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**The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning
process in Ecuadorian high schools**

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN.

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De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación: “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools” realizado por Guamantica Aguilar Juan Francisco, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

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DECICATION

There is a small group of important people to me whom I am greatly indebted.

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CONTENTS

Cover	i
Aprobación del director del trabajo de fin de titulación	ii
Declaración de autoría y cesión de derechos.....	iii
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgment.....	vi
Contents	vii
ABSTRACT.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	3
DISCUSSION.....	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	7
Teaching approaches and methods	8
Class size	10
Managing learning	11
Managing large classes.....	12
Activities for working with large classes.....	14
Seating arrangement and classroom space	15
Different levels of proficiency.....	16
Previous studies.....	18
METHOD	24
DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS.....	26
4.1.1 Quantitative Analysis	28
4.1.2 Instructional Implications.....	29
4.1.3 Social Implications.....	39
4.1.4 Psychological Implications	45
Conclusions.....	53
Recommendations.....	54
REFERENCES.....	55
ANNEXES	

Abstract

This research is about the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools. The purpose of this study is to determine what instructional, social, and psychological implications large classes have on the teaching-learning process.

This research took place in two high schools in the City of Machala. It is focused on students from secondary schools of 8th, 9th, and 10th grades, and 1st and 2nd “bachillerato”.

The methods applied to carry out this research were qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative analysis describes the teaching approaches and methods used in large classes, and other aspects such as class size, managing learning, managing large classes, activities for working with large classes, classroom space and seating arrangement, and different levels of proficiency. The quantitative analysis describes results of questionnaires taken to students based on academic, social and psychological aspects.

This research demonstrates that teaching English to a large number of students has limitations, and in order to face them, teachers must be trained in methods and techniques that can help to succeed in the English language-learning process.

KEYWORDS: English language teaching-learning process, influence-large classes.

Resumen

Esta investigación es sobre la influencia de clases numerosas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de idiomas Inglés en las escuelas secundarias del Ecuador. El propósito de este estudio es determinar qué implicaciones de instrucciones, sociales, y psicológicas tienen las clases numerosas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en dos escuelas secundarias en la ciudad de Machala. La investigación se centra en jóvenes estudiantes de octavo, noveno y décimo grado, y primero y segundo año de bachillerato.

Los métodos aplicados para llevar a cabo esta investigación fueron cualitativos y cuantitativos. El análisis cualitativo describe los métodos de enseñanza y los métodos utilizados en las clases numerosas, y otros aspectos como el tamaño de la clase, el manejo del aprendizaje, el manejo de las clases numerosas, actividades para trabajar con clases numerosas y ubicación de los asientos, y los diferentes niveles de competencia. El análisis cuantitativo describe los resultados de los cuestionarios adoptados para los estudiantes basados en aspectos académicos, sociales y psicológicos.

Esta investigación demuestra que la enseñanza de inglés a un gran número de estudiantes tiene muchas limitaciones, y con el fin de hacer frente a estas, los maestros deben ser entrenados en los métodos y técnicas que puedan ayudar a tener éxito en el proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas inglés.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje idioma inglés, influencia clases numerosas

Introduction

Teaching English has always been a tool aimed at preparing high school students to understand people and cultures beyond linguistic and geographic limits. Although these students have been studying this language since the primary school, they do not achieve the basic language communicative competence.

In recent years, after an intensive evaluation to English teachers and students, which confirmed the lack of language communicative competence, by the Ecuador government, important decisions have been taken in order to improve the education on this field. In order to give a solution to this issue, different policies and strategies have been implemented such teachers' training, not only in teaching methods but also in their English language proficiency, improvement of the curriculum based on international standards, and adding technology to classes so that English language teaching can be improved on its process and quality.

Nevertheless, not all aspects mentioned above may be the only ones that influence the teaching learning process of English language in Ecuadorian high schools. There are other aspects that do not allow students and teachers to accomplish their learning and teaching goals in class, as well. One of those aspects is teaching large classes. Woodward (2001) states that "these problems include noise, too many people and fixed objects in a restricted space, not enough material for everyone, not being able to respond to different needs, and the difficulty of organizing anything more than lockstep teaching " (p. 218). Large classes have been a problem for teachers in Ecuadorian high schools, especially in Public schools, where classes with over 35 students can easily be noticed; thus, they are claimed to be researched due to the fact that teaching English in this kind of classes have, in some cases, advantages and disadvantages in others, as stated by Harmer (1998) "despite of big classes, there are things which teachers can do" (p. 128).

Therefore, the present research titled “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools” is aimed at determining whether or not large classes affect the English language teaching-learning process. Through this research, the reader will learn what instructional, social, and psychological implications large classes have on the teaching-learning process. And so that those implications can be found, topics related to this research were investigated such as teaching approaches and methods, class size (number of students), managing learning (instructions, feedback, discipline, and timing), managing large classes, activities for working with large classes, seating arrangement and classroom space (physical space- big/small rooms), and different levels of proficiency.

Previous studies have researched on the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process. For instance an study carried out by Thaher (2005) aimed at determining the instructional, psychological and social effect that large classes have through the analysis and research of students’ aptitude in EFL. To achieve this study, a questionnaire was distributed among students that were studying English language as a requirement to apply for a university. The results showed that instructional effects have the highest mean over the social and psychological one. It seems that despite the negative aspects of learning English in large classes, there might be some positive aspects that teachers can use. Some recommendations are resolved in this study in order to face the problem of teaching English in large classes.

A second study regarding this research topic was conducted by Khati (2010) aimed at finding out the very common expectations of students inside the classroom where students are learning English at a variety of different pace and the large-classroom size. This study is

focused on 6 different areas: classroom management, establishing collaboration, range of tasks, giving feedback, classroom English and home assignment.

The results of the study above indicated that classroom management plays an important role in a large class. Fifty percent of students have top expectations of fixed class rules. Another discussion found in this study was enhancing collaboration, which does not happen with all students. Some students were found more frank and sociable than others who like group work and are good at speaking. Around fifty-five percent of students replied that they have enjoyed the group and pair work very much. Range of tasks was also another discussion topic in this study, which confirms that more than twenty-five percent of students expected different activities in a period. Using an appropriate level of English in classroom is very important, too. In this study, only twenty percent of students admitted that their English teacher should speak in English only. And, last discussion was feedback, which is one of the great challenges of teaching in a large class. Ninety-five percent of students reported they like to be informed about their progress.

The third study regarding this research topic was made by Forero (2005) which demonstrates how a group of 5 teachers used task-based learning with 50 students of 7th grade to improve oral interaction based on the following questions: Could task-based learning be used to improve oral interaction? And could it be effective? How can teachers handle interaction in large groups?. After applying three different techniques –a preforma, questionnaires and class recordings, the results showed that the use of task-based learning in large groups helped students to improve oral interaction, but it was a gradual process. It required providing opportunities to practice the language, providing different visual aids and working with topics related to students' needs and interests.

All the results obtained of this research will benefit any education institution, teachers, and students who are involved in this English language teaching-learning process.

Some limitations were found, during the process of this research, two different high schools were chosen due to the fact that in the first one, there were only two courses with over 35 students; thus, the second one was necessary to be included to complete the requirements of this research, and learners may have not answered questionnaires honestly

Discussion

Literature Review

Although it seems that in Ecuador teaching English is an easy task for anyone who can speak English fluently, but in reality, it is not. There are several aspects to be considered before deciding to teach English as a career. It requires, an intensive professional training, teaching experience and practice. In addition, this profession implies a high level knowledge of a variety of methods and strategies that must be used according to students' needs and the learning atmosphere they are immersed in.

From time to time language learning occurs almost instantaneously, and other times it is acquired only through long, arduous study and diligent practice, that is why teaching English should be based on vocation and love for it. Therefore, teachers have a great challenge to improve teaching at any educational institution.

In order to face such challenge, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (MinEduc) acknowledges the need to align the English curriculum to standards like the Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)—which is internationally recognized and provides a common basis for the elaboration of language curriculum guidelines and syllabi, and the Communicative Approach which is currently the most recognized, accepted method in the field of language teaching and learning worldwide because it comprises a theoretically well-informed set of principles about the nature of language and of language learning and teaching (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2011)

Despite all the efforts done to improve the English language teaching in Ecuador, this process is being affected by the large-class size which influences teachers and students on teaching and learning process respectively. Thus, this influence is going to be reviewed in this section. To achieve this purpose a study of the following topics is presented in the next pages:

Teaching approaches and methods, managing learning, lesson design, class size (number of students), classroom space (physical space- big/small rooms), seating arrangement, classroom and/or teaching resources, classroom observation (institution observation/monitoring), learning styles, and language aptitude.

The English language teaching-learning process is something that has worried societies since many years ago; for this reason, several teaching methods have been used through the years. Five of these methods and approaches have been selected for this research.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

As stated above, there are some approaches and methods in language teaching. They refer to general principles and theories, concerning how languages are learned, how language knowledge is represented and organized in memory, and how language itself is structured. The approaches and methods have to be appropriated to the English language teaching-learning process.

According to The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2011), today's most popular approach is the communicative approach. It is the best-known current approach to language teaching. It is characterized by two main features: The first feature is to focus on real-world contexts, because students will ultimately have to use the language productively (through speaking and writing) and receptively (through listening and reading) outside the classroom; classroom tasks/activities must equip students with the necessary skills for communication in everyday contexts. The second one is the relationship of language forms (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) and function (use).

Additionally, Larsen-Freeman (2000) argues that another approach that involves students in learning is the Cooperative Language Learning (CLL). Teachers help and

encourage students to learn more effectively by working in groups and thinking in terms of positive interdependence. In CLL, students are grouped and mixed so that they ask each other to contribute with learning and share responsibility. Teachers guide students with this learning process and are in charge of having students feel responsible for participating and learning. Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that “Cooperative Learning is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom” (p.62).

Alternatively, to learn a second language, Content-Based Learning (TBL) uses tasks as the center of planning and instruction. Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that there must be 4 conditions for language learning. They are exposed to a rich but comprehensive input of real spoken and written language in use, to use of the language to do things, to motivate to listen and read the language, to speak and write, and instruction in language.

Equally important is the Content-Based Instruction approach which is designed to provide second-language learners instruction in content and language. The same above authors state that teaching is organized around the information that learners will acquire. Content used with a variety of different meanings refers to the subject matter that students communicate through language. Likewise, Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that this approach has been applied for years, which includes content relevant to a particular profession or academic discipline that motivate students to learn a second language.

Another teaching approach that attempts to teach language through a combination of language and physical activity is the Total Physical Response (TPR). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the method used in this approach emphasizes the importance of listening on language development and responding physically to commands given by the teacher. Learners are not forced to speak; speaking comes up naturally after listening development.

For beginners, lessons require the teacher's voice, actions, and gestures which are sufficient basis for classroom activities. Then, the teacher uses classroom objects such as pens, books, furniture and so on. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that "Emphasis is placed on student's developing basic communication skills and vocabulary through their receiving meaningful exposure to the target language" (p. 107).

Class size

The number of students in a class plays an important role in the teaching-learning process. There are some advantages and disadvantages of having large and small classes. Harmer (1998) states that working with large classes is difficult for not only teachers, but also students. In case of teachers, they cannot make contact with students, and in case of students, they cannot ask for and receive individual attention. This author also states that having a large class can be impossible to perform dynamic and creative lessons, but there are some options that can be considered in order to manage this size such as the use of worksheets, pair and group work, chorus reactions, and group leaders. On the other hand, Woodward (2001) suggests that having a big number of students can make teachers have the change to work in pairs if there are about 15 students or in groups of 10 if there are more than 30 students, so it can facilitate the language-learning process

Woodward (2001) states that no matter if the class is large or small teachers must know how to deal with it, especially with those with challenging atmosphere. Large classes always bring problems such as noise, too many people and fixed objects in a restricted space, not enough materials for everyone, not being able to respond to differing needs, the difficult of organizing anything more than lockstep teaching and the lack of target language use if students speak common languages.

On the contrary, Woodward (2010) also suggests that switching to very small group such as one-to-one class, things are totally different, directions such as “all of you”, “everyone”, “get into pair” disappear. In this kind of classes to have to adjust to student pace and interests and have authentic conversations in your planning. There are many useful books on teaching one-to-one. The authors claims that classes are more flexible with small group, teachers can apply some principles for teaching such as planning plenty of time at the first meeting for getting to know each other, making the encounters as equal as possible by doing the work you ask the students to do yourself, making the occasions you meet a real exchange of information by exchanging things such as poems, books, CDs or cassettes with students, use the students as a resource, bringing other people in, using the local environment, and making plans, recaps and summaries even more clearly and jointly than usual.

Manage Learning

Regarding managing learning, very important aspects have been considered so that students can succeed in the learning process. First of all, the instructions that teacher give in class are essential. According to Davis and Pearse (2000), teachers should use simple and clear instructions so that students are able to understand. Teachers need to have students pay attention and train them in all the principal instruction needed to perform any activity. If the instruction is understood, the activity will go well.

Another important aspect to be considered is giving feedback to students, which according to Gower, Phillips, and Walters (1983), it is one the most important responsibilities of a teacher. The authors state that “by providing ongoing feedback you can help your students evaluate their success and progress” (p. 163). There are many ways to give feedback to students, and all of them must be applied in class. For example: when you give positive feedback, students feel praised and encouraged to keep going. If teachers use correction

technique, students must be able to correct it himself or herself, either with teacher or students' help. The students must know something is not accurate, where the error is, and what kind of error it is. According to the authors above, these are the three stages to consider making sure students learn successfully.

Besides, Gower, Phillips, and Walters also state that timing for every activity has to be set. The proper timing of your lessons is an area that ESL teachers need to be aware of.

The thing is that if you come into your lesson with too much or too little planned, you are going to have a hard time. Proper management of your in-lesson time is essential to maintaining a good class. Harmer (1998, p. 124) argues:

Some activities which sound very imaginative end up lasting for only a very short time. Others demand setting-up time, discussion time, student-planning etc. One of the things that undermine the students' confidence in the teacher is if they never finish what they set out to do. One of the things that irritate them most is when teachers run on after the bell has gone because they have to finish an activity. Thinking about how long an activity will take is a vital part of planning. Most teachers indicate the intended *Timing* of an activity in their plan.

Managing large classes

With respect to managing large classes, Saraswathi (2004) refers to this aspect as one of the biggest obstacles that teachers must face in managing learning. This author states that large classes bring indiscipline to the class. And discipline is one factor that influences the teaching-learning process. According to David and Pearse (2000), in order to have a good

order, cooperation, and respect in the classroom, it depends on the way you teach and way you are related to the learners.

However, that does not mean that teachers will not be able to manage learning. Saraswathi (2004) states that because of the large size of the class, teachers have to shout in order to be heard, and most of time teachers cannot make sure if all the students, especially those in the back, and listen to the instructions. In addition, individual attention is impossible in large classes. Saraswathi (2004, p. 154) states:

A teacher cannot even get to know the names of all her learners in a large class. A personalized approach, very vital to the process of learning, becomes impossible in a large class. If, however, individual attention is viewed as a means of involving learners, it could be achieved in a large class. When learners do tasks on their own, they learn much better than while passively listening to the teacher. While learners are engaged in group activities, the teacher can learn more from group to group and get to know them intimately.

Davis and Pearse (2000) also state that “it is obviously much more difficult to achieve good results in very large groups. Some of the main problems are: Communication, numbers, and co-operation” (p. 129).

Regarding these main problems, the above authors state that when teaching large classes, the teacher is not able to see or hear all the learners, and learners may not be able to see or hear the teacher. Thus, communication becomes a big problem during teaching-learning process. Teachers find it difficult to memorize all the learners and their names. The students also receive less individual practice, even when they work in pairs or groups, they cannot be monitored at all.

With respect to cooperation, the Davis and Pearse (2000) argue that “large groups are most common in captive learner situations—schools and universities where the students are obliged to attend the English courses. This means teachers are always likely to have a fair number of people who simply do not want to be there or to co-operate with teachers and the other more motivated learners” (p. 129).

What should teachers do regarding large classes? Davis and Pearse (2000, p. 130) state:

There are no magic, guaranteed solutions. The best starting point is probably obtaining the learners' co-operation. If the learners are adolescents or adults, you can discuss the challenges and options they face in their L1. The basic options are everybody co-operating and achieving some worthwhile objectives, or everybody wasting their time. If a majority chooses the first option, which they probably will if you present it attractively, there is pressure on the minority at least not to disrupt the lessons.

If the author mentioned above suggest that, teachers should focus on cooperative learning, which according to Larsen-Freeman (2000), Cooperative learning involves earning from each other in groups. Thus, teachers teach students collaborative or social skills so that they work more effectively.

Activities for working with large classes

In large classes, it is difficult for the teacher to give and students to receive individual attention, especially those at the back. It looks like to be impossible for teachers to prepare activities in their lesson plan. Harmer (1998) states that “despite the problems of big classes, there are things which teachers can do” (p. 128).

According to Harmer (1998), there are some things that teacher can do in order to face large classes, so teaching-learning process succeed. Hanging out worksheets with different tasks can be great for having students practice their English language knowledge. After having done these exercises, the teacher can go through the worksheet with the whole group, and all the students will get the benefit. A group exercise can be conducted as an in-class exercise or out-of-class assignment, and it is a very good way to manage the active learning of students in a large class. Before working in groups, it is very important to give clear instructions, so the learning process can flow without misunderstanding about what it has to be done. In group activities, students work together to discuss or solve problems, a process that is also called collaborative learning or cooperative learning. In a large class, students working in pairs or larger groups can help and learn from each other.

Another activity is through chorus reaction. Due to the fact that it is difficult to give individual attention, dividing the class in pairs or groups can be great for practicing dialogues, ask and answer questions, repeat sentences, or a song in chorus.

Another great activity is when doing the workbook (exercises), the teacher can make groups and give each group different section of the workbook. When they finish, they can go with the next one, in this way all the group are working in different exercises. No matter how big the class is, teachers must use the size of the group to their advantages.

Seating Arrangement and classroom space

Although it looks like teaching English can be done in any classroom space with any number of students, but in reality, it cannot. Classroom space influences on teaching-learning process a lot. According to Harmer (1998), being too close or keeping a great distance has

different meaning in a multicultural class. This can cause unease or even offence to other students.

Seating arrangement always affects the learning atmosphere to perform different activities. Gower, Phillips, and Walters (1983) note that with moveable desks, tables or seminar chairs of probably no more than sixteen students, a horseshoe arrangement will allow easy, face-to-face contact between the student and between teachers and students. These authors state that if the class has more than 16 students, teachers may be able to make a double horseshoe, group the students around tables, orderly rows, and circle.

Harmer (1998) also notes that teachers must consider the time for moving furniture, and return the classroom to the original arrangement because this can cause nonconformance for the next teacher that will be in charge of the class. And whatever the seating arrangement is, teachers can have students work as a whole class, in groups, in pairs or individually.

Different levels of proficiency

When teaching a class with students all at different levels, many teachers do not know what to do or where to start. Harmer (1998) states that “as with many other classroom subjects, teachers face this problem every day unless the most rigorous selection has taken place” (p. 10). The mentioned author states that there are possible ways of dealing with this situation. One way is by making groups and using different materials with different topics according to their levels, or using the different task with the same material. This solution may be frustrated if teachers do not know their students’ level and do not have enough classroom space to work in groups.

On the one hand, teaching English to different levels has some advantages so that teacher can take. For example: students can learn to work well in a group, become

independent learners, develop strong relationships with their peers, and becoming partners in learning. According to Rogers (2007), four ways to group your students can be applied in this kind of classes. The first is pair work, that is, two students working together. The second one is group work, that is, three to ten students working together. The third one is teamwork, that is, teams of students working together in a competition with other teams. The fourth one is whole-class work, that is, the entire class participating in an activity. All of this means that the role of the teacher is not only to give instructions, but also to make the pairing, grouping and teaming-up of the students.

On the other hand, Woodward (2001) states that working with different levels of proficiency have some inconvenient. It is difficult to meet all the expectations held by each student and difficult to make sure that everyone learns. It also takes too much time for teachers to plan a class for each level of proficiency, and planning for this kind of classes can need more time that not all teachers have. In additions to this, Hess (2001) points out that there are different opinions about what a large class is. This author states that a 20-student class is considered large in different places, while a one-hundred class even with more students is also considered large in different countries. Therefore, the concept of a large class is not exact since attitude toward language, language proficiency, language aptitude and styles are different from one person to another. Other aspects need to be considered such as gender, maturity, occupations, ethnicities, cultural background as well as personalities. In other words, a large multilevel class is not an issue of a class size but perception.

The English teaching-learning process can be varied, depending on where the teaching is taking place. There are many factors that make teachers change or develop their English language teaching methods, especially in large classes. For instance, teaching grammar and vocabulary only, adding technology devices in class, using the Internet, students' cooperation,

among others. However, in order to understand more about the implications that large classes have on the teaching-learning process, an analysis and comparison among five studies were necessary. These studies will help to see what is going on other high schools and have a better understanding of different point of view about this issue. The selected studies deal with the researched topic such as The effects of large class on EFL Students at An-Najah National University, Exploring common expectations from students in large multilevel secondary level English classes, Promoting oral interaction in large groups through task-based learning, How class size reduction mediates secondary students' learning: hearing the pupil voice, and Class size and language learning in Hong Kong: the students' perspective.

These studies mentioned above will allow incorporating subjects such as instructional, psychological and social effect of large classes in EFL, common expectations of students inside large classrooms, the lack of oral interaction and the huge amount of students per class, formulating the problem of large EFL classes and choosing a solution for it, differences between teaching and learning in a large class and in a reduced-size class, and to examine whether, and how class size reduction might help to alleviate language learning anxiety. As we can see, previous studies will really enrich this research proposal.

In order to clarify some more information about the present topic, some prior studies were taken into account. One of these studies is the one elaborated by Thaher (2005), who examined the effects of large class on EFL Students at An-Najah National University. The method to gather data was by distributing a questionnaire among E10103 students who were learning English as a university requirement. There were (230) non-English major EFL students who participated in this sample. The findings of the study revealed that the instructional effects have the highest mean over the social and the psychological effects. It appeared that despite the negative aspects of learning English in large classes, there can be

some positive aspects that teachers could make use of. The paper concludes with a number of recommendations to cope with the problems of large classes for future application in teaching EFL students.

The second study was carried out by Khati (2010), who explored common expectations from students in large multilevel secondary level English classes. The purpose of this study is to find out the very common expectations of students inside the classroom where students are learning English at a variety of different pace and the classroom is large in size. This study is mainly focused on six different areas: classroom management, establishing collaboration, range of tasks, giving feedback, classroom English and home assignment.

The population was sampled using purposive non-random sampling procedure. To collect primary data, one structured questionnaire was developed containing nineteen closed ended questions. Students were asked to tick the both nominal and ordinal alternatives.

This study reveals many findings at a time regarding the expectations of students in large multilevel classes. Many teachers do not seem to make trouble to learn names of the students but in this study, more than ninety percent students reported that they like to be called by their first names.

It is pointed out that learning names of students and using them establishes an atmosphere of mutual interest and responsibility. The author further opines about the movement of the teacher that moving around the class also makes the class seem smaller and encourages student involvement. This study also proves that an English teacher should move all around the class. Some teachers often find giving lectures easier and more comfortable than organizing group work and pair work in spite of the students' interest in these activities.

Sharing experiences like this activity is highly preferred by the considerable (40%) number of students. It shows that sharing experiences of teachers and students has strong motivational drive on the part of students. In the process of data collection, for example, they seemed to be interested in the passage (appendix 1) of 10th grade English (CDC, 2010 p. 104) in which the narrator is telling his story when he got the first pair of trousers. In the data, more than ninety percent students reported that they expect additional activities more than of textbook.

It is clearly revealed that students might have felt boring with the limited and repetitive exercises, materials and techniques used in the prescribed textbook. This study also supports that limited use of mother tongue in English classroom is bearable and accepted. However, while using English, the teacher should introduce some new words every day in simpler and shorter expression. In case of feedback, feedback at personal level inside classroom is more preferable. But William and Burden (1997) recommends for feedback that is informational.

This study also reveals that most of the students like challenging activities, neither too easy, nor too difficult. It is commonly believed that excessive 'check' work cannot be managed in large multilevel classes. But the same home assignment to all may be demotivated because of the different levels of students. The same activity may be too easy for some students may not be for others. Thus, it is essential to provide different tasks to different students to grow them at their own pace. Students have their own unique learning prospects in English. Therefore, in a large heterogeneous class, there is no alternative of developing a collaborative working atmosphere, providing a variety of works and making all students involved in various activities appropriate for different levels.

On the third study, Forero (2005) promoted oral interaction in large groups through task-based learning. The purpose of this study was to analyze the state of the art to identify possible weaknesses found in the state of the art stage and some data collected in the different classes, to become aware of the lack of oral interaction and the huge amount of students per class, to formulate the problem, to choose the best method as a solution, to make a plan and to consider the methods to get data, and to analyzing and reflecting on data collection in order to get the findings.

The use of task-based learning in large groups helped students to improve oral interaction, but it was a gradual process. It required providing opportunities to practice the language, providing different visual aids and working with topics related to students' needs and interests. In addition, to teach English in large groups, it was necessary to use different strategies to maintain motivation such as changing the activities very often, using creative and colorful flashcards and guides, and making a dynamic plan outline.

The control of students' discipline was very difficult but necessary. Some of the strategies used were to have different classroom settings (rows, groups, pairs), to promote competition among students (games), and to stimulate.

On the fourth study, Harfitt (2012) analyzed how class size reduction mediates secondary students' learning. This paper discusses the question of why and how class size can make a difference to teaching and learning from the students' perspective. Secondary school contexts and, in particular, the students' own voice on the issue of class size represent an under-researched area for class size studies. This paper draws on data from three case studies that examined secondary school English classes in Hong Kong (one large and one reduced-size class in each case). Both classes were of the same grade and taught by the same teacher.

This paper positions the case studies within a broader context that focuses on class size and the processes that appear to be mediated by class size reduction.

It also draws on interview data and findings from classroom observations. Notably, these data all suggest that students perceive smaller classes as being able to foster a greater sense of belonging and cohesion in their classroom, closer relations with teachers and enhanced participation levels in classroom activities. Crucially, findings also suggest that smaller classes can help to overcome some key cultural obstacles to learning such as language learning anxiety and the issue of 'face'. Some implications for teachers, trainers and researchers are also presented.

On the fifth study, Harfit (2012) analyzed the students' perspective of class size and language learning in Hong Kong. The purpose of this study is to examine whether, and how, class size reduction might help to alleviate language learning anxiety, which has long been seen as an obstacle to second language acquisition.

The method used was by employing multiple case studies in four Hong Kong secondary schools. Each case constituted one teacher teaching English language to first language Chinese students in a reduced-size class (where class size was between 21 and 25 students) and a large class (where class size was between 38 and 41 students) of the same year grade, and of similar academic ability. Multiple interviews were conducted with the four teachers, and data stemmed from group and individual interviews with 231 students. Student interview questions focused on their perspectives and experiences of studying in large and reduced-size classes. A total of 78 lessons were also observed across the four case studies. The data were analyzed to identify any emergent patterns and themes.

The research findings indicate that students reflect on their experiences of studying in reduced-size classes in a mature and confident way. Students reported that smaller classes promoted a strong sense of security within their classroom community and seemed to weaken students' fears of negative evaluation from their peers and teachers. Students also reported that they felt more confident about participating in English lessons and these perspectives were supported by evidence from classroom observations.

This small-scale exploratory research study suggests that the student voice can provide insights into language learning classrooms. Data from the case studies reveal that students' sense of anxiety can be reduced in smaller classes and that class size reduction may assist in breaking down cultural barriers.

Method

Setting and participants

This research took place in the City of Machala in Ecuador, in the south of the city, in two different private and public schools. The participants invited to this research were students of 8th, 9th, 10th grades of Basic General Education, and 1st and 2nd grades of Senior General Education . These students receive two hours of English classes daily. Each classroom has from 35 to 45 students. There is one teacher for each classroom.

Procedure

As soon as the topic of this research was known, several libraries were visited to get information about the content outlines for the literature review and this information was filled out in the corresponding chart. There were 7 topics to be searched on different books, and 5 previous studies in the Internet.

The general approaches applied on this research are Qualitative and Quantitative.. The qualitative method was used for the description of the gathered information.

The purpose of this method is not only to study individuals and events in their natural setting but also to present a natural and holistic picture of the phenomena being studied. The quantitative research was used for the numerical data concerning to teachers and students' perceptions about teaching English in large classes.

Immediately, a previous selection of schools was made within the City of Machala. Next, the corresponding formal request was handed in to the first school, which was a private one. Then, the answer to the request was obtained, which was positive. However, the 5 grades could not be surveyed due to the fact that there were only 2 grades with 35 students, which is the number needed, as minimum, for this research. Thus, another school was selected, and the

formal request was handed in, too, obtaining a positive result. Three grades were surveyed in the second school. Every class was observed before students answered the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 9 questions related to academic issues, 5 questions dealing with social issues, and 7 questions based on psychological issues.

Once the 5 courses were surveyed, the information was tabulated in the corresponding tables in each question. These 3 questions refer to what instructional, social, and psychological implications large classes have on the teaching-learning process. They were organized by criteria, number of students, and percentages. This information was also used to insert Microsoft Excel graphs which represents the information filled in the table.

The description, analysis and interpretation of results were done by taking into account the quantitative and qualitative tabulation. On this part, the obtained results were taken as references; with this, the researcher shared his criteria through the respective description, analysis and interpretation, based on solid and scientific information, as providing comments and coherent arguments about the researched topic, without losing sight of the goals outlined in this research.

In order to make the qualitative analysis, the information gathered in the literature review was used to check if methods and approaches, and teaching techniques have been used. Additionally, the comparative analysis (quantitative) was made statement by statement which were in the questionnaire focusing on percentages and frequencies of the different criteria. Finally in this section, the researcher introduces his point of view of possible causes for the results obtained.

As the last part of this research, conclusions and recommendations were described based on objectives, the topic and results of this research.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

One of the biggest problems often found in teaching English as a foreign language is the large number of students. English teachers prefer not to work with large classes because of the many teaching difficulties they have to face. The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools as reflected by their responses to the questionnaire in order to determine what effects (instructional , psychological or social) large classes have on students' learning.

In this section the results of the survey, which is the main part of this research, will be described, analyzed, and interpreted. To accomplish this purpose, statistical graphs will show the percentages obtained. This survey was held in 2 private and public schools in the City of Machala.

The process of collecting information was complete by following the necessary steps to do so. First, a previous selection of schools was made within the City of Machala. Second, the corresponding formal request was delivered to school selected, which was a private school. Third, the answer to the request was obtained, which was positive. However, 5 grades could not be surveyed in this school due to the fact that there were only 2 grades with 35 students, which is the minimum numbers needed for this research. Thus, a Public school was selected, and the formal request was delivered to it, obtaining a positive answer. 3 large-class courses were surveyed in this last school.

In addition, due to the complexity of the survey statements, each statement was explained before students answered it, especially for 8th, 9th, and 10th grade of General Basic Education.

Consequently, the results of an investigation process providing specific evidence about the reality of the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools is shown.

The summaries of the results obtained from the statistical analysis are introduced and the main results of the three study questions are highlighted. To analyze the findings, the researcher used the following criteria for analysis:

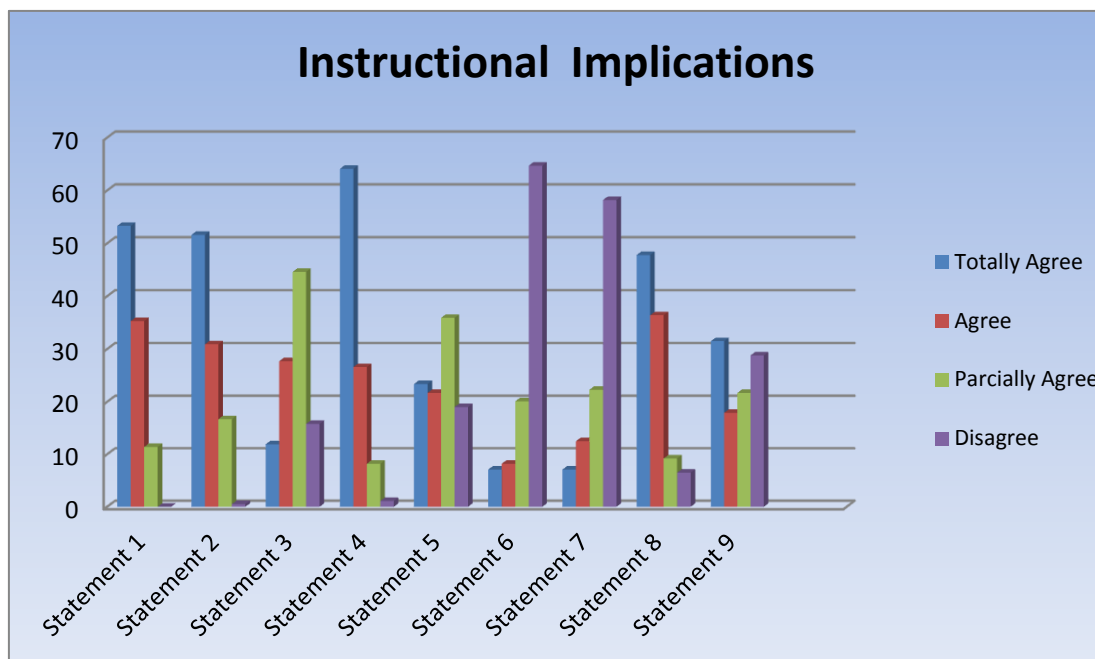
Quantitative Analysis

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

To answer this question, the researcher used the total and percentage of students in each criterion, and total of surveyed students. Table (1) and graph (1) shows the results of the first question.

Table (1)

N°	In classes with a large number of students: STATEMENT	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.	98	53.3	65	35.3	21	11.4	0	0	184	100
2.	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	95	51.6	57	30.9	31	16.7	1	0.5	184	100
3.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.	22	11.9	51	27.7	82	44.6	29	15.8	184	100
4.	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.	118	64.1	49	26.6	15	8.2	2	1.1	184	100
5.	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.	43	23.4	40	21.7	66	35.9	35	19.0	184	100
6.	Students can cheat during the test.	13	7.1	15	8.2	37	20.1	119	64.7	184	100
7.	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.	13	7.1	23	12.5	41	22.3	107	58.2	184	100
8.	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.	88	47.8	67	36.4	17	9.2	12	6.5	184	100
9.	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	58	31.5	33	17.9	40	21.7	53	28.8	184	100



Graph 1

Author: Francisco Guamantica

Source: Student's questionnaire

In statement 1, it is observed that fifty-three point three percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that the activities done in class help to apply what they learn in class; 35.3% of them “agree”; 11.4% “partially agree”, and 0% “disagree” with it.

There is a clear indication that half of the surveyed students accept that the activities that are being done in class help to apply what they learn in class. Hence, it can be said that teachers are using the appropriate activities from the material studied to succeed in their teaching. Another group of students (35.3%) support this statement, by answering that they agree with it. To this group, these activities are less frequent as the first ones. However, a third group of students (11.4%) state that they “partially agree” with activities done in class; this can reflect that teachers are working on these activities, but not as usual as it has to be. On the other hand, none of this group of student states that these activities are not being done.

Regarding this implication, Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggest that instructional materials play an important role in the language learning. That is, task is essential in planning and instruction due to that fact that activities are involved in real communication; they promote learning and provide both the input and output processing necessary for language acquisition. All of this implies that different roles must be followed in the learning process, especially with large-size class, that is, group participation, monitoring, selection and sequencing of task, preparation of learners for task, and consciousness-raising.

Another important point to be considered is that in order to succeed in teaching English to large-size classes, Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) must be taken into account. Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that CLL is an approach that uses the cooperative activities that make students often stay together and in this way, they learn from practice and how to get along with people, different from themselves; thus, language acquisition is facilitated by students interacting in the target language.

The result above, in the statement 1, gives evidence that a big amount of students 53.3% “totally agree”; 35.3% “agree” accept that activities that help to apply what they learn are being done, but just a few say they are not as frequent as they have to be. Regarding this last group, it seems that teachers have to apply activities more frequently on them, because instructional material play an important role in language learning, and increase the frequently to apply this kind of activities. This, together with an excellent selection and organization in making small and big group, by students interacting in the target language, can improve the language learning process in schools with large classes.

Statement 2 allows seeing that fifty-one point six percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that the activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; 30.9% of them “agree”; 16.7% “partially agree”, and 0.5% “disagree” with it.

Regarding language skills, Harmer (1998) states that students need to be exposed to language in order to learn it, by the teacher using it for them to listen to/see, by listening to tapes, by reading texts, by speaking in role plays, and by writing letters. And there many reasons why getting students to read, write, speak and listen to English. In the first place, students want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study purpose or simple for future. In the second place, the reasons to teach writing include reinforcement, language development, learning style and, most importantly, being able to write in one's own style. In the third place, the reasons to teach speaking are rehearsal, to get students to have a free discussion. Through feedback teachers can see how well their classes are being done, what language problems and engagement they are having; and when good speaking activities can and should be highly motivating. In the fourth place, one of the main reasons for getting students to listen to spoken English is to let them hear different varieties and accents, rather than just voice of their teacher.

Teachers should find a method that allows them to use activities of different types in large classes. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach with unlimited types of exercises such as accuracy and fluency activities, mechanical, meaningful, communicative practice activities, information-gap activities, jigsaw activities, task-completion activities, information-gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, information-transfer activities, reasoning-gap activities, role plays. All these activities are designed to be carried out in pairs or small groups. Thus, this approach can help students do activities that best facilitate learning to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, especially in large classes

The result above demonstrates that there is a great acceptance to the statement 2 51.6% “totally agree”; 30.9% “agree” which states that activities done allow to practice the

four skills mentioned above. Regarding the other group of students 16.7% “partially agree”, classes need to be focused on all the skills and not just on some as it is probably happening. On the other hand, just 0.5% of students “disagree” with this statement that might mean that it has more acceptance positively for the English language learning process.

As statement 3 shows, only eleven point nine percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that the students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom; 27% of them “agree”; 44.6 “partially agree”; and 15.8 “disagree” with this statement.

With respect to this academic aspect, Harmer (1998) it is difficult for the teacher to make contact with the students at the back and it is difficult for the students to ask for and receive individual attention. This means that it is impossible to prepare dynamic lesson plans because the large-size class makes students unable to walk around, teachers to have contact with all of them. This can be very challenging for inexperienced teachers. It is vitally important to make sure that they remain in contact with the students and that they keep everyone involved. So, if they are asking questions to the class, they must remember to ask students at the back.

With the result above, statement 3 shows that for this first group (11.9%), teachers are having difficulties and the large size of the class does avoid approaching more students. On the other hand, 44.6% “partially agree” with this statement, that is, some students (44.6%) can notice that classes are being planned with techniques that have teachers work with large-size classes successfully, but it does not satisfy most of them. For students who do not accept this statement (15.8 %) can mean either they are easily to be distracted by their classmates at the back and pay attention to the class no matter if they are at the back or teachers do not have

contact with them most of the time and are not using the correct technique to avoid inattention from students.

In statement 4, it is seen that sixty-four point one percent of surveyed students “totally agree” that varied class activities are used such as group, individual, and pair-work activities; 26.6% of them “agree”; 8.2% “partially agree”; and 1.1% “disagree” with this statement.

Regarding this academic aspect, Harmer (1998) reports that there are some activities and teaching techniques that can be done in large classes. Working with worksheets is one solution for teachers; thus, when feedback stage is reached, teachers can work on the worksheets, so all students will get benefit. Pair and group work are also essential because they make all students participate, even when there is no enough space in the classroom. Another activity, according to this author, might be by using chorus reaction; teachers can divide the class in two groups, left and right, and ask them to repeat loudly a dialogue, and they can practice pronunciation, fluency, and intonation; also playing which group best work. Also, another activity might be by using group leaders; this can help teachers to have the control of the whole class, especially those ones that very big in size, also giving feedback to leaders only, and they can return to the group the share with members. These are just a few activities; others can come up with according to the teaching experience.

Additionally, Woodward (2001) suggests that if class size is about 15 students, teachers can make pairs and have them work on a worksheet, and if it is 30 or 40, teachers can make group of 10. The author also suggests that teachers must give a different topic for each group and number each group so everyone can know what to do and the order to present the task or activity.

It is obvious that big groups have disadvantages, but this does not have to be an excuse so that teachers cannot perform well in classes. There are many advantages and activities working with big group as are mentioned above. In most of the classes surveyed in this research a big group of students accept this (64.1%), that is, the activities mentioned are being done in some degree that together with the 26.6% of students who “agree” with it, makes the statement stronger in a good way. On the other hand, just 1.1% of students do not accept it, which is a really small amount.

Statement 5 reveals that twenty-three point four percent “totally agree” that activities such as plays, competitions, debates, and games are used in class; 21.7% of them “agree”, 35.9 “partially agree” and 19% “disagree” with this statement.

Concerning the type of activities mentioned above, it seems that teachers should change their methods in dealing with large-size classes and they should adapt new and different types of activities to their lesson plans. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that there are unlimited exercise types and activities compatible that can be applied in class with the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, whose activities were mentioned before (see statement 3). Teachers play important roles in this approach. Teachers have to organize the classroom appropriate for communication and communicative activities to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom. During this process the teacher monitors, encourages, and support students in any misunderstanding related to the grammar. Material has the main role of promoting communicative language use. There are numerous textbooks designed to direct and support this approach and where teachers can find different games, role plays, simulations, and activities that teacher can use in lesson plans.

Thaher (2005) mentions in his study that students find it difficult to have the opportunity to express themselves in large classes. So, activities such debates have not

success, thus, it would result in anxiety, discomfort and boredom. The negative findings affect students' learning and achievement.

Davis and Pearse (2000) indicate that there must be an organization regarding topics and activities of students' interest. For example: teaching Past Simple to young learners must be practice in the context of Disneyland rather than that of banks, hotels, and restaurants in a city. Another example might be in the context talking about life of favorite actors/actresses to teach teenagers. Varied activities, interactions and topics joined in chain drills, 'find-someone-who' can surveys, team games and competitions such as noughts-and-crosses all help to make a lesson more enjoyable, even for large classes.

As we can see, activities such as plays, competitions, debates, and games are supported by the CLT approach; teachers just need to use them appropriately in large classes. 35.9% of students are somewhat satisfactory, which means that somewhat teachers are working with these kinds of activities, but not as it has to be. This kind of school surveyed request students to buy textbooks which always come with this kind of activities. But if they do not, teachers should find the way to get them, especially nowadays when internet is accessible for most teachers.

The results shown in statement 6 indicated that 7.1% "totally agree" that students can cheat during the test; 8.2% "agree", 20.1 "partially agree and 64.7% "disagree" with this statement.

Managing large classes on students' examination can be very frustrated for teachers, especially when classes are large in students and small in space. According to Saraswathi (2004), the large classes make unrealistic demands on teachers, who have to control their students. However, it cannot be asserted that indiscipline exists when the class is large and

does not when it is small, and cheating during the test is indiscipline that can be seen in both cases. Additionally, the author states that individual attention is impossible in large classes.

It seems that the results in statement 6 show positive feedback for students, but that is not totally true. Teachers know that students always try to cheat on exams, no matter the class is big or small. Teacher must be aware and prevent it by using techniques such as preparing different exams, organize rows, changing students' common seats, etc. By applying these techniques, cheating on exams will be difficult for students.

Statement 7 shows that 7.1% "totally agree" that students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects; 12.5% "agree"; 22.3% "partially agree" and 58.2 % disagree" with this statement.

It is not rare to see students doing assignments from other subjects during English classes. This issue happens even in the best ones. By taking into consideration that teaching English to large-size class is much more difficult to get good results, Harmer (1998) notes that "it is difficult to make contact with the students at the back and it is difficult for students to ask for and receive individual attention" (p. 128), and most of student that are sit at the back are found doing assignments from other subject. In fact, the back is their favorite place.

Thus, teachers must find ways to avoid this problem which from the point of view of the research, it happens to 2 kinds of students: Those who are low in the language and the ones that are very good at it. For the first group, teacher should have them be involved with different pairs and groups, changing from his/her position very often, and encouraging them with students that can help them learn and participate in class. For the second group, teacher must prepare challenging activities for them in class and others in case they finish early. In

that way, this kind of students we will always have to do something related to the English subject.

The results above shows almost 50% of students who “disagree” with this statement, which might indicate that another 50%, get distracted by doing other subject assignments. This might indicate that these students need to be more motivated in class activities so they have no change to do something else that it is not part of the learning process. Keeping them busy must be teachers’ goal.

Statement 8 shows that 47.8% “totally agree” that the seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class; 36.4% “agree”; 9.2% “partially agree” and 6.5 % “disagree” with this statement.

Harmer (1998) states that there are some advantages when students sit in rows. This is very easy for teachers to see all students, and students can see the teacher. Besides, the teacher can monitor students by walking around in the space these orderly rows allow. When students work with groups, it allows the teacher to focus on groups and not on each student, for example, if there is a group of five working on a task, teachers will check answers on 1 task only, and the leader of the group can share the results.

Additionally, Gower, Phillips, and Walters (1983) state that classroom furniture arrangement always affects the learning atmosphere. Moving furniture to different styles such separate tables, circle, solo work, horseshoe an orderly can help teachers to work better with students, but teachers need to take into account that it takes time to do so, especially after finishing because they have to move the furniture back.

In all the classrooms used for this research, students sit in orderly rows. Their chairs are for only one student and made up of metal with an arms and a surface to write on it. At the

front of such classrooms, on an un-raised platform, the teachers stand. In contrast, there was only one classroom with double chairs. More than 70% answered positively on this statement, which tells teachers that seating arrangement is very useful to get good results in the English language learning process.

Statement 9 allows seeing that 31.5% “totally agree” that students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students; 17.9% “agree”; 21.7% partially “agree” and 28.8 % “disagree” with this statement. Gower, Phillips, and Walters (1983, p.163) state:

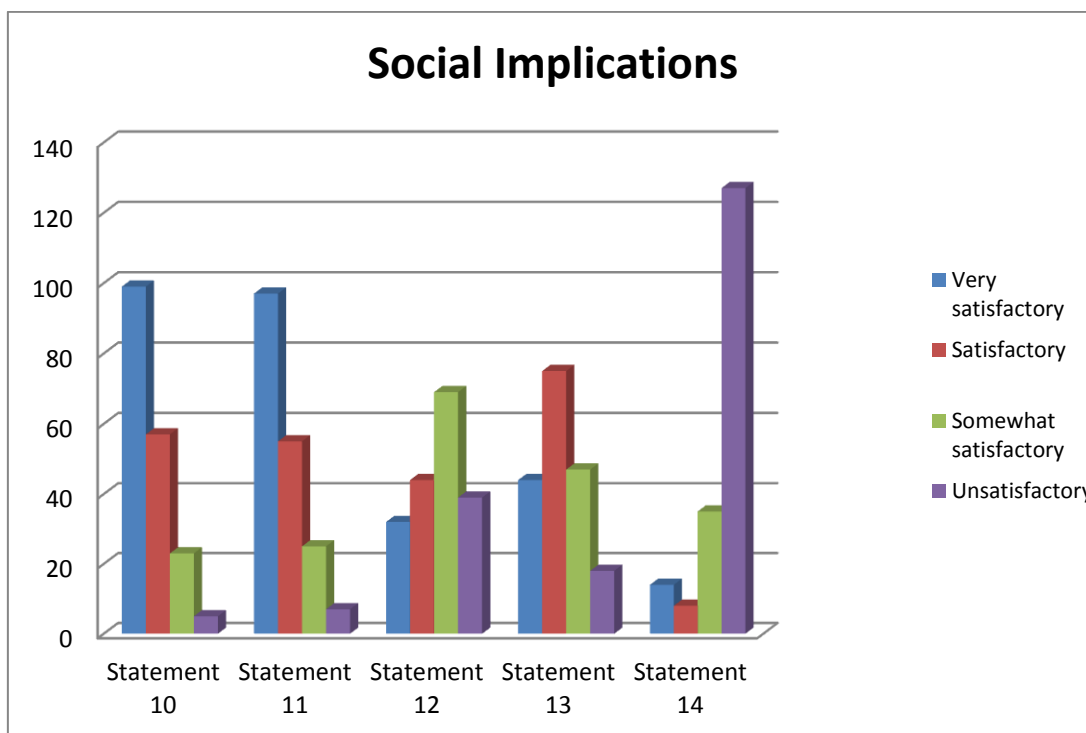
Giving feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher. By providing ongoing feedback you can help your students evaluate their success and progress. Feedback can take a number of forms: giving praise and encouragement; correcting; setting regular tests; having discussions about how the group as a whole is doing; giving individual tutorials; etc.

On the other hand, Davis and Pearse (2000) state that teachers should not correct students continually due to the fact that learners will be passive if they do so. Thus, learners must eventually correct themselves. This author suggests that teachers get learners used to self-correcting and give them help when necessary.

This issue claims to be fixed due to its importance in the English language learning process. Most of the students are saying that they need to have this solved, and only 28.8% are unsatisfactory. Schools that receive this kind of results should worry about it, because without it students can get a bad learning experience.

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

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory		Satisfactory		Somewhat satisfactory		Unsatisfactory		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
10	There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.	99	53.8	57	30.9	23	12.5	5	2.7	184	100
11	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.	97	52.7	55	29.9	25	13.6	7	3.8	184	100
12	The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.	32	17.4	44	2.4	69	3.7	39	21.2	184	100
13	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.	44	23.9	75	40.8	47	25.5	18	9.8	184	100
14	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.	14	7.6	8	4.3	35	19	127	62	184	100



Author: Francisco Guamantica
 Source: Student's questionnaire

As statement 10 presents, fifty-eight point three percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that there is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction; 30.9% “agree”; 12.5% partially “agree” and 2.7 % “disagree” with it.

Thaher (2005) states that “it is obvious that the social interaction between the students and their teacher is very important in learning a foreign language” (p. 29). Teachers should be able to build up a collaborative and lively learning atmosphere, thus they can evaluate the quality of their class, and notice how far the students cooperate with each other.

In fact, Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that the Total Physical Response method plays an important role in the interaction with the whole group of students and with individuals by using pictures and occasional words in the student's native language and by being as expressive as possible so that students can understand most of the time and have no excuse to

misunderstand something in class. The teacher helps students through 3 phases by modeling, and demonstrating understanding by them.

On the other hand, Harmer (1998) claims that in large classes there are some difficulties not only to make contact with the students, but also to organize dynamic and creative teaching and learning sections. This issue may intimidate inexperienced teachers.

As we can see in the results above, only 2.7% percent of students state that student-student and teacher-student interaction is not being done properly. Thus, it can be confirmed that most of teachers have teaching experience in this technique and know how to deal with interaction in large classes.

As it is shown in statement 11, 52.7% of the surveyed students “totally agree” that students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates; 29.9% “agree”; 13.6% “partially agree” and 3.8 % “disagree” with it.

These results have no much difference from the statement 10, which is focused on social interaction, which, according to Taher (2005), plays an important role in learning a new language. Therefore, EFL students should interact with each other to benefit mutual learning while building relationships among them.

Regarding students’ relationships in classrooms, Taher (2005) states that “it appears from the students’ responses that learning in a large class helps them to make more friends and exchange their own English knowledge.” In fact, teachers can benefit from working with large classes, it demands a variety of interactive activities and students can be changed to work with different classmate in most activities, so this can help to increase the relationship between them.

This result shown in statement 11 is positive since the students show that activities that are being done in class help them to improve classmate’s friendship. However, the result can be seen from others’ point of view, it can mean that activities are no being done, so they

are free to talk each other while the teachers are teaching in front of the class, and students are making friends just because they have nothing else to do in class.

As statement 12 presents, seventy point four percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that the teacher has problems remembering all the students’ names; 2.4% “agree”; 3.7% “partially agree” and 21.2 % “disagree” with it.

Regarding problems with teaching large classes, Harmer (1998) states that working with large classes is difficult, especially with the students at the back. For inexperienced teachers, this can be frustrated because they may not be able to organize dynamic and interactive activities that permit students and teachers to have more face to face contact and use their names regularly.

On the other hand, Saraswathi (2004) argues that even when teacher cannot get the students’ name easily in large classes, group activities can be prepared meanwhile they focus on groups and not on individuals, so it will be easier to remember student’s name.

In any case, in the results on statement 12, students’ response express that almost 50% of the class agree on that. That is, students express that teacher cannot remember their names and this can cause a disconformity. This issue can brings problems when teachers want to get individual progress report, and in teachers’ meeting at the end of each cycle when teachers talk about each student. But even so, there is a 50 percent of students feeling that teachers can remember their names. This means that some teachers are experienced and know what activities they must use to avoid this problem.

As statement 13 presents, twenty-three point nine percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that the atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student; 40.8% “agree”; 25.5% “partially agree” and 9.8 % “disagree” with it.

In regard to the atmosphere in the classroom, Harfitt (2012) mentions in his study that students found it difficult to answer teacher's questions due to the fact that students look down on them. Moreover, others found it better to work in small classes than large ones for the simple reason that they can support each other. As a matter of fact, some students get nervous speaking in class, they do not like presentations. Davis and Pearse (2000) state that it is very difficult to get good results teaching to large classes. Student may not be able to see and hear teacher's instructions. This can be the reason to have students bored during class and start doing something else or just talking with their classmate, and create a stressful atmosphere in class.

In contrast, Thaher (2005) mentioned on his study that some students feel an atmosphere of competition because they can share answer and prove their English knowledge. According to these students, they can compete in English activities and this creates a positive learning atmosphere.

The author above also states that the EFL teacher should build up a collaborative and lively learning atmosphere. Teachers are able to judge the quality of their class by noticing students' cooperation, and find the cause that makes the atmosphere stressful and fix it.

The students' responses on statement 13 were high. These responses are positive since students show that teachers are creating a positive learning atmosphere, letting all students participate and interact in class. However, there are other responses (9.8%) which might indicate that teachers are not finding the way so that all students can answer their questions, and speak English during class.

As statements 14 presents, seven point six percent of the surveyed students "totally agree" that it is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher; 4.3% are agreed; 19 % are partially agreed and 62 % disagree with it.

According to the results, a big number of students state they do not use the cellphone during the class. This might indicate that student feel it is not allowed to use or bring cellphones in class.

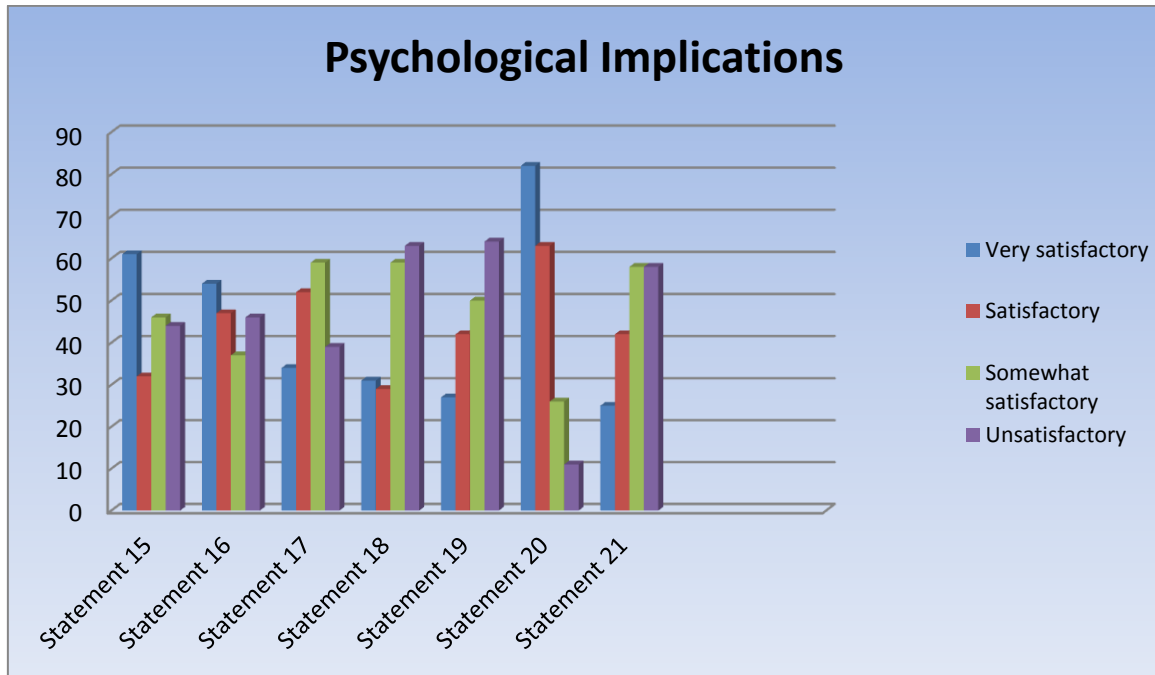
Using technology has been a boom in students nowadays. Students are involved in this technology revolution and cannot wait to use it. The truth is that most of the students bring the mobile devices to class and use them when they feel the necessity. The use of this devices become easy when teachers face large classes due to the fact that it is easy for students to hide them and use them whenever they want if the teacher is not looking at them.

Most of the surveyed students disagree with the idea of using the cellphone maybe because they know they are not allowed to do so. In Ecuador, authorities and teachers still think that mobile devices are a distraction in the learning process. However, other countries are already using them to be part of the learning process.

It can be a good alternative to train teacher how to use them to learn English, especially if internet access is being more popular. There are many ways to use mobile devices in class; in fact, there is a lot of information teachers can find in the internet to learn about it.

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

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory		Satisfactory		Somewhat satisfactory		Unsatisfactory		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
15	The atmosphere is stressful.	62	33.3	32	17.4	46	25	44	23.9	184	100
16	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest.	54	29.4	47	25.5	37	20.1	46	25	184	100
17	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.	34	18.5	52	28.3	59	32.1	39	21.2	184	100
18	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.	31	16.9	29	15.8	59	32.1	65	35.3	184	100
19	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.	27	14.7	42	22.8	50	27.2	65	35.3	184	100
20	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.	82	44.6	65	35.3	26	14.1	11	5.9	184	100
21	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.	26	14.1	42	22.8	58	31.5	58	31.5	184	100



Author: Francisco Guamantica

Source: Student's questionnaire

As statement 15 presents, thirty-three point three percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that the atmosphere is stressful; 17.4% “agree”; 25% “partially agree” and 23.9% “disagree” with it.

Gower, Phillips, and Walters (1983) state that classroom management affects the learning atmosphere. These authors suggest that whenever teachers move the furniture to change it, they must check if there is enough time to do this, and take it back. Not doing this can be frustrated for other teachers that come in after class. A good classroom arrangement will allow easy, face-to-face contact among students, and between them and teachers.

Harmer (1998) mentions that when teachers arrange the classroom in small groups of tables, students feel better, and it is easier for teachers to work on one table while the other are working on their own. This kind of arrangement makes the class quieter and it feels like teachers and students know what to do, so the atmosphere changes to positive.

The author above (1998) also states that not only classroom arrangement can help to eliminate the stressful atmosphere in class, but also the lack of audio-visual aids. This lack cannot encourage the students' learning. Teachers should find activities for listening, so the atmosphere can surely improve to a positive learning.

After all, the above authors coincides that stressful atmosphere exists in EFL classes, especially in the large ones. Although some students agree with it in some degree (33.3%, 17.4%, and 25%), there is a small group that disagree with this statement. This might indicate that teachers are working with students successfully.

As statement 16 presents, twenty-nine point four percent of the surveyed students "totally agree" that students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest; 25.5% "agree"; 20.1% "partially agree" and 25% "disagree" with this statement.

Harfitt (2012) reports on his research that those students completely avoid being in front of the class. The excuses for this issue is that their classmates laugh at them, look down on them, and so on. Definitely, students do not want to speak up, and according to them, there is no reason that may have them change their mind. Excuses like these ones were found on other school with large classes. Receiving negative evaluation from peers, it is something they do not like.

On the other hand, Hammer (1998) states that students do not want to talk in class due to the fact that they are not used to talking freely because of their culture or background. Although these reasons may make them keep quiet in class, they may all suffer from a fear of making mistakes and thus, 'losing face' in front of the teacher and their classmates.

On the result above, most of the 50% of students have a positive answer on this statement, which might indicates that a big group of students do not want to talk in class because they do not want to lose face as we can sum up. However, the 20.1% may have a

culture or background reason for that. And, 25% of them find no problem or impediment to do it freely.

As statement 17 presents, eighteen point five percent of the surveyed students “totally agree” that students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions; 28.3% “agree”; 32.1% “partially agree” and 21.2% “disagree” with this statement.

According to Thaher (2005), students feel that they do not have the opportunity to express their opinion is because they start feeling anxiety which may indicate that they are not getting the class and they might not have anything to express in class. Also, this author states that students start feeling discomfort which could indicate that the classroom arrangement is not the appropriate, or the lesson was not planned properly. Also, boredom can be affecting student’s learning because of a correct planning of interactive activities.

Harmer (1994) states that motivation play an important role in student learning process, its lack can be one of the reasons student do not want to participate or express their opinions in class. This author suggests that teachers must provoke interest and involvement in the subject even when students are no interested in it. These two factors have to be with the choice of the topic, activity and linguistic content that man make a class work well. However, teachers are not totally responsible for their motivation. They can only encourage by word and deed. Every student comes within their own motivation.

As we can see above, the result (18.5%) indicates that almost there is a group of students that feel that they do not have the opportunity to express their opinions which might indicates that they are not getting the class. The another (28.3%) also might affirm that classes are not being planned properly for all of them due to the large class and do not let them a space to speak. Regarding the 32.1% of students might indicate that they can express their opinions but not in every class due to the fact that the teacher do not focus on the students in the back more frequently. And only 21.2 % of these students can express their opinions in

class. This last result might indicate that only students placed near the teacher are having the opportunity to express their opinions and are feeling motivated in the class-.

As statement 18 presents, 16.9% “totally agree” that students do not like to participate because they feel afraid; 15.8% “agree”; 32.1% “partially agree” and 35.3% “disagree” with it.

Harfitt (2012) explains that student’s participation depends on cultural perspective. Many students feel less pressure in the smaller classes due to the fact that they can get support from their classmates. Other students, who were changed from a large class to a small one, express that they now feel better and like speaking with their classmates. Others also state that they can answer the teacher’s questions now because no-one looks on them. On the other hand, in large classes, students state that they would never ask a teacher a question because other classmates laugh at them. Confidence to speak up is not shown in large classes. Students give several reasons that do not allow them to participate in class.

Although it can be seen that participation will not come up in large classes, Hammer (1998) indicates that there are some teaching techniques that can be applied in order to maximize students’ participation. Pair work and group work can help to do so, even where chairs and desk cannot be moved. Due to the fact that individual repetition and controlled practice is difficult, it is recommended to use students in chorus. Humor, drama, and a good class feeling are used by experienced teachers to organize exciting and involving classes.

The results in statement 18 show clear evidence that different criteria in somehow agree that students do not like to participate because they feel afraid. This might implies that confidence to speak up does not exist in large classes. On the contrary, some students (35%) disagree with this statement. This might implies that teachers are using techniques such as those expresses by Harmer with this group of students.

As statement 19 presents, 14.7% “totally agree” that the teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students; 22.8% “agree”; 27.2% “partially agree” and 35.3% “disagree” with this statement.

Harfitt (2012) found on his study that students do perceive the difference when learning in large classes. They cannot get the chance to speak because the teacher prefers to ask them questions. The lack of speaking isolates students, and they lose interest in learning.

Khati (2010) states that “One of the great challenges of teaching in a large class is trying to communicate with students at the personal level” (p. 103). In fact, Saraswathi (2004) states “Individual attention is impossible in large classes” (p. 154). That is the reason why it is difficult for teachers to pay equal attention to all students. More than fifty percent of students in her study expect to receive individual attention inside classroom. Another group responded that they enjoy personal meeting with teacher outside the classroom, and other expect comment on the notebooks to receive feedback.

Khati (2010) also states that homework assignment can be a great tool to pay equal attention to all students. Although correcting written assignments is time consuming in a large class, it is a good way to communicate with students at personal level, at least twice a week due to the fact that working daily can have teachers waste time. The above author warns that some students do not like to do homework unless their assignments are checked. Besides, the author’s research indicates that very few students seem to have enjoyed peer and self-correction.

Paying equal attention to all students in large classes cannot be done in 100% as it can be seen from the author’s comments. In this statement, students (35%) agree that they do receive equal attention, which might indicate that these students are interest in learning and enjoying the teacher’s attention. However, there is a group of students (14.7% + 22.8%) that

feel that they need this attention through home assignments, personal meeting, and participation allowance, which will help their learning process, especially in large classes.

As statement 20 presents, 44.6% “totally agree” that students feel they can act competitively with other students; 35.3% “agree”; 14.1% “partially agree” and 5.9% “disagree” with it.

Thaher (2005) reports that during his study there were high positive answers regarding the sense of competition students feel in large class. Students can share knowledge with their classmates in order to evaluate and test themselves. According to those students, learning can come from teachers and students. This way of learning creates an appropriate atmosphere where students are open to learn.

Khatai (2010) informs in her study that 38% of students have expected competitions as English activities such as songs, games, projects, jokes and storytelling. More than 70% of students said they like challenging activities when learning English. They indicate that teachers must create the level of challenge to learn English. 90.3 % of students also expect to work on book’s activities. According to the authors, this indicates that teachers must change the teaching style frequently.

By reading the results above, it can be seen that a big numbers of students agree they feel they can act competitively with other students. This might indicate that students like sharing knowledge and teachers are planning some classes with challenging activities than make them interact and learn from each other easily. However, 5.9% of students disagree which might indicate that these students are not participated in this kind of activities for some reason, or simply they do not like social interaction and competition in English activities.

As statement 21 presents, 7.6% “totally agree” that students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed; 4.3% “agree”; 19% “partially agree” and 62% “disagree” with this statement.

With respect to this issue, Rocha (2005) quotes that the same students are the ones that participate very frequently in English activities or tasks, and others who are not so good at English avoid participation and stay in silence and unnoticed.

Additionally, Richard and Rodgers (2001) state that motivation to find out students' own mistakes play a very important role in the learning process. Thus, teachers must find the appropriate activities so that students can be involved in this way of learning.

Gower, Phillips and Walters (1995) suggests that an appropriate classroom management also plays an important role here, thus, unnoticed students can be moved to different place or groups, so this make them difficult to avoid learning process. In this way, students are encouraged to work with different students every class.

There is clear evidence in the result above that most of students responded negatively in this last statement, which might indicate that teachers are applying a good classroom management and appropriate activities in English classes. As authors say above, there must be motivation in order to have students active. However, a small amount of students affirm that can go unnoticed in class, this might indicate that teachers are applying individual activities where it is not necessary to move them. But, this kind of students can still be changed if necessary.

Conclusions

The results of this research show that most of the students think that large classes have an effect on the teaching-learning process because of some reasons, such as students' attention, teachers' attitude, stressful atmosphere, inhibition when speaking in front of the class, and incomplete feedback. These findings exhibit that students in large classes felt nervous when they had to develop the activities and participate in class.

Most of the students responded that class activities such as group work, individual, and pair-work were carried out in order to increase their knowledge of the language. These answers demonstrate that teachers played a powerful role in developing the activities in order to benefit their students in spite of space limit.

In this research, it was noticed that there was not significant difference on the assumption of social interaction between student-student and teacher-student. Almost half a hundred of students said that teachers created opportunities to benefit mutual learning while learning activities were carrying on. These answers demonstrate that their teachers promoted the relationship between them.

A minor group of students thought that there was not stressful atmosphere in the classroom, meanwhile, most of them answered there was a stressful atmosphere. This statement indicates that it occurred due to large number of students, lack of teachers' support, and classroom arrangement.

Most of the students did not like to participate in class because they felt afraid. The reasons, such as their classmates laugh at them; muck about pronouncing words, receiving negative evaluation from peers, and misunderstanding of what the teacher explain. For instance,

students did not like to be taken into account in activities in front of the class because of shyness.

Recommendations

It is advised that teachers must be familiarized with teaching approaches and techniques in order to use them in classes, so constant teaching training courses are a plus that can help teacher teach English to large classes successfully.

Schools must be aware that teaching English to large classes demands teacher's experienced, so they have to be careful when selecting a teacher for this kind of classes.

Not only teachers, but also directors should have English language teaching handouts for all teachers, so they can be advised what activities and techniques can be done when facing a situation in a large class, so teachers can feel that they are supported at work.

It is clear in this research that classroom space is a limitation when teaching large classes, so school authorities must consider this carefully when placing this kind of classes in a classroom by giving them an appropriate space where not only students, but also teachers can do their work.

Teachers should not forget that most students like social interaction, and by using a good techniques can help teachers to get good results in the learning-language process.

A good learning atmosphere is very important in class, especially in a large one. Teachers should apply most methods and techniques, together with classroom management in order to get it and get great results in this learning process.

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ANNEXES

INSTRUMENTS



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY

ENGLISH DEGREE

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 satisfactor	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	Unsatisfactory
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!