

# Overcoming barriers in classroom design and layout

## Background

Observations of Australian classrooms yielded 4 key focuses of inclusive classroom design\*-

- **Dead space**- free movement areas in the classroom for both teachers and learners
- **Cross-monitoring**- mutual observation between teachers and learners
- **Comfort**- physical, mental, and emotional ease in the classroom
- **Connection**- relationships between peers, between teachers and learners, and materials

## My experience

- University 1<sup>st</sup> year compulsory English communication class
- Pre-intermediate level
- 2/22 learners have special learning needs
- **Different classrooms in Spring and Autumn semesters**

**Student A**- Required extra instructions, monitoring for understanding, and assistance with writing

**Student B**- Could not have other students sitting behind, required monitoring for understanding, and assistance with collaborating

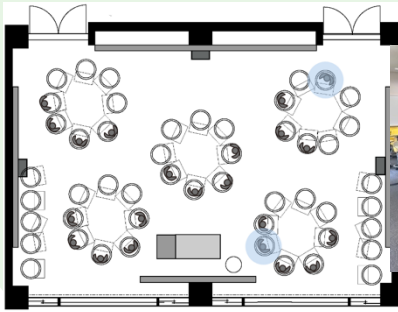
How can understanding **inclusive classroom design** facilitate active and inclusive learning in a classroom that is not designed for it?

**What can teachers do?**

## SPRING

### Language laboratory

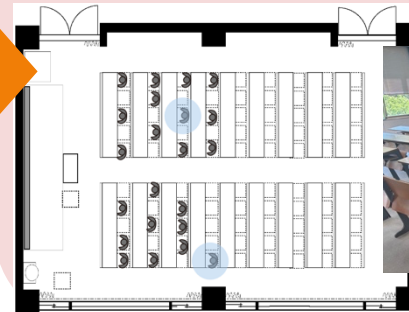
- **Connection** through mingling activities due to ample **dead space**
- Easy **cross-monitoring**
- Easy to seat ALL learners in **comfort**



## AUTUMN

### General classroom

- **Difficulty** in mingling, **reduced** collaboration
- Fixed seating, **reduced** cross-monitoring
- **Difficult** to seat ALL learners in comfort
- Middle seat **problem** emerged



## How I overcame barriers in classroom design

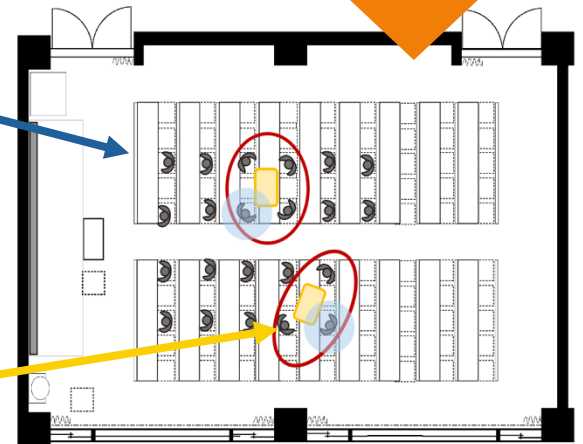
By applying the **social model of disability**, we can identify barriers in the classroom design and develop strategies to address them.

### Strategy 1- Seating plan

- **Comfort** through no middle seating
- Increased access to limited **dead space**, enabling easier mingling
- Increased teacher-to-student **cross-monitoring**

### Strategy 2- Mini whiteboards

- **Connection** through groupwork
- Increased student-to-student and teacher-to-student **cross-monitoring**



## What I learned

The classroom is an important **resource** for teachers and learners. The **design** and **layout** of the classroom affect **how** teachers teach and **how** learners access learning. Teachers need **strategies** to overcome barriers in classroom design. Thinking about **dead space**, **cross-monitoring**, **comfort**, and **connection** can help us think of ways to come up with teaching strategies.