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The influence of large classes on the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian High Schools

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: **The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools** realizado por **Roberth I. Ponce Martínez**, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, Septiembre de 2014

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“Yo, Roberth Israel Ponce Martínez declaro ser autor del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: **The influence of large classes on the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools**, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Eva Ulehlova directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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DEDICATION

Becoming an UTPL graduated in English Language Teaching is a tremendous privilege and goal in my life. I dedicate this research to all the undergraduate Students of Public and Private Universities in the country. I wish the present information becomes useful in future researches.

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ABSTRACT

The topic chosen for this research was “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools.” This research focuses on three different areas: instructional implications; social implications and psychological implications.

Instructional implications are the way professors deliver instructions, and how these are assimilated by students. Social implications are associated with the dilemma of effectiveness in relationship among students, and students - teacher. Finally, psychological implications refers to how students feel while dealing with crowded rooms and the connection with learning results

The Research was developed in Portoviejo. 200 students and 5 teachers participated. The methodology applied in this research was qualitative and quantitative, surveys were applied to students who expressed their level of acceptance to different indicators. Next, the obtained data was transformed into quantities to have a global understanding of students’ answers.

As a conclusion, according to survey results teachers should be trained in effective teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning and group work.

Key words: Large classes; teaching strategies; teaching learning process; social implications; psychological implications; instructional implication.

RESUMEN

El tema de esta investigación fue " La influencia de las clases grandes en el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje de la lengua Inglés en los Colegios del Ecuador. " Esta se centró en tres implicaciones relacionadas con grandes clases: instrucción; sociales y psicológicas.

Las implicaciones de instrucción son la manera en que el profesor proveerá las instrucciones, y como estas son asimiladas por los estudiantes. Las implicaciones sociales en salones numerosos están asociado con la efectividad en las relaciones entre estudiantes y estudiantes con profesores. Las implicaciones psicológicas se refieren al sentimiento de los estudiantes al lidiar con salones sobrepoblados y cómo está finalmente reflejado en el aprendizaje.

Se desarrolló en un colegio de la ciudad de Portoviejo. Participaron 200 estudiantes y 5 profesores. La metodología aplicada fue cualitativa y cuantitativa, los estudiantes se expresaron en una encuesta. Posteriormente, los datos fueron transformados cuantitativamente para comprender globalmente las respuestas de los estudiantes.

En conclusión, los profesores deben ser capacitados en: estrategias de enseñanza más eficaces, así como aprendizaje cooperativo y trabajo en grupo.

Palabras clave: Las clases grandes, las estrategias de enseñanza; proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje; implicaciones socio lógicos; implicaciones psicológicas; implicación instrucción

INTRODUCTION

English has become the most important language in the world which enables communication with any world citizen who knows the language. Ecuador as a member of a globalized world had included EFL classes in its curriculum. However, most of the previous generations of students can have a basic integration with a foreigner. English is taught in primary schools, in high schools and universities. In 2012 the Ministry of Education had included some reforms and policies for high schools in order to improve the language teaching in the country based on international standard reflected in a new curriculum. As papers are not the only condition to produce results, there are other factors that may stop students and teachers from obtaining the desired results. One of those aspects is large classes, which according to Harmer (2007), present challenges that smaller classes do not. Large classes are part of Ecuadorian reality in high schools and they need to be researched due to the fact that working with large classes might be, in some cases, advantageous or disadvantageous in other cases. As stated by Hess (2001, p. 2-4), “in large classes there are always enough students to get interaction going, there is a rich variety of human resources”.

Once the reasons for this proposed analysis are determined, it is necessary to know the purpose of the title of the research study, the purpose of determining whether or not large classes affect English language teaching learning process.

The present research will go around three main areas which are definitively the most effective ways to analyze this topic. Large classes are not a problem by themselves, there are other circumstances that could affect learning process. The three areas are: instructional implications; social implications and psychological implications.

These three ranges have transformed in the areas of analysis in this research, and subsequently in the specific objectives because the subject – large classes – will be analyzed in behavior and the special conditions in which this conduct is manifested. At certain time of this research, criteria will be shown in order to make executable the judgment of the data collected.

These three areas to be analyzed: instructional implications in large classes; social implications in large classes; and psychological implications in large classes were chosen in order to know, in first place, how activities provided or settled by the teachers were assimilated by students. Large classes' instructions do not have the same level of assimilation in students as in small classes. Thanks to this instructional implications teachers and students can evaluate if learning is happening in every session or class developed.

In second place, social aspects in large classes will demonstrate how much is aligned or balanced the teacher attention on the need of students. Social aspects as affinity among students and teacher are analyzed. In addition, it is also necessary to know whether or not stress is present in students' feelings in classes of English. Finally, large classes might represent a challenge on discipline, so it is necessary to know if discipline is managed by teachers.

The third aspect being explained is psychological implications in large classes. This aspect will definitively provide interesting results, because certain areas like stress influences students' behavior and performance of English knowledge shall be analyzed. Another important concern about large classes might be if large classes generate students' introversion; or if feelings of healthy competition among classmates are seen or not. Finally, the result of this area will demonstrate how

students feel with teachers' attention and how this is connected to the students' participation in the classroom.

Fortunately, for this research, there have been previous researches carried out analyzing this issue in other countries with and without the same objectives or with different contexts as high schools or universities. At the same time, the definition of large classes can be noticed in these studies because in some countries a large class would be a range between 35 to 45 students; however, in other countries such as in Africa the range number will rise up to or beyond 100 students. Those previous studies will provide relevant details for the foreseen reality in Ecuadorian high schools in large classes of English language. In this introductory part three previous studies will be briefly analyzed in order to have a snapshot about the topic and at the same time those previous studies will enrich the data collected in this research.

The first study to be researched was carried out by Thaher (2005) to determine the effects of large classes on students. The purpose of the research was to scrutinize the attitudes that learners assume in relation to large classes. With that aim, the researchers collected data in three important areas such as instructional, psychological, and social aspects. The results showed that the instructional effects were predominant in relation to the other aspects even though they were interrelated. In addition, students' perception of large classes in relation to class size was negative. As a result, the investigators concluded that there are social and psychological effects that influence students' learning in large classes. Therefore, the researcher recommended that schools must implement workshops to bring teachers the opportunity to increase experience and ideas how to manage large classes.

The second study was done by Goretti, Opolot, Mesembe, Samsin and Byanmuggisha (2008) who did the study of large classes and teaching in Resource – Constrained Context in Uganda. For this study teachers participated in several activities like workshops and teaching development programs. In this study researchers identified several relevant aspects in Ugandan Schools, for instance, small classrooms in term of space, few desks – sometimes eight children sharing one desk.

As a result teachers received training to develop effective strategies on individual and institutional level to improve teaching and learning under these circumstances and the implications of teachers' reflection on their lesson to large class teaching. For example, teachers found team teaching was a useful practice that relieved the burden of one teacher managing a large class alone. So the concept of co-teaching was developed. As a conclusion, these researchers commented that sometimes it is not possible to obtain enough resources to arrange smaller classes but there are alternative strategies for increasing learning in large classes.

The third study was executed by Salem (2009) who studied the relation between class size and students achievements. After the researched field interesting details arose, for instance all the teachers taught in a range of 45 students per room but the perception of large classes was divided because 50% of teachers described their classes as large, while the other 50% thought it was different. The most frequent factor that made participants thought that their classes were large was that students achievements were very low. Although there were other circumstances which made assume the class was large as the level of energy used in one class; classroom management and students discipline. Basically teachers' perception is influenced mainly by their concerns with the success of teaching. As conclusion, the researcher

could determine that teachers' opinion in defining large classes is divided in these following factors. The opinion related to the type of educational center or educational context. One important aspect of this research is that it agrees with previous studies in which there is a connection between large classes and achievements; and also training is required when classes are not able to be separated or divided in smaller amount of students per classroom.

The results gathered in this research will first benefit the high school where the research was developed and also to educative institution in general. Second, teachers and students who are involved in the teaching and learning of English for acquiring benefits and opportunities in the academic and professional field. This research is also useful for future studies in order to contrast the reality of English classes at the beginning of the EFL Ecuadorian reform in 2013 versus the out coming profile of students at the end of the sixth years of study in 2020.

Finally, the present research developed in Portoviejo City did not have any limitation or interference in the process. Authorities, teachers and students were always willing to collaborate in the research field. Teachers were also prompted to be observed in order to provide the required details to this process.

There is no doubt that this research will provide a beneficial outcome to authorities not only the high school observed, but to all educative institutions in the country which could compare their English language teaching conditions contrasted with their perception of large classes. One way to improve this research in future investigations might be the comparison of rural school circumstances and if there are large classes or not versus the language acquisition achievement.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

The participants chosen were ninth graders with an average of 40 students per room. There were 5 rooms, so 200 students were surveyed.

This group was chosen because they have been used to be taught in large classes. However, higher levels were not selected because those students were used to be taught in small classes and they might still have fresh in their mind how the high school had been before 2012 and therefore a negative predisposition to large classes could distract them from being impartial at the moment of solving the survey. In order to have trustworthy information in which participants do not have pre-misconceptions.

Procedures

The literature review was based on updated information. More than 50 books were revised where relevant information was gathered, the information was considered as admissible for the clarity and high quality of the information. For this reason, the methods and each one of the topics represented in *italics* are based on the most relevant authors and researches in the world. For the section of previous studies a wide range of universities were revised and deeply compared and referenced. For all the topics of the literature review, index cards or bibliographical cards have been used as evidence of the research. The index cards have the most detailed and summarized information referenced in APA Style.

The research field was developed under the process of surveying. The survey had items which evaluated different factors as students feeling in crowded rooms and level of acquisition for learning a new language or the level of effectiveness teachers might have in small classes versus big classes. With this factors seen and which

needed to be analyzed under the different implication to be developed in the classroom. The survey was linked with the specific objectives of this research: Instructional Implications; Social Implications; and Psychological Implications. In each question of the survey, students had the opportunity to provide vital data to this research in which they expressed their opinion and concerns through qualitative answers from strongly agreement to strongly disagreement. There were 4 option for each item: a) Very Satisfactory b) Satisfactory c) Poorly Satisfactory d) Not Satisfactory.

After the surveys were fulfilled by students, the information was processed and represented in statistical chart. Which allowed the transformation of the qualitative answers - from students - to quantitative data. Thanks to the formula of frequency the percentage of the most frequent options chosen were little by little decoded.

Once the information was processed, those numbers requited to be scrutinized and thanks to the interpretation of results, those numbers became data for the research which allowed to have an interpretation of the main ideas to be used as conclusions and recommendations. Finally, the data was represented in bars for easier understanding.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

There is immense literature on topics related to the teaching and learning both in a small and in a large group of students. This literature review will support the analysis and results of the present research. The books used as reference to collect the necessary information belong to the most recognized authors in the English Teaching Community worldwide. The current literature review focuses on methods to teach English, features of large classes, challenges on teaching and learning process in large classes; alternative approaches to handling large classes and the different levels of proficiency that teachers could face in a class.

In addition, this section presents a review of five outstanding studies done by different researchers around the world which provides special details. These researchers have investigated the influence of class size in different aspects of the teaching-learning process and their results and conclusions are briefly described at the end of the literature review.

Teaching approaches and methods

There is a vast spectrum of methods and approaches for teaching English; among them, Communicative Language Teaching approach is nowadays the most promoted method. This methodology has as its main objective according to Wilson (2008, p. 19) “to engage students on a personal level through meaningful interaction and personalization ... real communication rather than demonstration of target grammar and vocabulary”. This methodology is defined by Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 158) as, “a communicative view of language and language learning that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures”. Both authors agree that CLT is a creative process in which language is used to express meaning, to interact

with others, and to identify important elements of discourse for incorporating them into their speech. Richards and Rodgers mentioned (2001) that some principles underlying this approach are authentic and meaningful communication, fluency, and language usage for communicative purposes. This means that students learn to communicate through real situations and by trial and error.

Another progressive and modern methodology that visualizes the language as an interactive and communicative way of learning is Task Based Learning (TBL). Wilson (2008, p. 57) refers to this method, as “an offshoot of communicative language teaching.” The main objective of TBL is that students learn more effectively when their concern is on a task rather than on the language. In TBL students get involved in a class where they must develop a task that requires interaction, through the interaction learners will realize that there is required certain grammar or vocabulary tools, and it is then when the target language arises from the need, in contrast to a traditional class where grammar and vocabulary are presented. TBL produces a lot of communication, in which a variety of language output emerges and it is less teacher controlled since students use all their language proficiency to solve the task.

Another approach that emphasizes the use of language from an interactive view is Cooperative Language Learning (CLL). Richards and Rodgers (2001) remark that pedagogical class procedures that are oriented for developing students’ social and communicative skills is the central role of this approach. This approach allows teachers to focus on the structural and functional models of language, thus students are able to learn language forms and functions by interacting in pairs and small groups work. The authors state that CLL is developed around the premise of developing students’ communicative competence by assigning them structured and

pedagogical tasks, thus students interact with each other in cooperative rather than competitive activities. The activities also aim to teach learners how to improve their critical thinking skills. According to the same authors, the important aspect of the approach is the careful design of group work activities in order to maximize interaction and learning.

Within the sort of communicative approaches, Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention that learning to read and write in order to transmit information is the main purpose of the Whole Language approach. The authors emphasize its humanistic and constructivist foundation that assign the teacher the role of facilitator and active participant in the learning process while students collaborate and learn to evaluate their language progress. The target language is acquired naturally as it occurs with the mother tongue, and the contents of the lessons are the result of a negotiation process with learners rather than preplanned formats designed by the teacher. The author explains that students can choose the type of learning materials and activities to be used in class thus resulting in a self-directed process in which learners are responsible for their learning.

Teachers are also facilitators in the Natural approach. They, according to Brown (1994), are a source of input to learners and encourage them to go beyond their level. The author points out the development of basic communication skills as the main objective of the Natural approach; some common activities in a typical class are: common contexts for conversations, listening to radio programs, emulating shopping dialogues, games terminology, skits or plays, and small-group work.

Another characteristic of the Natural approach mentioned by Brown (1994) is the three-phase stages of development in the students' learning process. The author explains that Krashen and Terrel identified preproduction, early production, and

extending production stages. Learners, in the first stage, are trained in developing their listening skills. Later, in the second phase, it is common that students make errors as a part of the natural process in their learning path. Finally, learners are able to produce complex elements of discourse through different activities such as role play, discussions, or group work.

According to Krahnke (1987, p. 66) one method that will provide students with a useful viewpoint of the language is Content – Based Instructions. Krahnke describes CBL as, “the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language.” Content Based Instruction allows students to study subjects and learn language simultaneously, it avoids delaying the study of subjects or content just because students have not acquired all the language tenses or language structure before. Another benefit of Content Based Instruction is that language is learned in the context of its use or deductively, in this way the problem of transfer from instruction to use is eliminated. Some high schools provide subjects as social studies, science, arts and world history in English, but English as language is not taught. In this way, students will learn about photosynthesis, and at the same time they will learn how to describe processes or steps in the target language.

Due to the progressive development that learners experience under the stages of the Natural approach, Richards and Rodgers (2001) refer to it as an evolutionary approach. The authors add that the approach focuses on the amount of language exposed to learners rather than on practice; here, long periods of attention and motivation to generate written material is more important than producing the language.

Turning to the English teaching methods, Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 75) refer to the Total Physical Response as, “a method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity”. According to the author, the main objective of the method is to teach beginner learners to acquire oral proficiency through comprehension of meaning rather than speaking skills. Physical action is elicited through the use of imperative drills that students must follow. Brown (1994) states some basic instructions such as “open/close! the window/door”, may increase the level of complexity by adding longer statements such as walk to the door and open it; the central goal is to develop in learners a sense of self-confidence to use language.

However, Brown (1994) explains that TPR has some disadvantages such as the fact that it loses effectiveness as learners increase their level of knowledge. Also, students’ oral work is limited in TPR reading and writing activities.

When teachers hear the expression “methodology or approach”, one method has been very popular and keeps fossilized in old teachers’ methodological arsenal arises. This method emerged after the World War I and it is the Grammar Translation Method. It appeared in the offspring of German Scholarship, unfortunately, it has received a lot of criticism as it is stated in Richards and Rodgers book (2001, p. 5) “to know everything about something rather than the thing itself.” Grammar Translation Method focuses on grammar and vocabulary accuracy through reading and writing development. All the activities related to Grammar Translation are based on translating a text word by word and giving detailed analysis of rules in the target language.

Class size

Many authors state that class size affects the language learning process in different ways. Harmer (2003) explains that teachers experience difficulties in large classes because it is difficult to interact with students at the back of the classroom. However, the author mentions that a numerous number of students can make the classes fun and warm.

If a teacher is asked the opinion of large classes, a big amount of the surveyed are going to express a negative connotation teaching large classes. Dealing with large classes means no individual attention or feedback and at the same time student's claims for attention will be reduced, because the larger the class is the less attention is received. Entry level teachers find large classes stressful. No one chooses to have a class with more than forty students, this makes the teacher's job a real challenge. Nevertheless, teachers develop creative ways to handle large classes around the world.

Hess (2001) demonstrates there are certain advantages that we should be aware of. First, there are always students available for different kind of communicative activities as role plays, skits and besides having enough students there always the possibility to organize different groups I mean students will always be able to have different partners in each group. However, in small classes everybody knows about each other and sooner or later students will get tired of one another's company. Second, in large multilevel class great amount of opinions, experiences and learning styles will keep the class varied, interested in and centered on students. Third, large classes provide the opportunity to "strong" or "fast" students to become teacher's assistant and cooperative learning among learners develops naturally.

Fourth, work in large classes force teachers to research, invest and develop new ways of organizing and preparing material.

Managing Learning

The way a teacher presents himself or herself, and interacts with students will make a difference in the amount of success he or she will have. Part of the teacher's art is the ability to adopt a number of different roles in the class, depending on what the students are doing. According to Harmer (2007) the first skill a teacher must develop is management oriented to provide quality in students' learning. Managing learning is a wide concept but this section will focus on discipline, instructions, and feedback.

Discipline is one of the main concerns to new teachers, because standing in front of 40 or 50 teenage students or in front of experienced adults, it is a circumstance that can constrain even experienced professors. Harmer (2008, 3ed, p.127) provides a strategy to create an effective and healthy disciplinary environment, a "code of conduct" is required. Students need to "know where they are." The code must be discussed between the teacher and the students. This will help the teacher realize what students understand as correct or incorrect behavior. As a final result, students and teacher will understand what are the expectations from one another.

Once discipline has been set, the next step in teachers' role is to provide instructions. Even the best activity planned by a teacher can become a struggle if students do not understand what they are supposed to do. In order to avoid confusions or misunderstandings there are two basic rules for giving instructions: First, keeping it as simple as possible and avoiding giving too many instructions at once. It is better to provide one instruction and then check understanding, so there

can be choose one student to explain the instruction given or one student to use L1 to explain the activity. The second aspect in providing instruction is that these must be logical.

Finally, once the class is set and the students understand what is required; learners need to receive feedback of their performance – it can take several forms -. Feedback is one of the most important roles in teaching, through it teachers can evaluate the level of success or progress the learner has developed so far; . Gower, Philip and Walters (2005, p.163) states “Everyone thrives on genuine praise and encouragement. When giving feedback ... always be on the lookout for positive points to comment upon.” There are different ways of giving feedback: praising or encouraging; correcting; setting regular tests; talk about how the groups are performing; or individually how the learners are doing. One of the best ways to be fair and centered at the moment of providing feedback is the use of criterion - referenced feedback, telling students how they are progressing in learning specific types of knowledge and skills, this is better than giving them a score reflecting numbers of correct answers.

Another aspect integrated in managing learning is the way teachers can handle the flow and rhythm followed in the class through each one of the activities the teacher had planned. Transition from one activity to another should be done properly, not giving the appearance that the class is just a continuous jump of activities which students do not finish. In order to avoid this issue the best way to solve it is through timing. Teachers should set the time for each activity and be focused on the proper use of the time.

Managing Large classes

The term large classes does not have the same meaning around the world, in the USA a large class might be 30 students but in Africa or India a large class can represent almost 100 students. Despite the standard that each nation uses to describe large classes, teachers' role is the same. Teachers must always make sure that what they write on board is visible, instructions are understandable and finally, that learning is really generated in class. Woodward (2001) provides useful strategies to control large classes, for instance; teachers should learn students' names; use clear visual contact; never try to get control by raising voice, use systems to catch students' attention such as whistles, tapping on board, using a bell; create routines because in this way students go on automatic pilot after instructions are explained; it is recommended to use plenary phases; before making small groups making sure the whole class works together; make sure all the tasks are clear; plan interesting topics or activities so students get easily involved. It is also always important to explain why the required activities are useful.

Sometimes teachers require to do pair or group work in large classes, but the best way to perform and monitor this kind of activities is to explain the activity clearly and agree on that how the activity will be stopped. Finally, it is always necessary to provide good and positive feedback.

Activities for working with large classes

In order to be successful teachers in large classes, teachers must remember that good organization promotes good control, at the same time good organization helps students to know what the teacher expects, that way the learners can perform task assigned quickly and efficiently. Hess (2001) provides good ideas for activities. Hess states that establishing routines for simple activities, such as collecting

homework, checking homework or presentation of certain activities on assigned days, for instance, Monday dictation, Tuesday conversation etc... provides mental control in students' reaction in class. Blaz (2006) suggests that teachers, should post the guidelines, discuss them, and be consistent and fair about enforcing them. One of the biggest challenges in large classes is to perform group activities, and Blaz (2006, p.29) states: "I write a vocabulary word on the bottom of everyone's paper, and they seek out others with the same word. Other times I post a list, I may have color groups based on the learning style." The instruction must be clear and precise and make students as responsible as possible for their own learning. Since silence is vital, it is useful to assign students to monitor the noise level so they will have in mind that talking softly is required. Other alternative is to choose advanced students as experts of the day, to provide fast support to others.

It is also possible to vary the form of questions: those that gauge knowledge, require diagnosis or explanation, or challenge conclusions. Ask only one question at a time. Pause between asking and accepting replies (pausing gives students a chance to think of an answer, and by not asking the first person who raises his/her hand, you encourage quieter students to participate). Acknowledge all answers – repeat so the class can hear and/or write them on the board (this also helps to show you understood the answer). Move around the room – avoid focusing exclusively on the respondent.

Classroom space and Seating arrangement

If you visit any classroom in the world, you will notice that in most of them the seat arrangement is in rows; in some institutions horseshoe is also used. However, there is no perfect seating arrangement for all classes, teachers must find the arrangements that best work for them or one that adapts to some factors such as: students' level, subject, and lab work, traffic patterns, and so on. Seating

arrangement definitively influences students' attentiveness and constrains the teachers' use of space.

The most common seating arrangements are: orderly rows; horseshoe; and separate tables. Orderly rows might give the impression of something restrictive, however, there are several advantages, for instance, teachers have a direct visual contact with students and vice versa. This makes lectures easier and if there is space between rows the teacher can easily walk through and make a more direct contact and give personal attention.

Horseshoe is another kind of arrangement that faces the board, overhead projector or computer location. This kind of arrangement provides certain freedom and becomes less dominant. Finally, individual tables arrangement provides the opportunity of giving support, when the group is small it is easier to give support, however, this arrangement might produce problems, for example some students do not want to work together in the group and having difficulty at giving whole class instruction because the attention is diffused.

Different levels of proficiency

Dealing with large classes is a real challenge for any teacher – new or experienced; nevertheless, dealing with a large multilevel class is similar to adding a “fourth ball” to a juggler. In this section the background for varied levels of proficiency will be presented together with some settings for dealing with this “fourth ball”.

Different levels of proficiency in a classroom happen for three reasons: First, all students have a learning background. This happens because of the wide spread of methodologies applied in different schools. For instance, some schools follow conductism; others are centered teachers, another are student centered. So when

students learn the language with the application of a different methodology that will be a barrier for them. Second, every student has a different learning style and according to Gardner there are eight different kinds of intelligences for learning. For this reason teachers should plan classes in order to match with students' learning styles. The third factor is L2 use outside the classroom. The more the contact outside the classroom the higher the level of language acquisition. Teachers must always motivate students to use the language outside the classroom, not only with homework, but demonstrating that it is something useful for them when playing video games, listening to music, watching movies, making friends in social networks, etc.

Once the origin of multilevel classrooms is clarified, the next question to address is how to cope with large multi-level classes. Hess (2001) describes 11 principles which teachers must take into account. Principle one is to be realistic, large multilevel classes will provide some frustration, so meditate how to improve your presentation or class activities. Principle two motivates to variety, teachers need to provide variation to students' learning styles and variation of activities, in this way the teacher will engage all students. Principle three concerns about pace or pausing, providing the right amount of times for activities and the transition amount activities will provide good results. Principle four directs the attention on interest, teacher need to present in the information in an interesting way that catches students' interest, after that students can take that information into a personal level. Principle five points out collaboration, teachers can group students up to their level of proficiency, in this way the word load will distribute even in the group, so students will demonstrate interest and apathy to one another. Principle six moves into individualization, this will keep students challenged, motivated and interested.

Principle seven mentions personalization. Teachers have to give the opportunity to every student to participate in the class by giving opinion or to apply special knowledge to current concerns. Principle eight set forth on open – close methodological strategies. They are activities that give students possibilities to work with many possibilities for choosing appropriate language items and gearing the exercise to their own level of competence. Principle nine stimulates setting up routines. Routines are used to guide us, to bind us, teachers can always change things that are not useful to the class. Principle ten advocates enlarging the circle that means, involve as many students as possible and avoid many of problems connected to classroom control and interest. Principle eleven call attention to question the kind of questioning we use. It is important to ask the kind of questions that arouse interest and create maximum students involvement.

Therefore, if teachers keep in mind multilevel classroom background, the strategies to group students, multilevel strategies and Hess' 11 principles, then even entry level teachers will not feel anxiety and language acquisition will be developed in students.

Finally, having a large multilevel classroom is not negative at all, and at the same time it is not all positive, there are some advantages and disadvantages in teaching large multilevel classes. The positive aspects of dealing with this circumstance is that teachers will always have students to plan several kinds of dynamic and communicative activities, students won't be bored because they will always have somebody new to work. With advanced learners can be asked to help the teacher as assistants or monitor helping their partners with explanations or solving questions because teacher might not have all the required time and attention for all students. On the other hand, the disadvantages of having large multilevel

classes incurs in the fact that giving attendance, assistance, feedback and everything related to teaching or the teacher's role is very limited because of people, space or resources to be used in the process.

Though, teaching large multilevel classes is not easy and has limitations which had been mentioned before, it provides an opportunity for pedagogical development and to become a skillful and experienced teacher in order to engage students during the class and keep them working and learning.

Once some previous details about large classes have been clarified, it is also vital to get a more detail description of previous studies carried out in the last years in different parts of the world. The influence of each aspect revised previously has been analyzed by different researchers all over the world and five of the most relevant researches are going to be presented next.

One of the most outstanding researches develop in reference to large classes was carried out by Thaher (2005) in which he focused on have to determine the effects of large classes on Students. Thaher believed that students attitude was affected because of large classes, for this reason the purpose of Thaher's research was to analyze the attitudes that learners assume when they are exposed to large learning environments, large classes. Thaher chose a sample of 1200 students who attended at university level. They answered a survey which permitted the researcher to collect relevant data in three relevant areas which importance must be highlighted. The three areas were: instructional, psychological, and social. Thanks to the result is seem that instructional effects were more prevalent concerning other aspects although they were interrelated. The analysis demonstrated that students' perception of large classes was negative. As a result, the investigation concluded that student's learning is influenced by social and psychological effects.

The second study was done by Goretti, Opolot, Mesembe, Samsin and Byanmuggisha (2008) to study of large class teaching in Resource – Constrained Context in Uganda. For this study 35 teachers - with a class range from 70 to 120 learners - were observed in the execution of their classes. Teachers participated in several activities like workshops and teaching development programs. At the same time teachers were interviewed regarding the constraints they experienced with large classes. On the other hand, researchers identified several relevant aspects in Ugandan Schools, for instance, small classrooms in term of space, few desks – sometimes eight children sharing one desk.

As a result teachers received training to develop effective strategies at individual and institutional level to improve teaching and learning under these circumstances, and the implications of teachers' reflection on their lesson to large class teaching. For example, teachers felt team teaching was a useful practice that relieved the burden of one teacher managing a large class alone. So the concept of co-teaching was developed. As a conclusion, this researcher comments that sometime it is not possible to have smaller classes for lack of resources but there are alternative strategies for increasing learning in large classes. Finally, training teachers in specific strategies for large classes and providing them with the necessary instructional material was recommended.

The third study was done by Harfit (2012), to study how class size reduction might lessen the psychological aspects of learning in large classes. For this study, 231 students were selected from a secondary school in Hong Kong. They were interviewed and their teachers were observed eight times in four high schools; each teacher was assigned one large and one small class of the same grade. The results showed that small classes developed in students a great sense of support and

community. In addition, reduced groups helped to diminish students' fear of evaluation from their teachers and classmates. Also, students in small classes participated in class activities more than their peers in large classes. In conclusion, the researcher explains that small classes helped students to lessen their levels of anxiety since they perceive a powerful network of support from their classmates. For that reason, the author suggested that teachers must take into consideration the level of students' participation in class activities for planning their lessons.

The fourth study was developed by Shamin (1993) to study teacher and learner behavior and class development in large classes in Pakistan. For this study, 232 classes, 20 teachers and 21 groups of learners were observed. The research process included classroom observation, teachers' interviews and students to get complementary data on classroom events and as a kind of data checking classroom observation were done. There are several results found. First, participants perceive numbers as necessary but not sufficient in defining large classes, other factors, such as the physical conditions in the classroom and the opportunity and learning in the classroom. Second, participants reported difficulties in teaching and learning in large classes. Third, particularly in large classes, the space in the classroom is defined by the participants not only in terms of physical space per students but in terms of students location vs the position of the teacher and the blackboard in front of the classroom. Fourth, it was found that even well – trained teachers, introduced innovations in their classrooms only within the framework of core activity types. Finally, the author concluded that large classes have an effect on teacher – learner behavior and classroom processes at the interpersonal level, for example social aspects of the classroom event. In addition, some innovations are more difficult to introduce in larger than smaller classes. On the other hand, the author concluded that

for teaching and learning a set of rules has first to be created by teachers and learners before rules can be used effectively in large classes. For this reason teachers' development and training is required in order to affect the morale and attitude of learners in classes.

The fifth study was executed by Salem (2009) to study the relation between class size and students achievements. In this study 112 EL teachers – male and female – who used to teach in public educational centers, they participated in answering a questionnaire which required information as place of work, nationality, number of students in the classroom and if they considered teaching in a large class or not. After the field research interesting details arose, for instance, all the teachers taught in a range of 45 students per room. However, it is noticed that surprising results arose in teachers' perception of large classes. Basically, teachers, despite having the same environment, had different opinion about the definition and perception of large classes. 50% of teachers surveyed described their classes as large; while the other 50% considered it was not a large class. The main circumstance that did make teachers think that a class was large was the learning achievement obtained by students in one school year or at the end of scholar life. On the other hand, there are another circumstances which made teachers think that a class was large, for instance, the energy that professors spend on teaching a large group or the limitation of classroom management handled by the teacher and students discipline. As it was stated before, teacher had a divided view point about large classes, one half considered their class as numerous and the second half didn't. This teacher's conception, is related to the type of educational center or educational context. Therefore, the researcher agrees with previous studies in which there is a connection between large classes and achievements; and also training is tremendously required

when classes are not able to be separated or divided in smaller amount of students per classroom.

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section of the present research aims to present the produced, sustainable and relevant data which will allow developing a proper analysis of the three main focuses of this research: instructional implications of large classes on the teaching learning process; social implications of large classes on the teaching learning process; finally, psychological implications of large classes on the teaching learning method. In this section, there will be found one chart that will contain the data obtained from surveys applied to participants of the research. Each chart contains different aspects considered necessary to illustrate participants' point of view or feeling about the three aspects mentioned previously: Instructional implications, Social implications and psychological implications of large classes on the teaching learning process.

What instructional implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process?

N°	In Classes with large number of Students	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
1	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.	10	5%	186	93%	4	2%	0	0%	200	100%
2	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	0	0%	152	76%	48	24%	0	0%	200	100%
3	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.	0	0%	8	4%	192	96%	0	0%	200	100%
4	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.	52	26%	138	69%	10	5%	0	0%	200	100%
5	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.	0	0%	2	1,0%	158	79%	40	20%	200	100%
6	Students can cheat during the test.	181	90,5%	15	7,5%	3	1,5%	1	0,5%	200	100%
7	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.	25	12,5%	160	80%	13	6.5%	2	1%	200	100%
8	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.	0	0%	0	0%	191	95,5%	9	4,5%	200	100%
9	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	167	83,5%	33	16,5%	0	0%	0	0%	200	100%

Author: Roberth I. Ponce Martinez

Source: Survey of the present research

The first enquiry about instructional implication investigates if the activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class. As the chart shows 94% of the students agreed. This is really interesting because despite the fact students are in crowded rooms, anyway they do feel that there is not difficult to work on different activities.

The second enquiry about instructional implication examine if the activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. As the chart shows 76% of the students agreed. It is very interesting that three quarters of the class considered that they are developing their skills.

The third query researched about students' active participation even the ones sitting at the back of the classroom. As the chart shows 96% of the students partially agreed. As the evidence demonstrates the first area where large classes affect is students' participation.

The fourth query analyzed the variation of class activities. As the chart shows 69% of the students agreed. And 26% totally agreed. The results demonstrate that one strategy used by teachers who face large classes is to keep students working on different styles.

The fifth statement seeks if activities as games, competitions, debates, and others are used in class. The reaction observed according to the survey is that 79% of the students partially agreed. It is evident that those kinds of activities are not frequently used in class.

The following exploration focused on the capacity or range of monitory that a teacher can have on her students at the moment of assessing their learners. 90, 5%

answered that they can cheat during test. It is observed that the results of written assessment developed in class are not totally trustworthy.

The next enquiry was about instructional implication investigated if students get distracted by doing assignment from other subject. As the chart shows 80% of the students agreed. This is really interesting and at the same time not surprising as learners know the level of supervision the teacher can provide in a crowded room.

The eighth enquiry was about instructional implication examined if the seating arrangements facilitate the tasks carried in class. As the chart shows 95, 5% of the students partially agreed. Students have faced that the space they do have in the room do not facilitate at all the tasks the teacher wants them to perform.

The ninth query researched about students' active and regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students. As the chart shows 83, 5%% of the students totally agreed that they cannot receive feedback. These results indicate that despite teacher's effort, learners interpret the feedback as minimum from the teacher.

These results are congruent with the research developed by Shamin (1993), which demonstrated that there was teaching inside the classroom but there was little innovation, and if there was innovation it was only within the framework of core activity types. For instance, instead of asking students to write sentences with a specific grammar point, the professor can make a row competition in which every member of the row can just write one word. In this brief example students write sentences, use grammar, a topic but it makes fun and at the same time it's more demanding because the learners have to deal with the context of the previous words written in order to write the next one. Every class depends on students' engagement through the teachers' presentation of the class. If students are not engaged, student's attention and performance will be low. Woodward (2001) explains that in order to

achieve discipline and students' participation, it is necessary to establish routines – not too fixed – in order to make some steps of the class to go on automatic pilot. It is not easy to overcome all the barriers in order to develop teaching in large classes, but as literature review demonstrates, there are strategies and methodologies to cope with or solve this problem.

What social implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process?

N°	In Classes with large number of Students	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
10	There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.	36	18%	154	72%	16	8%	4	2%	200	100%
11	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.	27	13,5%	151	75,5%	17	8,5%	5	2,5%	200	100%
12	The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	200	100%	200	100%
13	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.	10	5%	187	93,5%	3	1,5%	0	0%	200	100%
14	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.	182	91%	14	7%	4	2%	0	0%	200	100%

Author: Roberth I. Ponce Martinez

Source: Survey of the present research

The tenth query analyzed the proper balance among students and between the teacher and the students. As the chart shows 72% of the students agreed and 18% totally agreed. The results show that one of the advantages of large classes is that despite there are too many students in a room, it is not difficult to keep the interaction in a class

The eleventh statement seeks if students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates. The reaction observed according to the survey is that 75, 5% of the students partially agreed and 13, 5% totally agreed. So it is evident that learners have the chance to build relationships with their partners.

The eleventh

The twelve

The following exploration focused on the atmosphere and if it is stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student. 93, 5% agreed and 10% totally agreed about their feelings of stress in the classroom as they don't have enough chances to participate in class or interact with the teacher.

The next enquiry about instructional implication investigated if it was easier for students to use their cellphones or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher. As the chart shows 91% of the students totally agreed. This is really interesting and at the same time not surprising as learners know the level of supervision the teacher can provide in a crowded room and at the same time the level of distraction students suffer from in crowded rooms.

Finally, the results demonstrate that a good level of interaction in the class exists– between teachers and students; and among students the interaction is perceived as positive. In addition, students describe that there is always the chance of interaction with somebody new. This answer is supported by Ness (2001), In her book *Teaching Large Multilevel Classes*, she states that large classes always provide opportunities for variety communicative activities and small classes can become boring as the time passes by;

The most positive result gathered in this area was that the teacher remembered in 100% of the classes the names of all of the students. And this is the first advice provided by Woodward (2001), to invest plenty of time in learning students' name, most of the time students in large classes do not feel high level of attention provided by the teacher, however, if the teacher remembers the student's

name at least this small and important detail will demonstrate that the teacher really cares for his or her students.

Another important aspect is the level of stress that learners face in classes when the teacher is going to choose a student to participate in providing answers or for role-plays or addressing in English to teacher. Most students reported that in each class there was not enough time for the teacher to provide individual attention a large number of students or repeatedly one learner. This answer demonstrates how do students feel at the moment of participating and the reaction is normal because they are not used to it.

Finally, it is surprising that not only distractors in the classroom arise, but students also bring distractions into the class. Electronic devices are used in the classroom without teachers request and control. Abuse of the lack of supervision originates this problem.

Therefore, it is positive to observe teachers' and students' effort dealing with the environment of large classes but there are some factors that naturally occur with large classes results, because of lack of control and distractors. The results obtained from students' answers in the survey were corroborated.

What psychological implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process?

N°	In Classes with large number of Students	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
15	The atmosphere is stressful.	23	11,5%	159	79,5%	18	9%	0	0%	200	100%
16	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest.	0	0%	0	0%	79	39,5%	121	60,5%	200	100%
17	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.	128	64%	72	36%	0	0%	0	0%	200	100%
18	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.	0	0%	10	5%	168	84%	22	11%	200	100%

19	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.	200	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	200	100%
20	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.	180	90%	9	4,5%	11	5,5%	0	0%	200	100%
21	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.	75	37,5%	100	50%	23	11,5%	2	1%	200	100%

Author: Roberth I. Ponce Martinez

Source: Survey of the present research

The final state to be analyzed is pertinent to psychological aspects in large classes. The fifteenth query researched about classroom atmosphere is described as stressful. As the chart shows 79, 5% of the students agreed and 11, 5% totally agreed. As the evidence demonstrates, it also perceived from the psychological point of view large classes as stressful.

The sixteenth query analyzed the inhibition of students when speaking in front of the class. As the chart shows 39, 5% of the students partially agreed. And 60, 5% totally disagreed. The results demonstrate that speaking in front of the class is not a psychological implication or issue for the students. This might be seen in the previous chart, where students agreed that large classes provide them more opportunities of interaction.

The seventeenth statement seeks if there is opportunity for students to express their opinions in class. The reaction observed according to the survey is that 64% of the students totally agreed and 36% agreed. It is evident that large classes do not provide the chance to all students presenting their point of view at the moment.

The following exploration was focused on the feeling of fears at the moment of participating in class. 84, 5% answered that they partially agreed and 11% that they did totally disagree. It is observed that learners do not feel afraid when participating.

The next enquiry was about psychological implications investigated if the teacher does not pay equal attention to all her/his students. As the chart shows 100% of the students totally agreed. This is really interesting and at the same time not surprising as learners know the attention range the teacher can provide in a crowded room.

The twentieth enquiry about psychological implication examined if learners can act competitively with other students. As the chart shows 90% of the students totally agreed. Students have faced that the bigger the number of students in a room is the harder is the effort they must perform in order to highlight one from another.

The last query researched students' feelings of relax if they can be unnoticed in the class. As the chart shows 50% of the students agreed and 37, 5% totally agreed. These results demonstrate that despite teacher's effort for requiring the maximum number of students participating in class, it is not possible to make all students participating.

According to the results, large classes produce lack of attention from the teacher to students' needs and individualities, and the psychological consequences that are bad, because on one side, students get insecure and feel careless, and on the other side the message of low and slow production in the classroom is installed in students' minds.

In order to avoid these negative consequences, Blaz (2006) recommends that teachers should always share their thinking with students and be considerate in the way of treating with students. In addition, teachers need to listen to students' suggestions and not to be judgmental. Also providing clear instruction is relevant for their learning and teachers must always make sure students become as responsible as possible for their learning.

Students' answers allowed to determine one factor related to question 19 which refers to teacher's attention to students. It is realistic that a teacher won't be skillful enough to distribute proportional attention to 45 learners – or more – in a room. However, some teacher preference for the fastest learners in acquiring the language was noticed. It is for this reason that 100% of students expressed in the survey that the teachers' attention or treatment was not the same for everybody in the room.

CONCLUSIONS

- It is seen that large classes are not the ideal context for a teacher to deal with, however, it is really interesting that despite not having good conditions, learners described that there is a learning process in large classes.
- One concern when teaching English in large classes is the dilemma of developing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. As this topic was researched, it is concluded, that it is possible for teachers make their learners develop their skills as well as students feel that their skills are being developed as it was previously presented in the analysis of results.
- Many teachers describe large classes as stressful, furthermore, students also consider large classes as stressful. Stress is reflected when the teacher requires participation of learners, and as participation is not frequently possible to all students, this creates feelings of anxiety. The research has demonstrated that large classes are creators of stress.
- The next to be concluded is that large classes do not provide the right environment for concentration because as the research has demonstrated students are tempted to do activities from other classes which do not belong to English classes, it is also noticed that they do bring technological equipment as mobiles which distract them from learned activities in class. Thus, there is a high percentage of distraction in large classes.

- It is seemed that teachers who teach in large classes do not have the opportunity of providing effective feedback to all students. At the same time learners do not have enough opportunities to express their opinions. Consequently, it is very challenging for teachers tracking all students' process in each class and provide them with efficient and effective feedback.
- One area related to teachers monitoring but at the same time related to learners' honesty and finally a consequence of large classes is the fact that students tend to copy. For this reason, large classes do not provide an efficient environment for assessing students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should be trained with workshops and seminars in order to provide more effective teaching strategies such as cooperative learning and group work and any other strategies recommended to perform in large classes.
- Teaching in large classes has produced different psychological reactions that have become a difficulty. In order to transform those difficulties into challenges, teachers need to focus on students' needs. Meditation and critical thinking is required in order to innovate and help students to attain success not only in grammar or vocabulary, but in all the skills development such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking.
- As it was seen in the results and conclusions, students believe that their tasks do not receive the required feedback or the tasks are not considered meaningfully. For this reason, it is claimed that teachers get to know the characteristics of teaching in large classes and adapt to the fact of leading large groups or teachers could vary their ways of teaching in order to promote learning despite the class is large.
- It is also necessary to split the class at the moment to summative assessment. In this way, learners are not motivated to copy as they do not have to shirk to fit in the room, and there is also more efficient teachers' monitoring of the process. As a result, the assessment will be trustworthy and will provide the necessary information to help students in the language acquisition.

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ANNEXES



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

TITULACIÓN DE INGLES

Dear student,

The aim of this brief questionnaire is to obtain information concerning the: *influence of larges classes on teaching and learning English*. The following information will only be used for academic/research purposes. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible based on the following criteria.

Very satisfactory:	Totally agree
Satisfactory:	Agree
Somewhat satisfactory:	Partially agree
Unsatisfactory:	Disagree

Informative data: Please fill in the information below

Name of institution: _____

Type of institution: Public () Private ()

Year of study: 8th year. () 9th year () 10th year. ()

1st senior high school . () 2nd senior high school. () 3rd. senior high school. ()

City: _____

Instructions: place an (X) in the box that best reflects your personal opinion:

A. Academic issues

	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
1.	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.				
2.	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.				
3.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.				
4.	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.				
5.	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.				
6.	Students can cheat during the test				
7.	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.				
8.	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.				
9.	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.				

B. Social issues

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfact
10.	There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.				
11.	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.				
12.	The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.				

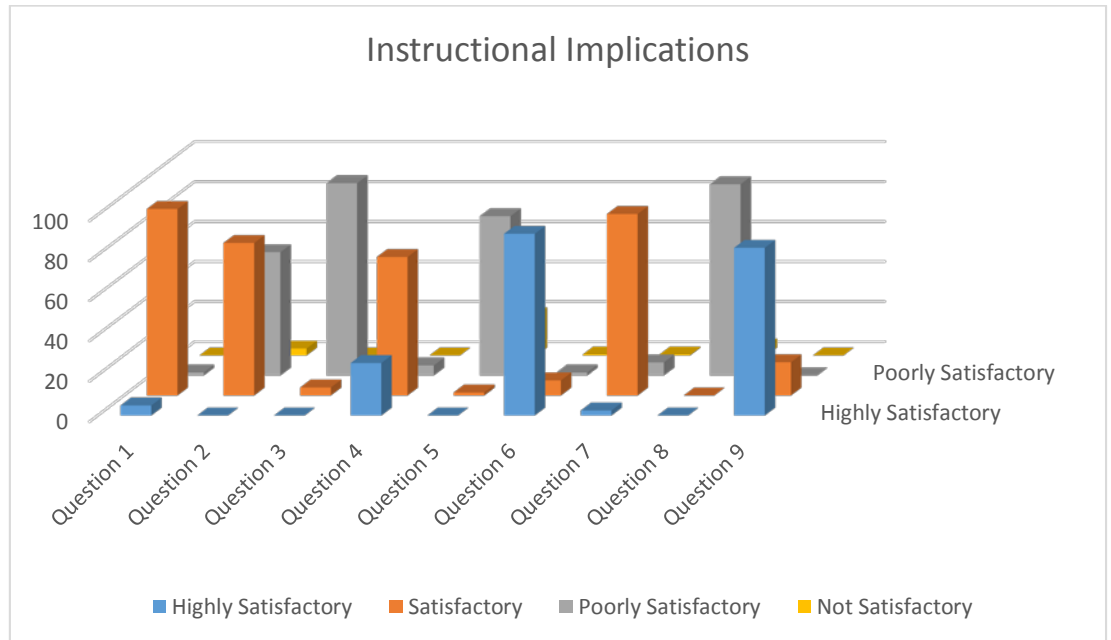
13.	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.				
14.	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.				

C. Psychological issues:

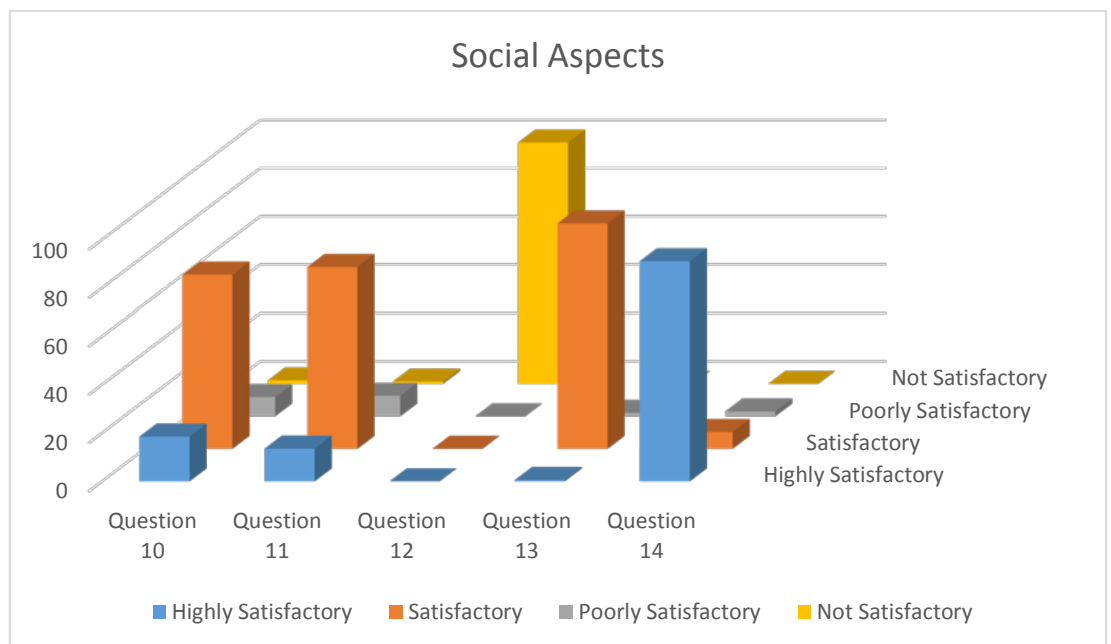
	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
15.	The atmosphere is stressful.				
16.	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest.				
17.	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.				
18.	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.				
19.	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.				
20.	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.				
21.	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.				

Thank you for your collaboration!

What instructional implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process?



What social implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process?



What psychological implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process?

