a group leader in the next assignment. Make each member partially responsible for representing the group's work to the class.



Reflection

Some tips for better student-teacher interactions:

- Use "I-messages":
 - Consider: "You're being disruptive."
 - Versus: "I find it distracting when you talk over me. If you have a question about what I'm saying, can you please ask me directly?"
- Meet with students individually outside of class to discuss problems
- Ask for ideas from experienced colleagues



In closing: some guiding principles

- **Be prepared**

- Think about how you will respond to certain behaviors *before* you experience them.

- **Be explicit**

- Tell your students *in advance* what you expect from them.

- **Be understanding**

- Think about why a student did what s/he did before acting.

- **Be consistent**

- If you state a policy on the syllabus or in the classroom, enforcing it consistently is important.



Finally:

- Have questions or need more info?
 - Feel free to contact me at letsonan@msu.edu
 - View the Classroom Management Module on the Foreign Language Teaching Methods website from the University of Texas—Austin



<http://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/>