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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

Magister.

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DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

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

Loja, Marzo de 2014

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo, Ríos Mocha Jean Beatriz declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: ”The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools” de la titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Gina Karina Camacho Minuche directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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Ríos Mocha Jean Beatriz

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DEDICATION

This thesis work is dedicated to my family, especially to my husband André and our children, whose love and care supported me throughout this process and gave me the strength to finish it successfully. I also dedicate this research to my parents and mother-in-law, whose words of encouragement always made me feel that I could accomplish anything.

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ABSTRACT

This research project addressed the topic “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools”. The project was undertaken to specifically answer and analyze statements related to the instructional, social and psychological implications present in large classes.

The samples taken in this research were from two Ecuadorian high schools, one located in the city of Machala and the other in the city of Loja. The sample population was comprised of students from ninth and tenth grade of Basic General Education and first and third year of senior high school. The students were surveyed using a questionnaire containing 21 statements divided into three sections (9 items focusing on academic issues, 5 items of social issues and 7 items of psychological issues).

The obtained results were analyzed using the quantitative method which led to the conclusion that students in large classes benefited from the use of activities to reinforce lessons taught. However, because of the size of the classes they are restricted from performing more complex and time consuming activities that would further develop their skills.

KEY WORDS: Students, teacher, large classes, learning, language, activities, results, teaching, skills, environment, psychological, size, process, instructional.

RESUMEN

El tema del presente trabajo de fin de titulación es “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools”, este estudio analiza las implicaciones que tienen las clases numerosas en el aspecto educativo, social y psicológico.

Las muestras utilizadas fueron tomadas de dos colegios ecuatorianos, uno en la ciudad de Machala y otro en la ciudad de Loja, en donde estudiantes de noveno y décimo año de Educación General Básica como también de primer y tercer año de Bachillerato respondieron 21 interrogantes contenidas en 3 secciones, 9 enfocadas al aspecto académico, 5 al aspecto social y 7 al aspecto psicológico.

Con los datos obtenidos se realizó un análisis cuantitativo que permitió llegar a la conclusión que las actividades realizadas en clase fortalecen los conocimientos adquiridos, sin embargo debido al tamaño de la clase y al corto tiempo, no se están realizando actividades más complejas como debates, concursos, etc. las cuales contribuirían mejor al desarrollo de sus destrezas y habilidades.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Estudiantes, profesores, clases numerosas, aprendizaje, lenguaje, actividades, resultados, enseñar, destrezas, ambiente, psicológico, tamaño de clase, procesos, instrucción.

INTRODUCTION

The Ecuadorian government has acknowledged there are issues hindering the growth of English as a foreign language amongst high school students in the public sector. The average pupil leaving a public secondary school graduates with an average of 65% in English according to the National Secretariat for Higher Education, Science and Technology (SENESCYT). The government is acting proactively in fighting the low level of English found throughout the public school system. Some recent examples of this are the mandatory B2 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language, of all English teachers where Ecuador has teamed up with the world renowned nonprofit organization English Testing Service (ETS) to ensure English teachers have the appropriate level to be instructors. Also there has been the implementation of the program "Go Teacher" assisted by the University of Mississippi in the United States of America where Ecuadorian teachers receive training and scholarships to become better at their profession.

In addition, the Fulbright Fellowship and Peace Corps have programs in Ecuador that are growing at a rapid rate in the public school system. According to the Regional English Language Office (RELO) of the U.S. Embassy, Ecuador has the largest English program in the region boasting more English teachers per capita than any other Andean country. Despite all of the efforts by the Ecuadorian government to improve the knowledge of English in high schools, the students are graduating from Ecuadorian high schools with an A1 or A2 level of English which is far below the desired level.

The Ecuadorian government has demonstrated that it is willing to do what is needed to improve the process of teaching English. However, after all that has been

done to improve the quality of Ecuadorian teachers, students are still graduating with low levels of English. There are other factors that must be considered besides the quality of teachers such as the class size. The purpose of this investigation is to answer questions relating to the instructional, social, and psychological implications that large classes have upon the teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools.

Previous related studies have shown that large classes do create an impact upon both students and teachers. One such research paper was conducted by Thaher (2005) who focused his research on the instructional, psychological, and social effects of large classes on EFL students. The author concluded that there were more negative than positive implications resulting from large classroom settings. Students failed to be paying attention in class due to the feelings of neglect resulting from the teacher not being able to give each student enough of his/her time. The feeling of neglect led to the students' perception that there were no opportunities in the classroom to express themselves. The author made no notes about any limitations.

A different study that was carried out in Hong Kong by Harfitt (2012) was based on the premise that if the number of students per class were reduced, learning anxiety would be diminished. The results were evident in the authors' findings who stated that students who participated in smaller classes had less fear of receiving negative feedback from teachers combined with an increased feeling of security. Harfitt did cite that his work was limited by only studying four cases which comprised of eight classes (231 students) and four teachers.

Another research paper completed in Thailand by Todd (2012) set out to answer questions about the relationship between learning and the size of the class and at what size does a class lose the ability to learn effectively. He has generalized

that students in larger classes get lower grades as compared to those in smaller classes making a defining correlation between the size of a class and academic results. This theory maintained its integrity over all courses investigated and held true regardless of what the class objectives were. The author claimed the research had limitations in respect to grading. It was possible that teachers unconsciously awarded higher grades to students in smaller classes because there was a stronger relationship between teacher and students.

The results of this investigation will primarily benefit the students of the public education system in Ecuador. In addition, all teachers will benefit from this research but the teachers that will prosper the most will be the ones that have to face the over populated classrooms. Last but not least, the information collected here will be beneficial to the administrative bodies such as the Ministry of Education, schools and all other forms of educational institutions.

The analysis of this investigation experienced one limitation. Only the students completed a questionnaire but none of the teachers which made it difficult to fully analyze the teaching-learning process. The data gathered only reflects the students' point of view (learning). To have a better understanding of how large classes influence the teaching-learning process, the teachers should be given a questionnaire and classes should be observed.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This investigation was conducted in two public high schools located in Ecuador. The first was in the city of Machala and the second was located in the city of Loja. Both of these secondary schools were in urban areas of their respective cities. The student sample consisted of 5 classes with a total of 186 students comprised of one 9th grade of Basic General Education, one 10th grade of Basic General Education, one 1st year of seniors' high school and two 3rd years of seniors' high school. Two of these classes were from Machala and the three remaining classes from Loja. The age group of the sampling ranged from 12-18 years old.

Procedures

The investigation began by researching previous literature directly pertaining to this study. The literature came from two different formats: books and articles. The information was found on the Internet, Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) physical and virtual libraries.

The instrument used to gather information was a questionnaire (see Annex A) that included 21 statements. It was divided into three sections: 9 statements about academic implications, 5 statements about social implications and 7 statements about psychological implications. To apply this questionnaire, first authorization was granted from the administration of each high school then arranged for a convenient day with the teacher of each class. Upon arriving at the class the instructions were given in Spanish so there was no misunderstanding about what was expected from the students. The investigator read each of the questions and allowed enough time for

pupils to respond to them. The method used for this research was quantitative.

Upon completion of the questionnaires the information was tabulated by hand and entered into an electronic spreadsheet. Here the information was converted into percentages for easier analysis of the three different sections. All information was double checked for accuracy.

During the analysis of the information obtained from the questionnaires there were different aspects to consider. The first aspect to keep in mind was the purpose of the study. The second aspect to remember was which section was being worked with (academic, social or psychological). Finally, any radical variation or conflicting data needed to be analyzed with scrutiny to understand its correlation to the whole.

DISSCUSSION

Literature Review

English is the most widely spoken language throughout the world resulting in 1 out of 5 people having the ability to communicate with it. It has long been established that English is the base for science, aviation, computers and countless other industries. Taking into consideration that the Ecuadorian economy is strong, stable and growing rapidly it only makes sense that the Ecuadorian government is pushing the implementation of English upon students to ensure the success of the next generation and of the country.

It has been more than twenty years since the Ecuadorian ministry of education has made English a mandatory subject in the school system and yet students are graduating with substandard abilities. The government has invested time and money to improve teacher's qualifications and still the results are not what they should be.

There are many factors that impact the process of teaching-learning and one that we are going to investigate further is that of over-crowded classes and its impact upon those involved.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

Content Based Instruction

Content based instruction, also known as CBI, is an approach that focuses not only on teaching a language but also content. By combining these two skills the students are becoming more knowledgeable and proficient in a second language.

According to Larsen and Anderson (2011, pg.139) CBI is achieved through using real texts, visual aids, repetition, examples which all builds upon students' previous knowledge. Richards and Rodgers (2001, pag.204) take this idea one step

further by isolating two main principles that explain how and why CBI is effective. The first idea is that people learn languages with a higher rate of success when they are trying to learn information in a second language (L2) rather than just trying to learn through traditional channels of grammar and vocabulary. When people are self-motivated to learn interesting or necessary information they learn more efficiently. The second premise is that learning through a content-based method allows learners to be better prepared for academic advancement and allows them to learn as quickly as possible.

Grammar – Translation Method

In a grammar-translation classroom the students are not intended to be self-starters or have much communication with other students. Here the teacher is the center of the activities, giving instruction and maintaining the role of authority figure. Larsen and Anderson (2011) claim that teachers hold the highest authority in the class and the students must do what is instructed so they may learn. The majority of the interaction is given by the teacher and received by the students. It is rare that students would start any form of interaction with the teacher and it is not common to have student to student interaction.

This method holds strict to rules and memorization with an emphatic focus being on literature incorporating all sub categories such as grammar, vocabulary which results in strong reading and writing skills especially translation. This can be clearly seen in the ideas of Richards and Rodgers (2001) who stated the primary objective of English as a foreign language (EFL) is to have the ability to read literature so one may flourish academically through the discipline and development of studying another language. This is accomplished primarily through reading and writing with almost no importance given to listening and speaking.

Audio-lingual method

The audio-lingual method is rooted in behaviorist theory and is similar to the direct method. The basic premises that form audio-lingual is that the four basic skills are isolated and taught separately with listening and speaking receiving the most emphasis. The primary tool used in audio-lingual is the use of dialogues and explicit grammar instruction is avoided. Through dialogues the form of the language is copied and committed to memory. Through practice it is expected students will eventually be able to use the given language spontaneously. Nagaraj (2005) suggested that reading and writing are not ignored, there is more of an emphasis on listening and speaking. Language learning is primarily taught through dialogues providing pupils to mimic, practice and memorize the parts of language. Richards and Rodgers (2001) are in agreement with Nagaraj, however they go on to speak more specifically about vocabulary. Once sounds and grammatical forms are clearly learned then the student goes on to increase lexical abilities.

The silent Way

As the name implies, the teacher is intended to be silent during instruction. Instead of speaking the teacher is supposed to use colored Cuisenaire rods and colored charts to give classes. The objective of this method is to instill basic oral skills with beginners of a second language focusing on the outcome of being near-native in fluency. This can be demonstrated by Richards and Rodgers (2001 pg.83) when they stated the Silent ways' objective is aimed at beginners to increase their oral and aural abilities in the target language. The students are to strive for fluency and pronunciation as close to a native speaker as possible. Richards and Renandya (2002) agree and repeat almost exactly what has been said before, but make the distinction that The Silent Way is intended for adult beginners.

Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching, commonly referred to by its acronym TBLT, focuses on real/authentic language in order to accomplish everyday tasks like going to the market, giving directions, talking to tech support etc. Success is assessed through accuracy of real world tasks. Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated:

There is a commonsensical understanding that a task is an activity or goal that is carried out using language, such as finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, making a telephone call, writing a letter, or reading a set of instructions and assembling a toy.

Richards and Renandya (2002) agree with the above data of TBLT, however instead of talking about specific tasks they speak more about the types of tasks such as “information-gap-task, opinion gap-task and reasoning gap-task.” The gap tasks can be used in conjunction with the above mentioned activities to create a curriculum for the TBLT classroom.

The Natural Approach

The natural approach is a relatively new concept that was formed in the late 1970s. This approach has less emphasis on teaching/learning traditional grammar in the formal style and is focused on communication skills for beginners. An explicit goal of this approach is to reduce stress which in turn is supposed to allow students to learn in a more natural setting. Richards and Rodgers (2001) indicates that The Natural Approach was created to allow beginners to become intermediate level students. Through this approach it is expected that pupils will have the skills to adequately function in the L2 and have the ability to relay ideas and requests. Garcia (2005) completely agrees with what has been claimed by Richards

and Rodgers, however he explains in detail the four principles that support the Natural Approach.

First, students will be able to understand before they will be able to speak. Second, language production follows a series of stages starting with nonverbal interaction leading up to complex grammatical segments of speaking. Third, classes are based on communicative objectives and not levels of grammar. Lastly, the class should be friendly and as near stress free as possible to maximize learning.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

The TPR methodology is the creation of California psychologist James Asher. Through Mr. Asher's observations of young children it was hypothesized that language is first learned through listening then the skill of speaking is later developed. Even though young children cannot produce complex statements that does not mean they do not understand and this is the basis for TPR.

Children are often told to do activities and they must act these commands out physically. Listening comprehension is the basis for TPR and has been shown to be the same process followed during the acquisition of the mother tongue. In summary, TPR focuses on listening combined with physical action, speech and other relevant skills following in time. According to Gordon (2007) if TPR is used in the English as a Second Language (ESL) setting we are assured that the pupils will begin to comprehend the second language with a higher level of confidence. Richards and Rogers (2001) were in agreement and added no substantially new information.

Class Size

The idea of class size is understood by everyone, however large classes are a matter of perspective. Byram (2004 pg. 345) stated between 30 to 40 pupils in a

British classroom is considered large and the average size in China is between 50 to 60 students.

Byram (2004) and Balleantine and Spade (2008) agree that smaller classes are usually beneficial. However, Balleantine and Spade (2008) make an additional claim about disadvantaged students by saying “Initial results indicate that students who have traditionally been disadvantaged in education carry greater small-classes, early-grades gains forward into the upper grade and beyond.”

Managing Learning (instructions, feedback, discipline, and timing)

The process of managing learning is a multi-faceted process. Ridnour (2006) and Gower, Phillips and Walters (1995) agree that the recipe for a well-managed class incorporates instruction, feedback, discipline and timing. Both authors talk extensively about classroom management however Ridnour (2006) takes a pro-active stance about avoiding problems by providing clear instructions to students. If instructions are not clear, especially in large classes the resulting problems multiply exponentially resulting in a confused class. So, it is better to take it slow, demonstrate and explain clearly before beginning any activity.

Both authors mentioned above agree that a disciplined class is based on several factors. Gower, Phillips and Walters (1995) explain in more detail that discipline will vary on the input of four factors which are the pupils age, why they are studying, atmosphere of the learning environment and respect in general. Every class is different but by analyzing these four characteristics of a class will help in the application of discipline. A guideline for children’s classes is to begin with a tight control over the class and slowly relax as the teacher comes to understand their issues. Discipline is reinforced by earning the respect of the students which can be

done by being on time, prepared, handing back work in a timely manner, consistency, not ignoring problems, follow-through and self-control.

Managing Large Classes

Managing large classes will differ from teacher to teacher and from culture to culture. Baker and Westrup (2003) have suggested that communication (speaking) is the key. It is not desired that the teacher talks a lot but to have the students engage and speak as often as possible. A general checklist of speaking activities during class may include salutations to the students, making small talk at the start and finish of the class, having students ask Wh- questions, correcting errors, having students self-correct, students correct other students, ensuring they know when they do something well and maintaining discipline. The teacher should also vary the speaking among: closed questions, open questions and elicitation.

Even though Nolasco and Arthur (1995) agree that the ability to manage a class is paramount for managing large classes they have taken a different approach. The suggestion for managing a large class revolves around assigning responsibility to the students in order to bring about a sense of togetherness which spawns cooperation and motivation. Some of these activities include daily chores like making sure everyone can read the date on the blackboard and whiteboard, cleaning the board at the end of the class, giving certain students responsibilities such as distribution and collection of materials and having students work at correcting other students work.

Activities for Working with Large Classes

One classic idea that allows large classes to flourish are activities that are centered around pair or group work. Lewis and Bedson (1999) and Baker and Westrup (2003) unequivocally agree that pair and group work is the most efficient

way to handle large classes. At times it will be slow going and the class will get loud but this tactic will prove beneficial in the end. Lewis and Bedson (1999) suggest different games for large classes. For example “Turn players into turns”. In this activity, the teacher finds a game that will allow every student at least one turn but hopefully more. If a game allows for 8 turns, this would allow for 24 students to play ($8 \times 3=24$). Another strategy implored with games is to have groups of students playing different games all over the room.

Baker and Westrup (2003) said it well when they stated “The teacher does not give up control during pair or group work, but controls the whole class differently.”

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement (physical space big/small rooms)

The way that students and the teacher sit in the classroom has an impact on learning. For classes that are large and the teacher is addressing the entire class at once, the traditional sets of rows is often found and referred to as “orderly rows”. According to Harmer (1998) orderly rows is a good seating arrangement for teaching grammar, displaying video, explaining on the board and using a projector.

Harmer (1998) and Gower and Walters (1983) both agree that the horseshoe shape (form to sit the students) is advantageous in smaller classes where the teacher would sit at one of the open ends where he or she would have easy access to demonstrate or teach.

In addition, Gower and Walters (1983) explain in detail about pair work. There are two sub-categories of pair work which are open pair work and closed pair work. Open pair work is when students are openly able to speak at a distance, sometimes across the room, to get their work done under the control of the teacher.

Closed pair work is when the two students are working together and the teacher does not have direct control over them.

An important issue that Gower (1983) addressed was about attitude.

“Where the students sit in a classroom can determine:

- Their attitude to each other and to you
- Your attitude to them
- How they interact
- The types of activity they can perform.”

Different levels of proficiency

Proficiency levels in any given class will have some degree of fluctuation ranging from beginners to advanced students. Using different materials for different levels is one method proposed by Harmer (1998). For example, if there is a lower level group in the class they may be given the task of studying the past perfect while the other group may be given exercises on phonetics or advanced linguistics using a piece of reading. Dividing the class into separate groups allows all the students to work at their own level and advance at an acceptable pace.

There is another school of thought that says we may just ignore the problem of different levels in the classroom. The drawback to this notion is that some students will become bored and others may become frustrated by the material they don't understand.

Harmer (1998) and Ur (2012) agree that peer teaching and help is an advantageous route to go in a classroom of varying levels of proficiency. Ur (2012) states that “The fact that the teacher is less able to pay attention to every individual in the class means that for the class to function well, the students must help by teaching

each other and working together. Peer-teaching and collaboration are likely to be common, contributing to a warm and supportive classroom climate.

The idea that large classes have adverse effects upon students and teachers is not a new concept. It has been widely reported by both pupil and instructor that it is a difficult environment to flourish in for many reasons. Previous investigations into this ever present obstacle of oversized classes have been carried out around the world and it is of great importance we revisit these studies to have a well-rounded view of our current situation.

Harfitt (2012) undertook a research project in order to investigate if stress associated with learning in large classes could be reduced or eliminated by significantly reducing the number of students in over populated classes.

There were only two methods to collect information in this research: interviews and class observations. Four classes were selected and all participants in the study, 4 teachers and 231 students, underwent interviews to understand their views and experiences of learning in small and oversized classes. In addition, a total of 78 class sessions were observed from the four classes in which small classes ranged from 21-25 students and larger classes had between 38-41 students. All classes chosen were of the same academic year and ability.

The results of this research indicates that while students were participating in small classes, the class as a whole felt more secure and the anxiety of being critically evaluated by teachers and peers seemed to be reduced. In addition, students had more confidence in taking part in the English class.

In conclusion, this investigation indicates that allowing students to express their opinions through interviews gives greater insight into the EFL classroom. From the information gathered it seems that learners anxiousness may be lessened in a

small class environment and by reducing the number of students in a class may help in lowering cultural obstacles.

Forero (2005) conducted research in order to verify if speaking skills could be improved by using task-based learning and how large groups could be managed using this style.

The backbone to Foreros research was founded by using peer observation. When classes were being given one or two other instructors would gather information. There were three ways to collect the data: a pro forma, recordings and questionnaires. The observing teachers would note the most important parts of the class in the pro forma writing down the timeline of the class and the observers' opinions. The recordings were taken as undisputable evidence of the class and the results obtained. Lastly, there were two questionnaires used. The questionnaires were given at the beginning and end of the class to better understand the students' perspective.

The results of this research truly showed a change in students' behavior from the implementation of task based learning. When the class began students preferred individual activities such as reading and writing but by the end of the class they indicating stronger desires to work in pairs or groups. The second result of interest was that at the beginning of the class students felt unsure about activities where speaking need to be understood, however by the end of the class students were showing more confidence when they had to do tasks that involved speaking, listening and reading. Finally, through the course of the class students became more active in the tasks and showed more interest.

In conclusion the large classes did benefit from the application of task-based learning. It was a slow process but speaking skills improved and many

opportunities were given to practice using different visual prompts and interesting topics according to the students. Maintaining motivation was done by switching activities frequently, the use of flashcards and an energetic class plan. Maintaining discipline proved challenging but was needed in a class this size. The seating arrangement was changed to encourage a competitive environment. Prior knowledge was a key factor in planning for these task-based classes. Overall task-based has proven beneficial to improving speaking skills in the over populated classroom setting.

Thafer (2005) has several reasons for conducting his research. The first was to learn more about how the instructional, psychological and social effects that oversized classes had on EFL students. The second reason for this study was to understand how students responded to oversized classes because of their gender, education level, choice of college or entrance exam grade.

The method used to collect data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions in both English and Arabic using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The instructions were easy to understand and in both languages. Both dependent and independent variables were incorporated into the design of the questionnaire. The independent variables were the questions containing information about entrance exam grades, gender, college and level of study. The dependent variables related to how pupils answered the questions about academic, social and psychological information. The questionnaire was validated by officials from the university to ensure the questions were appropriate and the reliability was verified by the use of the Cronbach Alpha formula. The methods to analyze the information were T-Test, ANOVA (analysis of variance), MANOVA (multivariate analysis of

variance), Sidak post hoc test, Cronbach alpha formula, means, standard deviation and percentages.

The outcome of the investigation concluded with both positive and negative information. Unfortunately the bad out ways the good, but good relationships are formed in large classes that lead to friendships inside and outside of the class with reported constructive competition. However, some students felt abandoned in the large class environment winding up with pupils not paying attention during class. Feeling they had no chance to express themselves has led to further negative psychological implications.

In summary, the independent variables have resulted in no major variations in the areas of academic, social and psychological domains. The prominent concluding idea is that interaction within oversized classes has a negative relationship with the size of the class. It has been suggested that students interaction in large classes should be promoted by the use of pair and group work allowing for peer teaching and positive critiques from the teacher. It was recommended that there be more education of the teachers on how to handle large classes. There should also be more studies and research done in the area of large classes and the implications. Finally, the administration ought to create more English classes to reduce the overcrowding.

Khatai (2010) set out to explore what students were expecting in a large EFL classroom setting with a focus on feedback, collaboration, classroom management, tasks, homework and classwork.

The method to collect data was one questionnaire containing 19 open ended questions. Students were chosen to take the questionnaire by using purposive non-random sampling procedure which resulted in every 5th student on the schools

roll sheet participating. Altogether there were 60 students that took the questionnaire consisting of 30 students from a rural school and 30 from an urban location.

Students were instructed to answer with both ordinal and nominal options.

In general the results indicate that the variations seen between rural and urban students' expectations were not significant. However, the rural pupils did indicate marginally higher expectations of using their native language in the EFL classes yet the urban pupils were expecting more activities. In addition, the urban students spoke more directly and desired more activities because they had three times the amount of English classes as their counterparts from the rural areas. Finally, the rural students seldom practiced self and peer correction techniques and they also did not care for personal interaction with the instructor while not in class.

In conclusion, this study has revealed several different points of views from the students of large classes where different levels of English are found. First, the majority of students preferred to be called by their first names, however the teachers did not often put forward the effort to learn the pupils names. Secondly, teachers should move around the classroom as much as possible as it creates the illusion of a smaller class and promotes student participation. In addition, instructors lecture more than conducting group or pair work because it is easier to orchestrate but the questionnaire clearly shows that students are better motivated through activities and group work than straight book work. It was also indicated that moderate use of the students' native language was acceptable. Finally, challenging activities and informative feedback is an expectation of the students polled. In a multilevel class it is paramount for students to receive different activities for the appropriate level of English as this will promote academic growth.

Todd (2012) investigated the relationship between learning and class size and if there are threshold levels for learning effectively.

The method for collecting data in this study was taken from the size of the classes and evidence of learning. From 2006 to 2009, 984 classes were observed having anywhere from 10 – 103 students each. The information was easily gathered from the universities enrollment documents. However, the evidence of learning was slightly more complicated. It is often considered that grades are all the evidences needed to demonstrate the level of learning. This study went more into depth to study the tasks and projects with a heavy emphasis on productive skills. The students observed were taken from four different levels of English and none of them were English majors.

The result of most significance was that there is a direct correlation between class size and grades, with the biggest classes tending to have the lowest grades. Class objectives did not seem to play a major role in determining the outcome of the grades.

The author concludes that until further research is done at similar institutions the general guideline for students threshold limits is between 25 to 45 pupils per class. This information can be used by other institutions to minimize lower learning results.

Description, analysis, and interpretation of results

Currently English teachers have to cope with a lot of different issues because of the high demand of ESL classes. One such issue is the presence of large classes and how they affect teachers and students. This forces institutions and teachers to constantly look for ways to improve the productivity of the classroom. One of the ways of understanding this issue is to address the instructional activities, social interactions and psychological relationships. The analysis of these three variables will tell us more about the oversized classroom.

What Instructional implications do large classes have on the teaching –learning process?

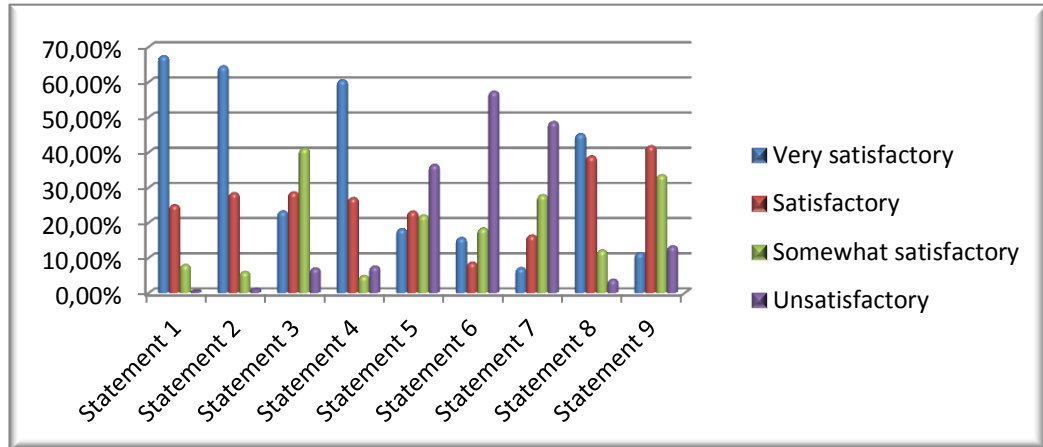
A. Academic issues

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory		Satisfactory		Somewhat satisfactory		Unsatisfactory		Total	
		F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.	124	67.39	46	25.00	13	7.97	1	0.54	184	100
2	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	118	64.48	52	28.42	11	6.01	2	1.09	183	100
3	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.	43	23.24	53	28.65	76	41.08	13	7.03	185	100
4	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.	112	60.54	50	27.03	9	4.86	14	7.54	185	100
5	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.	33	18.23	42	23.21	40	22.10	66	36.46	181	100
6	Students can cheat during the test	29	15.67	16	8.65	34	18.38	106	57.30	185	100
7	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.	13	7.10	30	16.39	51	27.87	89	48.64	183	100
8	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.	71	45.21	61	38.85	19	12.12	6	3.82	157	100
9	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	18	11.39	66	41.78	53	33.54	21	13.29	158	100

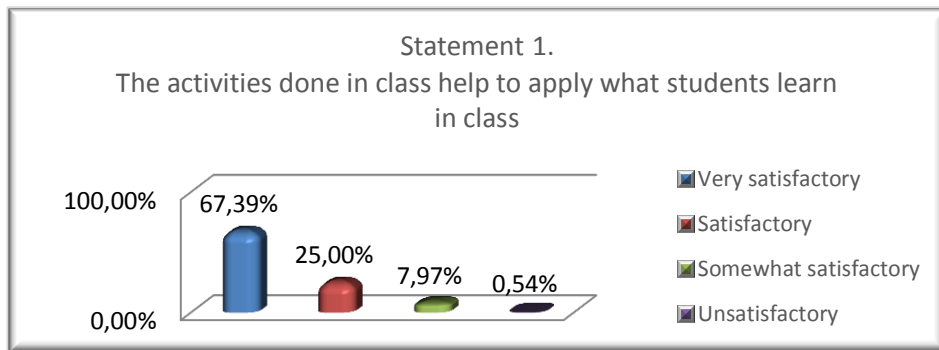
Author: Ríos Mocha Jean Beatriz.

Source: Students Questionnaire.

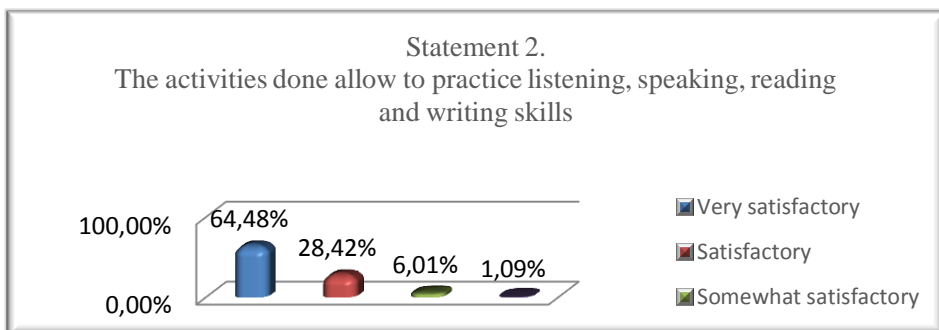
Academic statements



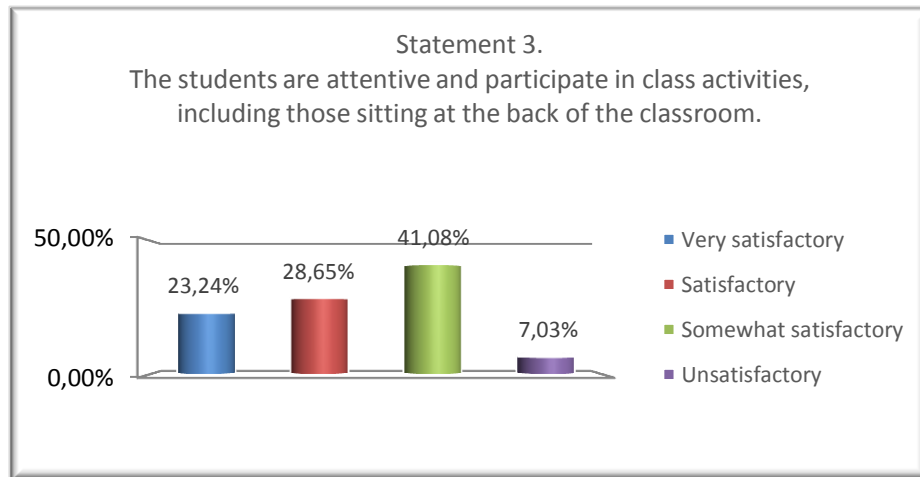
To comprehend better the instructional implications, a questionnaire was given to students and nine different aspects were evaluated and scored based on student's satisfaction.



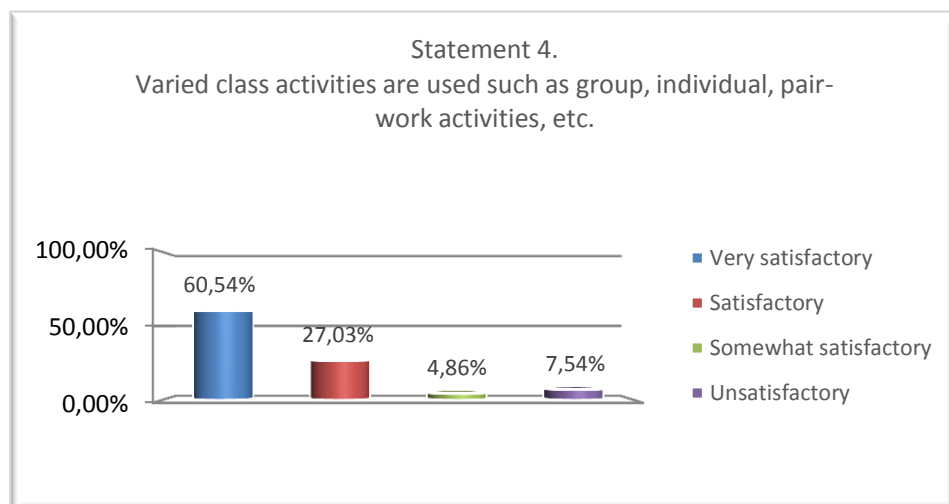
Item 1. In this chart we can see that more than the majority strongly agree that activities help to reinforce lessons taught in class. Overall it was reported that 92.39% (combination of satisfactory and very satisfactory) of students believe that activities help to reinforce what was taught in class.



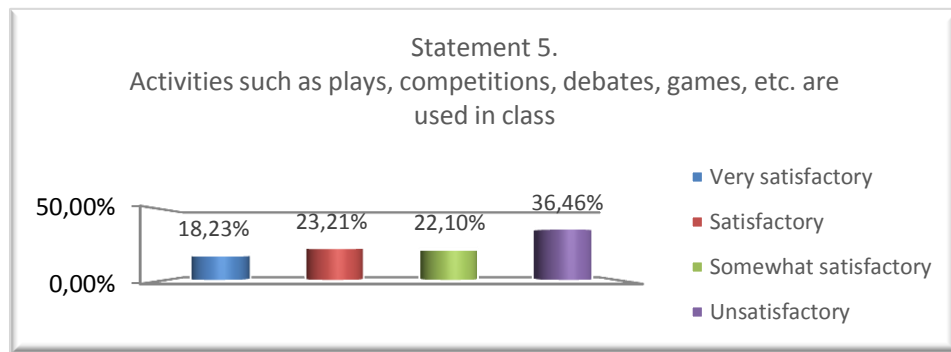
Item 2. Results in a similar manner as item 1, where 92.90% (combination of satisfactory and very satisfactory) of students surveyed agree that activities help to reinforce the four basic language skills.



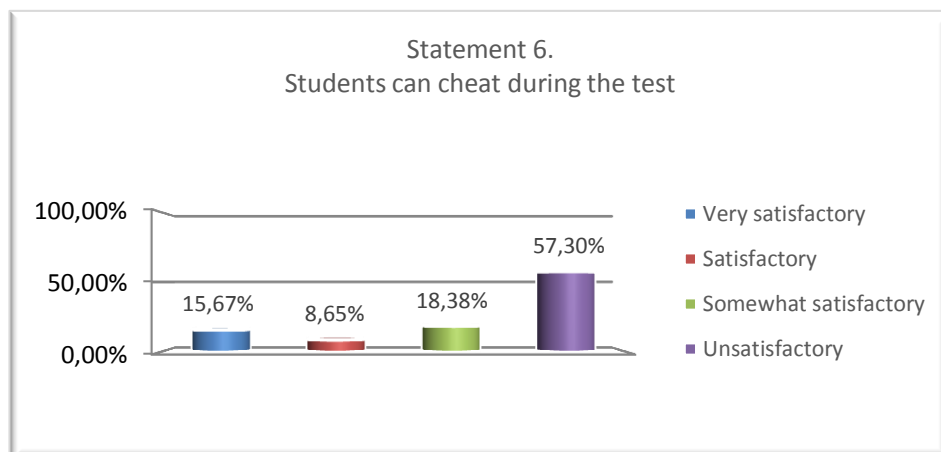
Item 3. Students responded negatively, with 41.08% (somewhat satisfactory) claiming attention and participation in the class is not as satisfactory as it could be. Just over half of the class responded in a positive way creating a division of students' perspectives upon classroom participation. Further investigation into this question would be needed for a more definitive analysis.



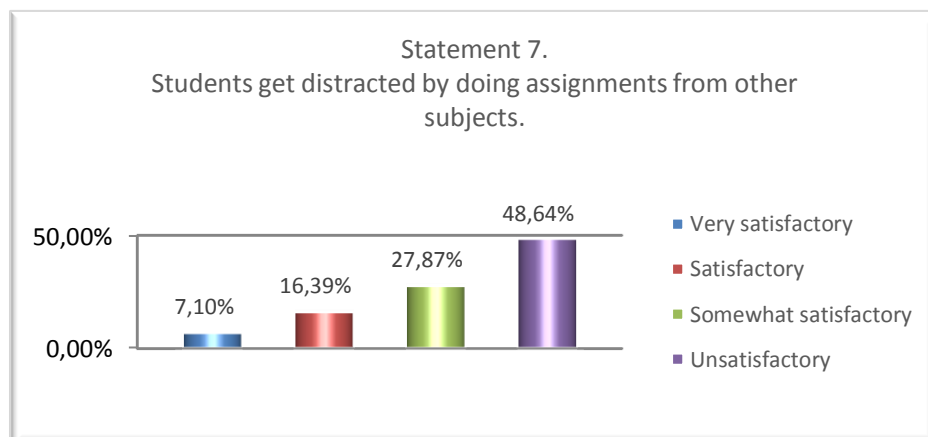
Item 4. Here it is demonstrated that the vast majority find pair work and group work useful in class.



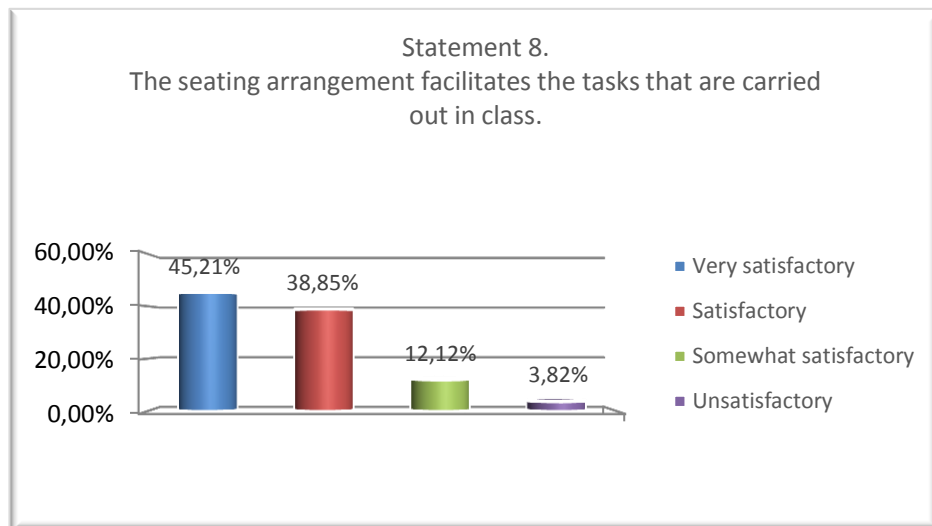
Item 5. The students answer shows clearly that complex activities are not being used frequently enough in class.



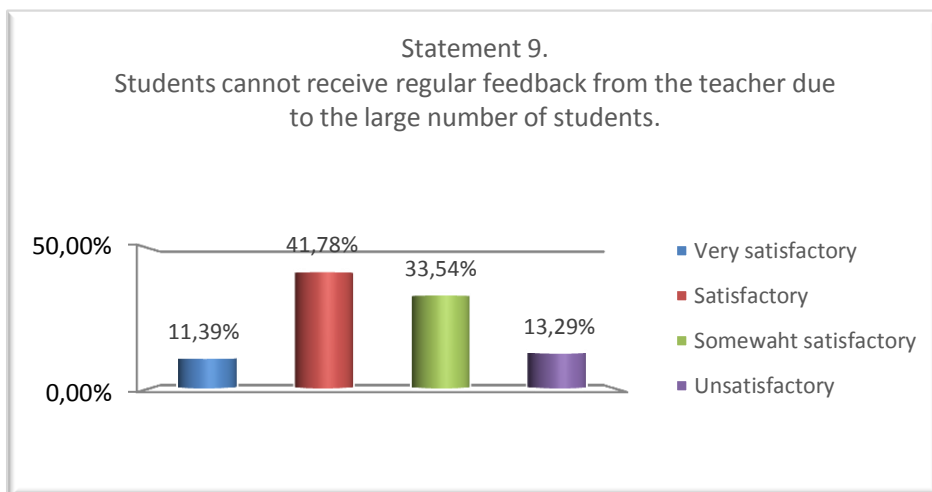
Item 6. Academic dishonesty is shown to not be prevalent in large classes with 75.66% responding that there is no opportunity to cheat.



Item 7. Students reported that they do not get distracted by working on other assignments other than EFL activities.



Item 8. Students appear to be satisfied with the way the classrooms are arranged. Due to the amount of students and classroom size their current seating arrangement is the most practical and most likely the only way they know.



Item 9. Here we see an almost perfect division of positive and negative responses in respect to feedback. With the majority of all answers laying in the half-way mark between satisfactory and somewhat satisfactory it may be inferred that teachers are having difficulty because there is not enough time for each student to receive individual attention.

The aim of this questionnaire was to investigate how instruction fared in oversized classrooms in Ecuador. The students responded favorably in respect to the

use of activities in the classroom, this is evident in statements 1, 2 and 4 where more than 60% of students chose very satisfactory manner. For these three statements the respondents showed a landslide of support for the use of activities and how these activities helped in the learning process. These findings support statements made by Baker and Westrup (2003) where they claimed that pair work and group work increases motivation.

However, students answered in a negative fashion about not having in depth activities such as plays or debates, which can be seen in statement 5, with the majority of students 36.46% of the whole answering in a negative form. Even though most students answered negatively, the class remained somewhat split over this issue dividing the remaining votes at approximately 20% among very satisfactory, satisfactory and somewhat satisfactory.

Attention and participation by the students in classroom activities, statement 3, were also divided among the participants however an overwhelming amount, 41.08% of the total population, described students' involvement as somewhat satisfactory. The rest of the input was more positive resulting in 28.65% as satisfactory and 23.24% as very satisfactory. In a related issue, students viewed themselves as easily becoming distracted with other subject material with an impressive 48.64% claiming an unsatisfactory rating, leaving us with the impression that there may be a correlation between a lack of attention and the desire to work on other subject material.

The response to cheating in the classroom (item 6) was met with 57.30% of the students responding with a mark of unsatisfactory. According to the students, cheating is not as prevalent as some studies done about this topic have suggested.

It was reported that teacher feedback (item 9) mostly rested in the satisfactory to somewhat satisfactory area according to the students. These results were slightly better than anticipated yet seem acceptable with the understanding of how many students each teacher is responsible for. Gower, Phillips, and Walters (1995) claim that if the teacher is punctual and hands back homework promptly they will be more greatly respected. It appears that the teachers have earned the students respect by receiving a general score of satisfactory.

Of those questioned in respect to the seating arrangement of the class (statement 8) responded in a positive light with 84.06% claiming to be satisfied or very satisfied. Apparently the seating arrangement, in the opinion of the students, seems to be a positive factor of the class. According to Harmer (1998) the seating arrangement (orderly rows, circle, horseshoe etc.) will depend on what activities are being conducted. Whatever the method the teachers from our two surveyed high schools used, they seem to be doing an acceptable job according to the students.

The favorable response to activities as a valuable tool of instruction (items 1,2,4, and 5) indicates that students want to learn English yet the sheer number of pupils does not allow for more complicated in depth activities, such as role plays, debates and plays, to be easily incorporated into the curriculum. It must be taken into consideration that these students only receive four hours a week of instruction and that the amount of class hours will directly impact the complexity of activities thusly impacting the instructional cycle.

Almost half of everyone surveyed, 48.64%, state strongly that students do not do work from different subjects while in English class. Another 27.87% also claim that they do not have problems with being distracted in class by other subject

assignments. It does not appear that in large classes other subject work seems to be a factor that affects students from learning English.

What Social implications do large classes have on the teaching –learning process?

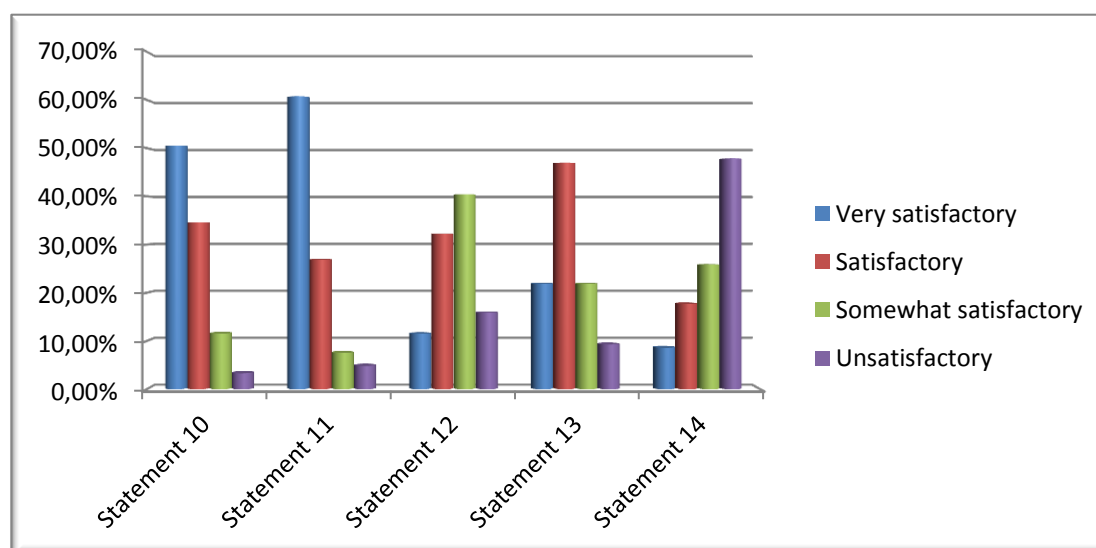
B. Social issues

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.	92	50.54	63	34.62	21	11.54	6	3.30	182	100
11	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.	113	60.75	50	26.88	14	7.53	9	4.84	186	100
12	The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.	21	11.48	59	32.24	74	40.43	29	15.85	183	100
13	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.	40	21.86	86	46.99	40	21.86	17	9.29	183	100
14	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.	16	8.60	33	17.74	48	25.81	89	47.85	186	100

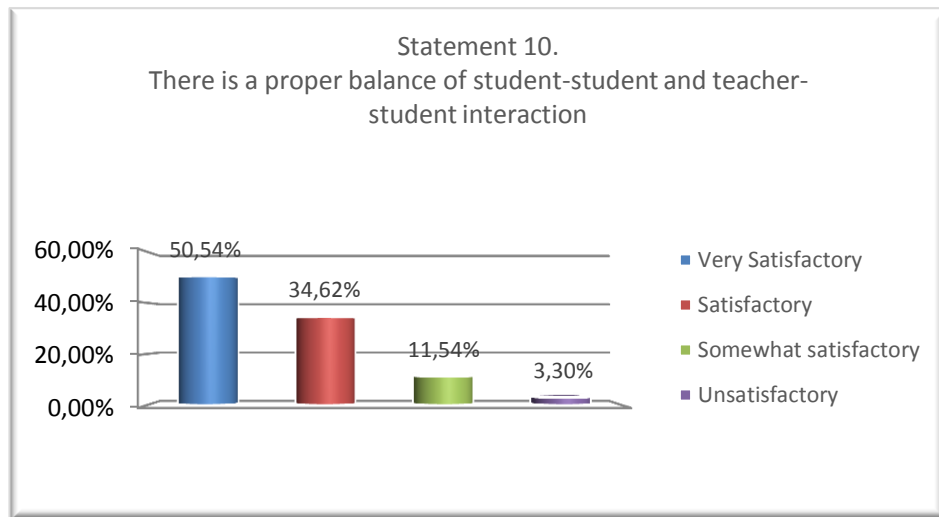
Author: Ríos Mocha Jean Beatriz.

Source: Students Questionnaire.

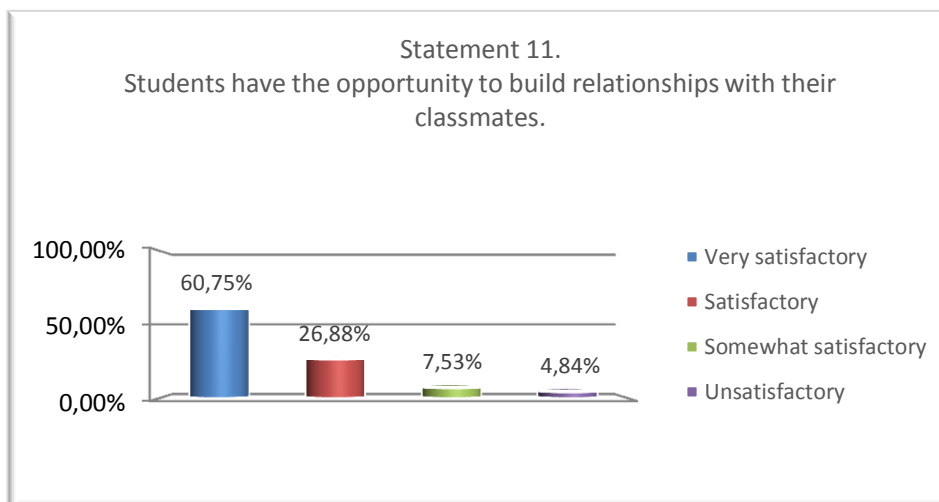
Social Statements



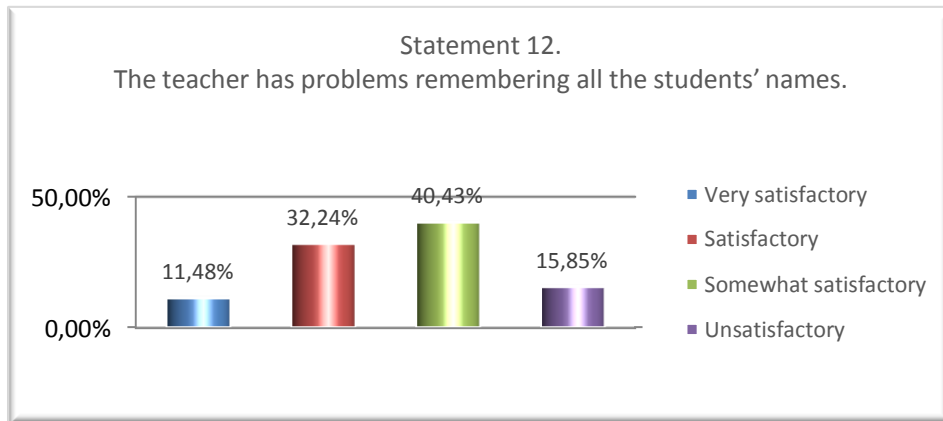
This section of the survey will focus more on the social impact that a numerous student environment has on teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student relationships. This section of the questionnaire dealt with the social aspects consisting of 5 questions.



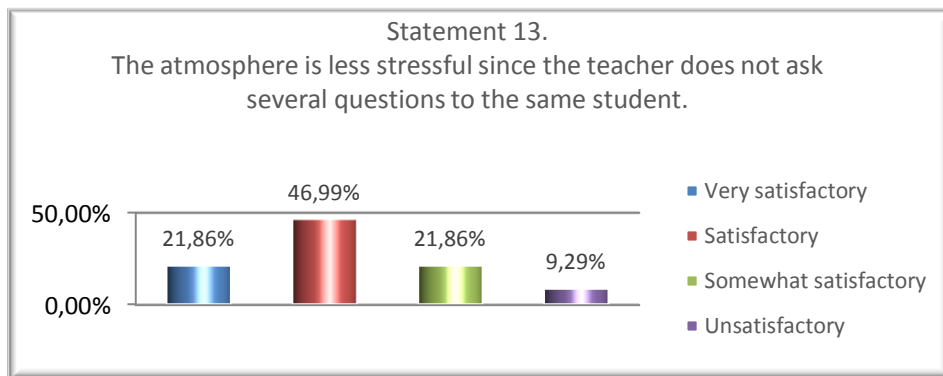
Item 10. The overwhelmingly positive response to teacher and student interaction leaves the impression that the instructors are managing the large classes correctly.



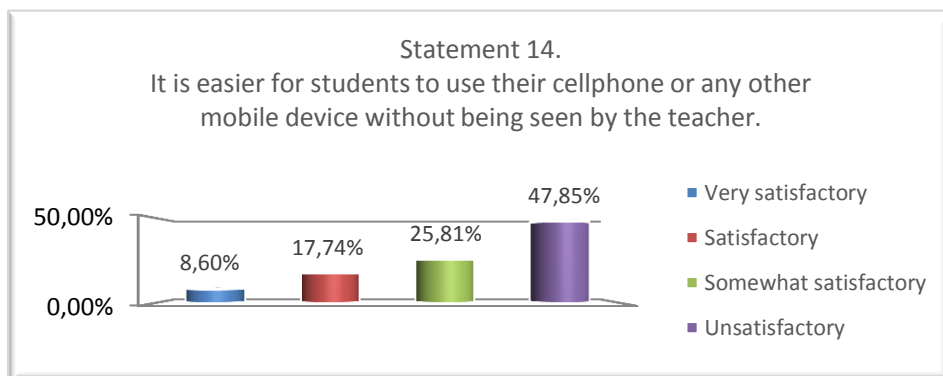
Item 11. The majority of students, 87.63% (satisfactory and very satisfactory), feel they have sufficient opportunities to develop relationships inside the classroom.



Item 12. The overall results from the students indicate that it is difficult for the teacher to remember all of the students' names in a large class.



Item 13. These findings may be seen as double edged sword. While the majority does not feel stressed, this may imply that pupils do not need to try that hard.



Item 14. Most students claim that it is not that easy to use their mobile device during class time.

It has long been understood that over-sized classes pose many issues and obstacles. However, most of these viewpoints have been looked at from the side of the teacher and what the teacher must cope with in order to be successful.

The social aspect of the English classroom, as represented by these surveys, represents a division of both positive and negative. The students claim that there is an acceptable, if not really good, balance of interaction between student-teacher and student-student (item 10). However, this claim is not clearly understood because the teacher does not have enough time to personalize all the classes. It needs to be taken into consideration the motives of the students to answer these questions the way they did. With this in mind it has been concluded that the students truly do think there is a good balance in the classroom between the teachers and students creating a healthy learning environment.

The overwhelming majority of students claim that there is a healthy balance of social relationships within the class between student-student and student-teacher. Furthermore there is plenty of opportunity to work with their classmates, which can be verified by reviewing items 10 and 11. Each of these items has a rating of more than 80% positive feedback in the form of satisfactory and very satisfactory markings. These results are in agreement with Baker and Westrup (2003) who state that having students work together is a good way to manage classes. This allows the teacher to give individual attention to students while many are working in pairs or small groups.

The 40.43% of surveyed pupils stated (item 1 2) that the teacher had problems remembering the names of all the students and rated it as somewhat satisfactory. Given the amount of names needed to be memorized by teachers this comes to be no surprise and these results are about what was expected. It is felt that it would be very

difficult for any one teacher to remember the names of all the students in several large classes (item 12). With this being said, it does not diminish the fact that by not remembering the names of the students there is a negative connotation that the teacher does not care about the students which in turn may have a reciprocal effect on the students' attitude toward learning the subject material.

Students have reported that the environment is less stressful (item 13) because the teacher is not able to ask the same student several questions. This answer could be viewed as a negative finding since students know there is a small chance of being called on more than once; they may not be attentive enough to absorb the lesson. Results show that it was not easy for students to use technological devices, such as cell phones (item 14), in a large class. Almost half of those surveyed, 47.85% rated the ease of use of cell phones in class as unsatisfactory and 25.81% rated it as somewhat satisfactory. These results may be an indicator of teachers exercising excellent classroom management. In items 13 and 14 there is a trend emerging showing us that the students are not stressed. One reason students are not stressed is because they know they will most likely not be asked to answer more than one question due to the amount of students in the class. This situation is the breeding ground for such activities as using cell phones in class. Even though this questionnaire resulted in low usage of cell phones in class, we may see this be an emerging problem in the future.

The social implications of this study are very interesting indeed, yet a more in depth study needs to be done to clearly identify the positive and negative traits of these types of classes. Unfortunately, these results are

viewed as mostly negative and affecting the classroom and students in a manner of destabilizing the social environment inside the English class.

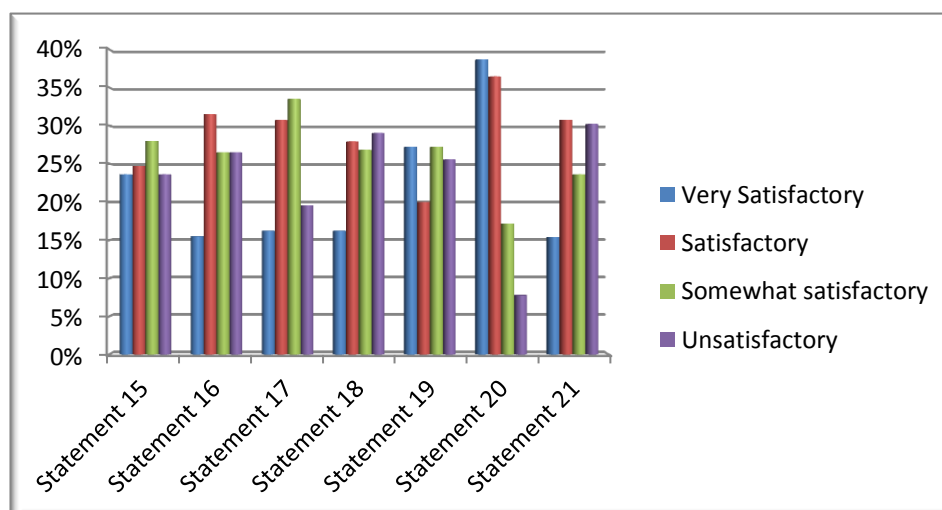
What Psychological implications do large classes have on the teaching –learning process?

C. Psychological issues

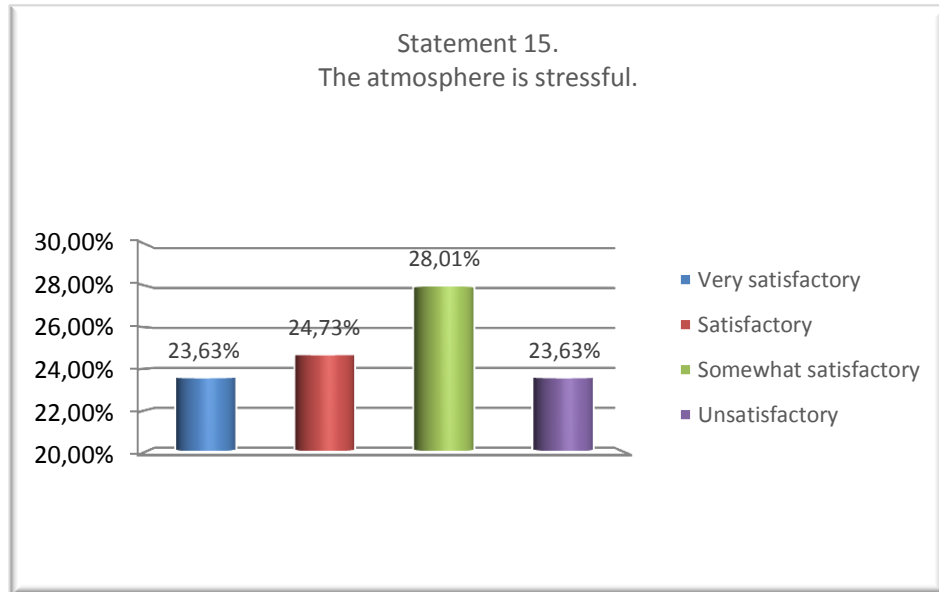
N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory		Satisfactory		Somewhat satisfactory		Unsatisfactory		Total	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	F	%
15	The atmosphere is stressful.	43	23.63	45	24.73	51	28.01	43	23.63	182	100
16	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest.	28	15.47	57	31.49	48	26.52	48	26.52	181	100
17	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.	29	16.20	55	30.73	60	33.52	35	19.55	179	100
18	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.	29	16.20	50	27.93	48	26.82	52	29.05	179	100
19	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.	49	27.22	36	20	49	27.22	46	25.56	180	100
20	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.	70	38.68	66	36.46	31	17.13	14	7.73	181	100
21	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.	28	15.38	56	30.77	43	23.63	55	30.22	182	100

Author: Ríos Mocha Jean Beatriz.
Source: Students Questionnaire.

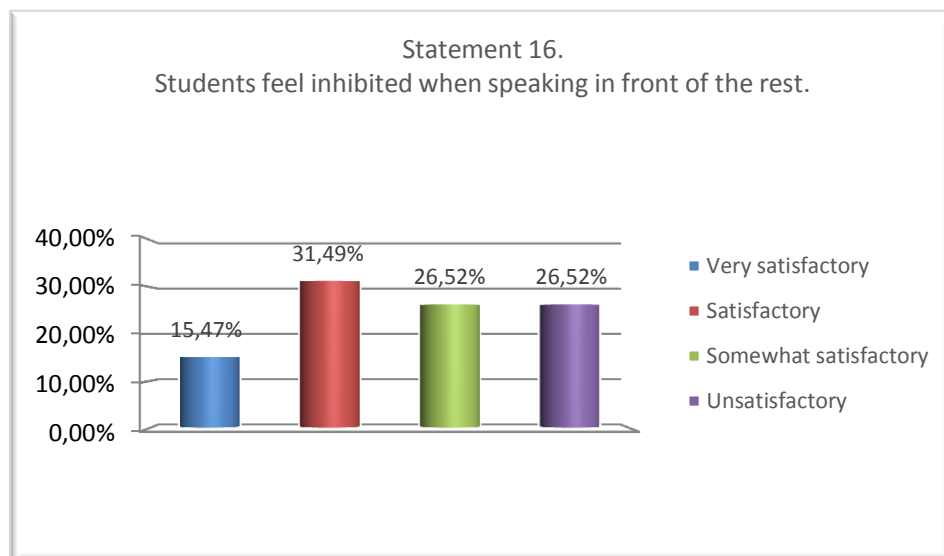
Psychological Statements



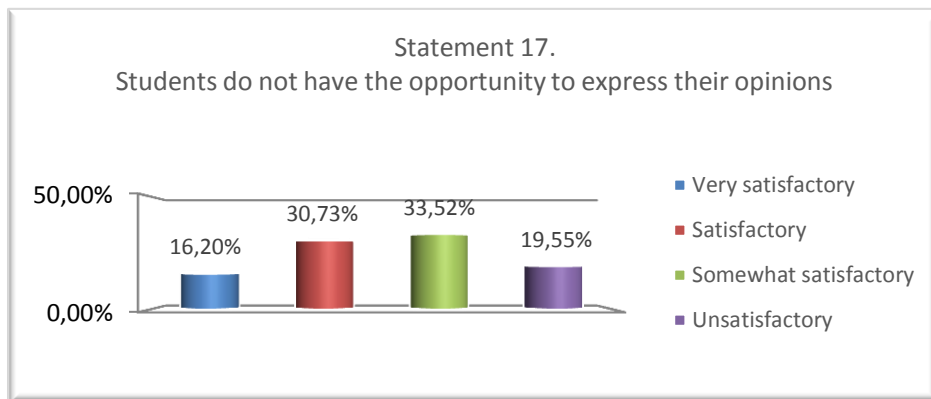
Of the three sections of the survey, the psychological portion has proven the most difficult to analyze due to the fact that the results are either split or evenly divided making one concrete decision difficult.



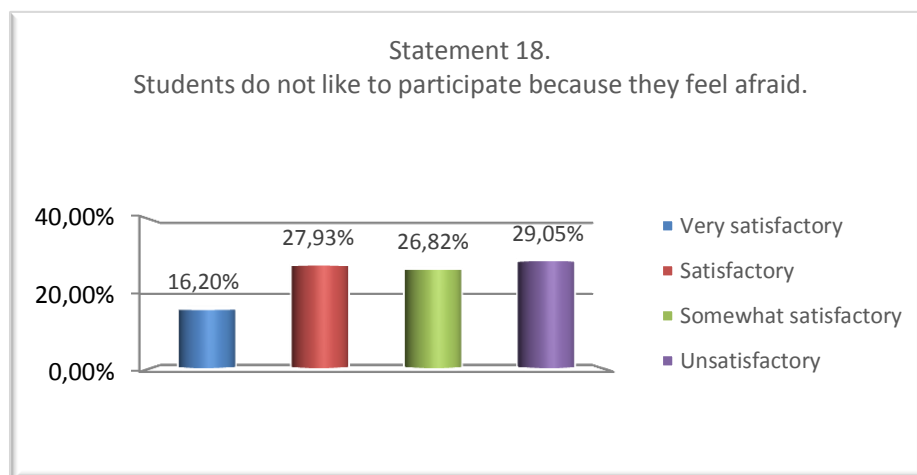
Item 15. The population is almost perfectly divided on this issue. All the students are feeling different ranges of stress.



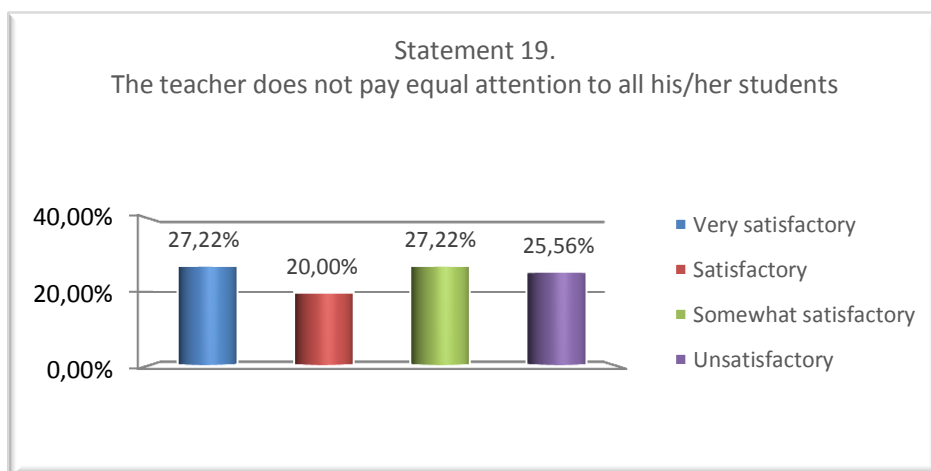
Item 16. Here again the students are divided with their answers. This can be interpreted by understanding that each student has a different level of confidence; however it is positive to hear that only 15.47% feel very shy in front of others.



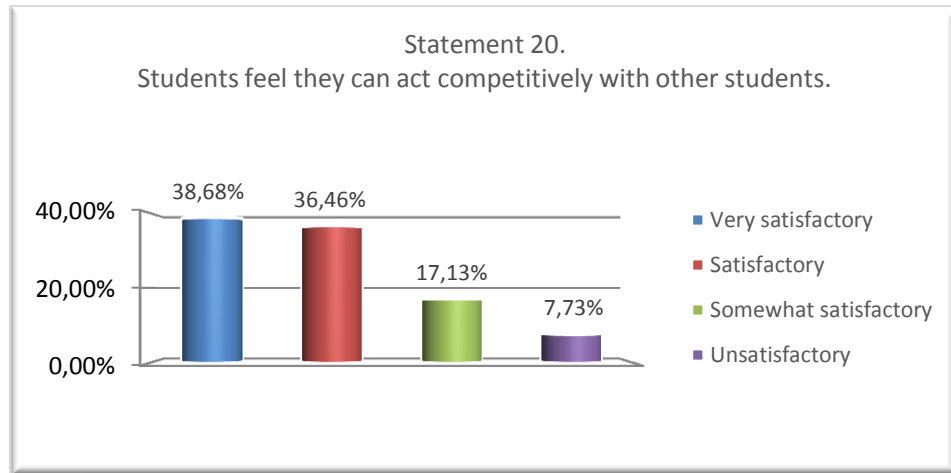
Item 17. Large classes do not afford everyone the opportunity to say what they think and this is reflected in the above results.



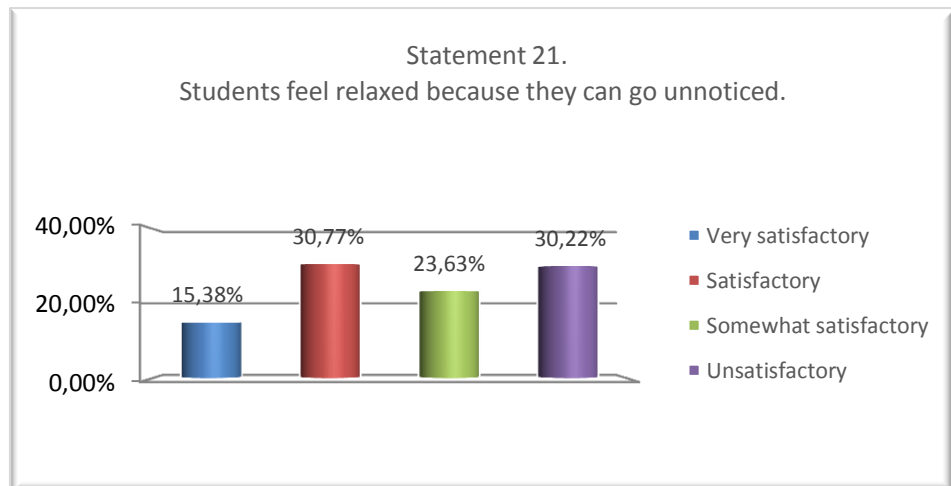
Item 18. The class is seen as having different levels of fear.



Item 19. Near equal division may be representative of how much time one teacher can afford to each individual.



Item 20. The results show that there is healthy competition in the large class environment.



Item 21. Only 15.38% of students feel they are able to go unnoticed in a large classroom. However, it may be due to good classroom management that the rest of the students feel they cannot go unnoticed.

The psychological part is comprised of seven statements with a range of possible answers from very satisfactory to unsatisfactory.

Students reporting on the environment in the classroom being stressful (item 15) resulted in almost a perfect division across all ranges: 23.63% very satisfactory, 24.73% satisfactory, 28.01% somewhat satisfactory, and 23.63% unsatisfactory. Such an even distribution can be accounted for in many ways such as the make-up of the class, random guessing or honest results. Because this anomaly did not just happen on one statement, it must be concluded that these statements were answered honestly and we are dealing with a variety of students with varying degrees of opinions.

We have all felt nervous at one time or another when having to speak in front of a group of people. This idea holds true to the students that were surveyed about speaking in front of the class (item 16). Eventhough the results are split among the possible answers, 31.49% answered that they feel shy when having to talk in front of the class.

The large classes that took this questionnaire were divided on the issue of having the opportunity to express their opinion in class (item 17). The results showed that 33.52% did not feel they could share their opinions in class by answering somewhat satisfactory. This point is countered with a close 30.73% answering satisfactory to the same question. The division of answers is most likely due to the fact that there are too many students in the class for everyone to express themselves thusly resulting in the findings.

Most students claimed they do not feel afraid to participate in class (item 18) with 29.05% marking unsatisfactory. Fear of participation seems to be fairly evenly split among all categories with a slight majority not being afraid. It can be interpreted that large classes make students become accustomed to speaking in front of large groups thusly the results.

The issue of not receiving equal attention from the teacher (item 19) was equally split between very satisfactory and somewhat satisfactory with 27.22%. The additional scores of unsatisfactory coming in at 25.45% leaves us with the interpretation that the majority of students do not feel they get the same amount of attention as others. This result seems logical as it is extremely difficult for a teacher to give the same amount of attention to everyone in a large class.

Students absolutely feel they are able to be competitive with each other in the large classroom setting (item 20). The questionnaires revealed that 38.68% marked very satisfactory and 36.46% marked satisfactory.

These findings are in agreement with Thaher (2005) whose findings yielded the beliefs that in large classes there was a sense of competition and good relationships amongst pupils both inside and outside of class. Of all the psychological issues in the questionnaire item 20 is the only one that shows a clear position of agreement where the results are not divided amongst all possible answers.

Most students, 30.77%, stated they felt relaxed because they could go unnoticed by the teacher (item 21). This result is almost evenly opposed with 30.22% of the students ranking this item as unsatisfactory once again leaving us with a division of answers. These results are reflecting how the large class operates; the teacher can only be actively attentive with about half of the class at any given time.

The analysis of the psychological part was difficult to analyze however easy to summarize. The class was almost evenly split on every item resulting in no one section being overly positive or negative.

The results are seen as an even division within the demographics of the classroom and only two conclusions can be clearly stated. The students in this study feel they have the ability to compete with other

students with a combined total of 75.14% reporting a positive result. This leads the reader to believe that the environment in the classroom is a positive one and allows for students to make errors and feel free to engage in competition.

The resulting interpretations are that the classes are comprised of students that are very confident and others who are not. In the same token, there are students who do their work and do not feel the stress and there are other students who do not do their work or do not understand the English language and are so intimidated that is why a very stressful environment is created.

Conclusions

- This research demonstrates that students find in-class activities helpful in learning the four basic skills of English: reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- Students in large classes do not get consistent feedback from their teachers.
- Complex class activities as plays, competitions and debates are not often used in large classes.
- Teachers in large classes have difficulty remembering students names.
- It is less probable, in large classes, for a teacher to ask the same student more than one question.
- This research suggests that a healthy learning environment is created with the proper balance of student-teacher and student-student interaction.
- This research demonstrates that large classes provide opportunities for competition amongst students.

Recommendations

- It is necessary to use more in depth activities, such as debate, plays, and competitions to reinforce lessons taught in class.
- There should be a meeting between student and teacher after school at least once a month for giving feedback.
- Regular seminars should be given to keep teachers abreast about new technology and how to apply it in the classroom.
- A more profound survey needs to be executed in respect to the psychological implications about stress, fear of speaking, expressing opinions and participating in class to fully understand the Ecuadorian students mind set.

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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 satisfactory:	Partially agree
Unsatisfactory:	Disagree

Informative data: Please fill in the information below

Name of institution: _____

Type of institution: Public () Private ()

Year of study: 8th year. () 9th year () 10th year. ()
1st senior high school . () 2nd senior high school. () 3rd. senior high school. ()

City: _____

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

A. Academic issues

		Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
	In classes with a large number of students:				
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°		Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
	In classes with a large number of students:				
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:

		Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
	In classes with a large number of students:				
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!