UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA

TITULACIÓN DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
MENCIÓN INGLÉS

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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CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO ESMERALDAS

2015

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this research project to my lovely mother Mariela, who has supported me during this research process. With this document, I want to express my gratitude and love to her.

I also dedicate this work to my husband Juan, my son Ismael, and my daughter Alanis who are the principal reasons of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research is about the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools. Its general objective is to determine the impact that large classes have on the teaching-learning process of the English language.

This study took place in five classrooms with thirty five or more students, each classroom with different teachers from three high schools: one public and two fisco-misionals from the city of Esmeraldas. A sample of 177 students was selected with teenagers from 13 to 17 years old. The quantitative approach was applied in this research. The principal sources of data collection were students' questionnaires and note-taking.

According to the instructional implications, the main findings showed that students are in agreement with the activities suggested by teachers. Related to social implications, it was found that there exist good interaction between teachers and students. Finally, along with the psychological implications, students manifested that the environment in large classes is stressful which certainly affect the quality of the English language teaching-learning process.

Key words: influence of large classes, English language teaching-learning, and high schools.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación es acerca de la influencia que tienen las clases con grupos numerosos de estudiantes en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en los colegios del Ecuador. El objetivo general de este estudio es determinar el impacto que producen las clases numerosas sobre el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa.

Este estudio tuvo lugar en cinco aulas de clase con 35 o más estudiantes, cada clase con un profesor diferente de tres colegios: uno público y dos fisco-misionales de la ciudad de Esmeraldas. Una muestra de 177 estudiantes fue seleccionada, constituida por adolescentes de entre 13 y 17 años de edad. En esta investigación se aplicó análisis cuantitativo, y las principales fuentes para la recolección de datos fueron los cuestionarios que se aplicaron a los estudiantes y la toma de notas.

De acuerdo a las implicaciones educativas, los principales hallazgos mostraron que los estudiantes están de acuerdo con las actividades sugeridas por los profesores. Conforme a las implicaciones sociales, los estudiantes indicaron que existe buena interacción entre los profesores y los estudiantes. Finalmente, según las implicaciones psicológicas, se encontró que el ambiente en clases numerosas es estresante, lo cual ciertamente afecta la calidad del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés.

Palabras clave: influencia de clases numerosas, enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa y colegios.

INTRODUCTION

The study of English as a second language presents many difficulties in high schools of our country especially in public educative units where most of students do not have even the Basic English knowledge to write or speak in this foreign language. One of the biggest problems that affect the quality of English instruction is large classes which is a common aspect in developing countries as Ecuador, where the number of students in classrooms are increasing every year; for this reason, it is important to do a deep research on the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools in order to determine the impact that large classes have on the English language teaching-learning process.

Besides, the intention of this research is to try to answer the following questions: What instructional implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process? What social implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process? What psychological implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process?

The present study is very important to students, teachers, and other people who are immersed in the English language teaching-learning process because through this research they will find answers to solve the typical problems that emerge from teaching in large classes.

Some previous studies about the influence of large classes on the teaching-learning process have been carried out.

An interesting study was conducted by Chowdhury and Shaila (2013) whose main purpose is to focus on how the English language teachers deal with large

classes at the tertiary level, especially when they are conducting classes to practice and evaluate the speaking skills of students.

The limitation found in this study was the fact that students are less familiar with the features of the spoken text; especially, in terms of the cultural context of the language. Besides, English is not practice in schools due to the lack of trained and experience teachers who keep using their mother tongue to teach the classes, as a consequence, students are reluctant to speak English.

Another study done by Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani and Byamugisha (2008) consisted in three main purposes: to increase the number of teachers to allow more than one teacher per class, to provide schools with the necessary resources, and to enable teachers to develop the confidence and skills to improve the learning environment in large classes. Some difficulties that this research faced were the limited physical space for movement and interaction, few desks, and limited number of instructional materials. Students learned in such poor conditions and there were also danger of easy spread of infectious diseases such as flu and cough.

Finally, the purpose of the study conducted by Dachs (1998) is based on five questions: How do teachers in large classes interact with their pupils? How effective is their teaching? What use is made of teaching and learning materials? In what way does the use of such material contribute to effective learning? What do teachers, principals and materials designers feel about large class teaching and benefits of the materials available to them?

The limitations encountered in this study were at the moment to accumulate data because of a variety of causes, being the most notorious conditions of uncertainty and dissatisfaction in the teaching profession in South Africa. As a

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consequence problems related to right-sizing, strikes, retrenchments, etc., took place

at the moment to conduct this research which resulted in several months of go- slow

action in schools. Another problem found by the researcher was the fact that schools

were in rural areas with difficult access.

The main beneficiaries of the present research are English teachers and

students who are teaching and learning English in large classes. The results gotten

from this research might contribute to improve teachers' abilities to instruct

efficiently inside the classroom applying new techniques and procedures in order to

keep students high motivated in the learning process. Besides, students that are

acquiring English as a foreign language will improve their English proficiency

levels. This research will also benefit to researchers interested in studying the

influence of large classes in the teaching-learning process.

Finally, this study presents one limitation that is related to time. The students'

questionnaires were filled in few minutes according to the time the schools' principal

provided to. Consequently, there was not time enough for students to answer the

questionnaire with total precision.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This research was conducted in the city of Esmeraldas. Three high schools were selected: one public and two fiscomisionals. The sample consisted of 177 students from 5 different classrooms; each classroom with 35 or more students. The students who participated in this study were between 13 and 17 years old from 9th, and 10th grades of basic general education, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of senior high school. Also, five teachers participated in this research; all of them had English bachelor degree.

Procedures

To carry out this research it was necessary to investigate on subjects related to the research topic in order to build up the literature review. This research project includes information concerning to the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process, and five previous studies associated to the theme as well. The bibliographic information was collected from some libraries in the cities of Esmeraldas and Guayaquil and the information for the previous studies were collected from internet sources.

Another important part of this study was the field research, which was done by selecting five classrooms with large classes. The students selected were asked to complete a questionnaire with 21 items. The items were concerned with the instructional, social, and psychological implications that large classes have in the teaching-learning process.

Then the quantitative method was applied in order to organize the collected information in tables, these tables in graphics, and those graphics were organized by

variables. After that, the analysis was built based on the results gathered; it was supported with information taken from the literature review.

Finally, some conclusions and recommendations were presented in order to complete this research project.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

English is very important in our life; it is an international language that has become in the most popular one around the world; it opens many opportunities to work, travel, meet more people, and raise our level of culture. Since the period of globalization started, the English language has had significant involvement in the area of science, technology, tourism, and especially in communication.

Besides, as population rises their needs also grow, bringing as a result an increment in the number of students per classroom where there is only one teacher to takes care of them; it happens especially in institutions that belong to the public sector.

Regarding to the number of students per classroom, it is important to recognize that the Ecuadorian government strives every day to improve the level of teaching and learning English in private and public schools; however, the problematic to deal with more than thirty-five students per class still persists and has become a true conflict for both teachers and students.

Related to the consequences of large classes on the education system, it is necessary to mention some of the most common approaches and methods in the English language teaching-learning process and other important aspects that also affect it.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), the study of methods is very useful in teacher instruction. Methods offer teachers alternatives about what system they need to implement in the classroom and also they help teachers to expand their repertoire of techniques in order to deal with students in an effective way.

The most widespread methods are:

Communicative Language Teaching, which according to Richards and Rodgers (2001) "it is referred to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures". These authors also mention that some characteristics of this method are the meaningful communication for classroom activities, learners learn the target language by using it, and fluency is also an important dimension of communication. In addition, Mukalel (1998) states that "Communicative Language Teaching is essentially creative, purposeful and task-oriented" which means that the communicative competence can function as the focal point around which learning can take place.

Another important method is the Natural Approach, which according to Ridchards and Rodgers (2001) is based on examination and understanding of how learners obtain both first and second languages in non-formal situations, as for example when a little child inherit a language from his parents or relatives. Regarding to Salim (2007), Natural Approach language "is viewed as a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages which are considered of primary importance" where comprehensible input is necessary to allow the language emerges spontaneously, providing the sufficient conditions for successful classroom acquisition. On the other hand, grammatical perfection is not as much important as the improvement of the listening skills.

Regarding to the Cooperative Language Learning, Richards and Rodgers (2001) define it as a group activity method. This is the most important way of learning and is part of an absolutely theory of arrangement for the use of group work in teaching. The same authors indicate that in this method group activities are

carefully planned to take full advantage of students' interaction and to facilitate students' contributions to each other's learning. In the same way, Shefaei &Mehran (2008) affirm that "Cooperative Language refers to a method of instruction whereby students work together in groups to reach common goals" for this reason, good communication between students is important to create a positive affective classroom environment which improves the social skills of the learners.

Related to the Content-Based Instruction Method, Stryker and Leaver (1997) state that it is focused in content and language; they also indicate that this method is the best way to teach a second language by practicing or using this language from the first class for genuine purposes and not a purely study of concepts. Some important characteristics of this method are that it is based on a subject-matter core, this method uses authentic language and texts, and it is appropriate to the needs of specific groups of students. On the other hand, Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that "CBI refers to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus".

Another interesting method is the Task- Based Language Teaching, as indicated by Ellis (2004), "it is focused on asking learners to do important tasks using the aim language". This author also emphasizes that the tasks suggested by the teacher must be significant to the students who relate these tasks to possible situations in their lives outside the classroom. Besides, the main characteristic of this method is the great exposure to the target language in a natural context; the classes are high motivated because students spent a lot of time communicating, while teaching is based in task completion. In contrast, Richards and Rodgers (2001) assert that TBLT proposes the notion of task as a central unit of planning and teaching,

which makes necessary that task have a pedagogical purpose specific to the classroom.

Similarly, the Total Physical Response method, according to Larsen and Anderson (2011), is concern with making learners response to the commands made by the teacher as "sit down", "stand up", "open your books", and so on. These authors also state that "in TPR vocabulary and grammatical structures are emphasize over other language areas embedded within imperatives". In fact, listening is relevant in TPR; as it is stated by Nagaraj (1996) who affirms that "in TPR listening comprehension is the basis of the course. The teacher gives commands and orders and learners perform the action" in order to learn the target language in a meaningful way.

Another important method is the Whole Language, which according to Richards and Rodgers (2001) it is emphasized on making meaning on reading and express connotation in writing for real purposes. These authors also state that it is necessary to integrate all the aspects of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to make instructions meaningful to students who receive an active position in the education process. In addition, Westwood (2001) claim that when the Whole Language is implemented by meaningful practices children increase their awareness on the processes of reading and writing, improving their vocabulary and building positive attitudes towards books.

Finally, the Grammar -Translation Method, which dealing with Larsen and Anderson (2011), "is a method focused in enable students to read and translate literature between one language into another"; as a result, little or no spoken communication in the target language exists in the class because emphasis is given to reading and writing skills. Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that

"Grammar Translation method is still used in situations where understanding literary texts is the primary focus of foreign language study and there is little need for a speaking knowledge of the language"; as a consequence, error correction and little attention to the content of texts are constant rules in the classroom, decreasing the motivation in the students who got bored and also frustrated.

Class size

The term "class size" refers properly to the amount of students in the classroom and it is one of the most remarkable factors that influence the teaching-learning system of the English language. The impact of working with a large group of students is a very important issue that must be taken into account by the leading authorities of the educational organization of our country.

According to Blatchford (2003), the effect of class size is a much discussed topic as it has great influence on the learning and performance of students. This author argues that w*orking with few students results in a comfortable work environment where students interact with their teacher in a more direct and effective way. The teacher in a small class can better help their students to know their strengths and weaknesses and also he can provide immediate feedback to improve students' performance. On the other hand, Blatchford explains that working with a large group of students is a challenge as far as discipline is concerned because students cannot be concentrated due to the noisy environment of large classes. Consequently, both students and teachers decrease their motivation and interest in learning a foreign language. For this reason, several studies have shown that the appropriate number of students within a classroom should be 25.

In contrast, Molnar (2000) explains that "there is no relationship between class size and students' achievement". This author also states that small classes do

not ensure a good education at all, the quality of instruction, leadership, and physical conditions of the school are also very important aspects to consider as well. Additionally, according to Bray and Kehle (2011), "class size is one observable and malleable dimension of classroom environments that has the potential to benefit all students".

Consequently, large classes should be considered a challenge rather than a problem because this is a very common situation especially in public schools where the economic contribution is not always present but the need to educate more children and teenagers increases every day.

Managing Learning

There are four major points to lead a class successfully; the first one is concerned with instructions, which according to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) should be simple by using short expressions to avoid confusion and uncertainty. These authors also state that instructions need to be consistent and supported with visual or writing clues; besides, they indicate that the most important characteristic of instructions is that they must be demonstrative, because showing what to do is more effective than only telling what to do.

The second point to consider is Feedback. According to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005), this is an important part of effective learning because it helps students to improve confidence, identified strengths and weaknesses, provides enthusiasm for learning, and also it gives a clear understanding about the topics the students are learning.

In addition; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock (2001) indicate that for feedback to be successful, it needs to be focused on a specific level of skill or knowledge in students, for this, effective communication is required; teachers must asset students

giving them the opportunity to express their opinions about the subject and their needs as a central concern.

The third point to take into account is discipline, as stated by Blandford (1998) it is an exhaustive task that teachers have to face every day and is the responsibility of all members of the school community. This author also indicates that self-steem and self-confidence are fundamental to the management of discipline; students with low self-steem manifest inappropriate behaviors while students with high self-steem will be able to respect themselves and respect others.

Similarly, Bear (2010) claims that there are many factors that influence students' behavior that cause different reactions in the classroom that affect the development of the teaching-learning process, such as personality of the teacher, appearance, communication skills, teaching skills and curriculum knowledge; of course, professional teachers will be capable in preventing troublemaking behavior. As a result, discipline is important to avoid low students' performance, academic chaos and teacher frustration.

The last point to contemplate in managing learning is timing. Hargreaves (1994), affirms that "time is an important element on which teachers build or plan their work"; for this reason, this author emphasizes that the structure of the lesson plan needs to be done in an orderly manner by establishing a time limit for each topic in order to obtain efficient time management, bringing as a result more discipline at work, better organized schedule, and considerable reduction of stress.

Managing Large Classes

According to several studies, large classes are increasing each year, mainly in public institutions where this situation is more notable. Due to the rapid development of globalization and communication, the learning of English as a second language

has also increased. Nowadays, teachers face many challenges at the moment to teach English in classes with large amount of students; for this reason, they have to implement new techniques and apply practical lessons in the classroom in order to catch the attention of the students and make their classes high motivated.

Following with the same line of reasoning, Nunan and Lamb (1996) state that it results difficult to work with more than fifty students which are considered to be a large class. These authors also claim that "students who are seated in the front of the class have a greater academic advantage than those seated further back because they can actually take part in the lesson".

Additionally, Michaelsen, Knight, and Fink (2004), argue that the most common difficulties of large classes are discipline, anonymity and lack of attention, for this reason, these authors suggest Team-Based Learning as an instructional strategy of learning activity. With TBL students are integrated in a sequence of activities that work together to generate a high level of energy on the part of students in order to avoid anonymity and passivity. Following with this point of view, Erickson, Peters and Strommer (2006) claim that teachers have to avoid that their students feel anonymity and disconnection inside and outside the classroom, and despite any obstacle; teachers are responsible for students' achievement.

Furthermore, Wharton and Race (1999), explain some practical suggestions to work with large classes, some of them are: to address learners by name whenever as possible to make them feel that their presence and contribution is important; another important tip is to let students the management of some tasks like distributing and collecting of materials. Additionally, Wharton and Race (1999) also suggest that teachers and students can make an agreement on one specific signal for quiet such as

clapping hands or ringing a bell in order to maintain the discipline inside the classroom.

Furthermore, Thiessen and Cook-Sather (2007) state that students do not like when teachers forget their names because they want to feel that they are important part of their teachers' memory.

Activities for working with large classes

Working with large classes demand energy and concentration to maintain students focused in the target language and at the same time well-motivated and fascinated with the topic the teacher is explaining. Regarding to this, Lewis and Bedson (1999) state that "the larger the group of students, the more difficult it becomes to set up activities which promote active language use". These authors also state that it is necessary to play some games with large classes especially those based on total physical response such as line-ups, "Simon Says" and other kind of activities where learners can easily respond with passives answers to prompts and also involve all the students. The same authors conclude that the best way to conduct these activities is by dividing the class into smaller groups, because in this way students can play games and participate more effectively.

Besides, Baker and Westrup (2000) suggest that group and pair work allow students to practice language and participate in an active way in the classroom. According to these authors, pair and group work is a very significant procedure to implement in large classes because all the students have the opportunity to get involved and not only few stronger and confident students.

On the other hand, Baker and Westrup (2000) claim that group and pair work can be noisy and time consuming, but it certainly improve motivation in student's

use of English because quieter learners have to speak only with their partners rather than the whole class.

Additionally, Doff (1988) states that pair and group work activities need particular planning to get all students involved in the lesson. In this situation, large classes need good activities to work with; this is essential to keep students focus in the target language. This author also state that "pair work and group work can help shy students who would never say anything in a whole class activity". Teachers can use questions, debates and other activities that enhance student's level of comprehension and participation in the classroom.

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement

As indicated by Ming-tak and Wai-shing (2008), in the teaching-learning English process, the presence and position of all objects within the classroom are important because students spend many hours per day at school; for this reason, the environment of the classroom needs to be safe and comfortable. The objects and the furniture in the classroom need to be organized according to the students' needs. Regarding to seating arrangement, Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005) claim that it is necessary to move desks around the classroom according to the students' necessities and also about the topic the teacher is going to explain. These authors also affirm that the place where the students are located can determine their attitude towards the teachers and towards the rest of the students in the classroom.

Following with Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005), teachers can also determine the position of the students taking into account their personalities and behaviors. How the seats are arranged depends on the size of the class, the size of the groups, the types of activities and the style of the furniture.

Additionally, Woolfolk (2010) also suggests that horizontal rows and column arrangements are useful for independent seatwork of teachers, students or media presentations; moreover, clusters of four or circle arrangements are best for student interaction.

Indeed, this author also states that the fishbowl or stack special formation, where students sit close together near the focus of attention (the back row may even be standing), should be used only for short periods of time, because it is not comfortable and can lead to discipline problems. Regarding to Woolfolk (2010) "the fishbowl can create a feeling of group cohesion and is helpful when the teacher wants students to watch a demonstration, brainstorm on a class problem, or see a small visual aid".

Different Levels of Proficiency

Nowadays it is common to have students with different English levels in the classroom. For this reason it is necessary to take into account some advantages and disadvantages when teaching to students with different levels of proficiency.

Regarding this topic, Carr and Bertrando (2012) state that the advantages teachers have are that strong and average students can help weaker students to improve their level of proficiency. These authors also indicates that "when mixing language levels, we recommend placing the English learner who is at a low-proficiency level with an English learner who is just one or two levels higher to practice receptive and expressive skills in English".

On the contrary, Baker and Westrup (2000) indicate that some disadvantages that teachers can have at the moment to work with students with different levels of proficiency are that weaker students may stop learning because it is hard to understand what the teacher or other classmates explain due to their low level of

English knowledge and stronger students may stop learning because they find work activities' too easy for them; so they may get bored.

The topics mentioned above are very important for teaching English as a second language; teachers have to take them into account to get success in the development of the students' knowledge; especially, if they are teaching in large classes which demands more time and dedication.

Many scientific studies have been carried out in the teaching to large classes' field. In the following pages the most relevant studies are going to be mentioned.

Dachs (1998) made an interesting research of eight classrooms in kwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, whose principal objectives were to know how do teachers in large classes interact with their pupils, how effective is their teaching, what use is made of teaching and learning materials, in what way does the use of such material contribute to effective learning, and what do teachers, principals, and materials designers feel about large class teaching and the benefits of the materials available to them.

The methodology of this study was based in observations scale, structured interviews, and indicators of learning gains; and the use of the read and smile programme for language development. The observations were made to teachers and pupils both individually and collectively. The interviews were recorder either on a Likert-type scale of responses or in an open-ended verbatim style.

The main finding of this study was that there is no clear relationship between class size and effective learning, but teachers' performance appears to be more affected than students´ performance. This study also concludes that one of the most effective ways of improving teaching and learning, particularly in the area of language development, is to be found in the developing, supplying and supporting of the materials. These will greatly assist practicing teachers of large classes and will do

much to ensure that meaningful learning takes place in a well-managed classroom environment.

Another important study is the one conducted by Chowdhury and Shaila (2013), whose purpose was to know how the English language teachers deal with large classes at the tertiary level, particularly when they need to evaluate speaking proficiencies of learners. This study took place in Bangladesh, where English is a foreign language and the phenomenon of large classes is common. The instruments used for the research methodology were a survey and a questionnaire. The survey was conducted to 52 language teachers teaching in different private universities, both, teachers and universities were selected randomly; and the questionnaire was made to the teachers who participate in this study with open ended questions and fixed alternative questions.

The most important conclusion of this study was that large classes needed to be considered a challenge rather than a problem. For this reason, it is necessary that teachers apply innovative techniques and methods to keep students involved in the lessons. Furthermore, the researchers argued that speaking is one of the most time consuming skills in teaching because it requires interaction between educators and learners and also because it is necessary to practice inside and outside the classroom to maintain a good level of flow on students; subsequently, the motivation that teachers transmit is going to make students like or dislike the language they are learning. Another conclusion these authors indicate is that shyer students need particular care than the rest at speaking out and expressing their views. Additionally, the researchers also conclude that in large classes it is not easy to pay attention to all the students at the same time, in this sense, to convert the difficulties into challenges teachers must be focused on students' needs.

On the other hand, the study of Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani and Byamugisha (2008) is about the problems emerging in the teaching and learning process in large classes in Uganda. The objectives of this research are to increase the number of teachers to allow more than one teacher per class, and also to provide schools with the necessary resources and enable teachers to develop the confidence and skills to improve the learning environment in large classes.

This study was done in two phases. The first one adopted a descriptive survey design using the Education Management Information System (EMIS), where twenty schools and twenty five teachers were surveyed from Kampala and Wakiso Districts. Data for the baseline was generated from interviews with the thirty five teachers, twenty schools administrators and one hundred lessons observations. The second phase of the study was done using lesson study methodology with ten teachers who participated in several activities including workshops and professional development activity on reflective practice.

In this study the researchers concluded that it is not correct that teachers work in an isolated manner because they will always need institutional and policy support particularly if they are working with large amounts of students. To get good results it is indispensable to increase the number of teachers to allow two teachers per class but it seems to be a paramount in the present days especially in public schools where the resources are limited.

Besides, the researchers state that in classroom situations what matters most may not be the size of the class but the quality of the teacher and better trained teachers can handle more students to get proficient in second language learning; for this reason, governments have to provide schools with the necessary resources and

enabling teachers to develop the confidence and skills to improve the learning environment in large classes.

Adeyemi (2008) made a research to determine what influence class size has on the quality of output from secondary schools in Eikiti State, Nigeria. In addressing this problem, the following research questions were raised:

What relationship exists between class size and the quality of output from secondary schools in Eikiti State, Nigeria? Is there any significant difference between the quality of output of students in schools having an average small class sizes and the quality of output of students in schools having an average large class sizes in the SSC examinations in the State?

This study was designed along the lines of a descriptive survey. The instrument used for collecting data for the study was an inventory which is a checklist or an open instrument complied to serve educational needs. The data collected were analyzed with the use of the chi square test, correlation analysis, and t-test. Also, a semi-structure interview was conducted to 30 principals of schools and 30 education officers in the State to elicit information on their views about the class-sizes in schools.

The finding gotten from this study was that the increment in the amount of students per classroom brings as a consequence a low student's level of achievement; on the other hand, it is stated that pupils in smaller class-sizes achieve better results than pupils in large class-sizes. Consequently, class size is a significant aspect in determining the quality of output from secondary schools.

The study of Fauzia (1993) states that large classes are a hard reality in Pakistan as in others developing countries because few pupils per class result too expensive for government, for this reason, it is said that the higher the class size the

lower the cost of education is. This researcher also states that it is necessary to think about ways of improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes. The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

How do teachers and learners define varying size of school classes in Pakistan? What are teachers' and learners' beliefs (based both on their perceptions and experience) about larger and smaller classes in Pakistan? What happens, in terms of teacher-learner behavior and classroom processes, in large classes in Pakistan? What are the nature and scope of innovations in large classes in Pakistan? What are the determinants of teachers' and learners' difficulties in large classes? What are the reasons for the similarities and differences in teacher-learner behavior and classroom processes in varying size of school classes in Pakistan?

The methodology used to complete this study was classroom observation, which is a complex process especially in large classes; for this reason it was also used an audio-visual recorder to record the classrooms events to discover some significant aspects which were observed in the observations performed. Interviews were also conducted to get complementary data on classroom events and to serve as a kind of check on data collected from classroom observation. Examining Documents were also used like examination papers, school notices and newspaper articles.

The investigator concluded that it is more difficult to work with large classes than to work with small classes because the present instructional and management techniques used for the teaching and learning of English in school classes in Pakistan are more suitable for smaller classes. The findings of the study also suggest that some innovations are more difficult to introduce in large classes and more opportunities for teaching and learning are available in smaller classes.

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

Quantitative analysis

This section will be focused on the description, analysis, and interpretation of the results about the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools. The answers gotten from the students' questionnaire have been quantified considering the instructional, social, and psychological implications of the English class.

Therefore, it was possible to get some tables which contain the results of this study in frequencies and percentages with their respective analysis sustained with the information of the literature review.

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

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.	36	76,84	39	22,03	2	1,13	0	0	177	100
2.	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	133	75,14	35	19,77	5	2,82	4	2,26	177	100
3.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.	24	13,56	59	33,33	87	49,15	7	3,95	177	100

4.	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.	132	74,57	30	16,94	14	7,91	1	0,55	177	100
5.	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.	114	64,41	26	14,69	25	14,12	12	6,78	177	100
6.	Students can cheat during the test.	38	21,47	23	13,00	34	19,21	82	46,33	177	100
7.	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.	30	16,95	16	9,04	27	15,25	104	58,76	177	100
8.	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.	134	75,71	14	7,91	11	6,21	18	10,17	177	100
9.	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	137	77,40	32	18,08	6	4,00	2	1,13	177	100

*The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.*
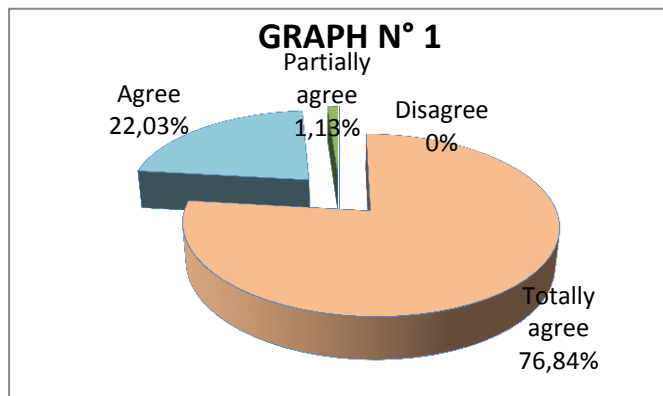
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above reveals that 136 students that represent 76,84% of them indicate that their teachers use easy and interesting activities that allow them to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. Moreover, 39 students that correspond to the 22,03% agree with this statement. Only 2 students that represent the 1,13% disagree at this point. These results show that there is not a problem working with large classes because students can apply in the classroom their English knowledge by doing the activities suggested by their teachers.

To support this interpretation, Doff (1988) states that large classes need good activities to work with; this is essential to keep students focused on the target language.

The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.


GRAPH N° 2
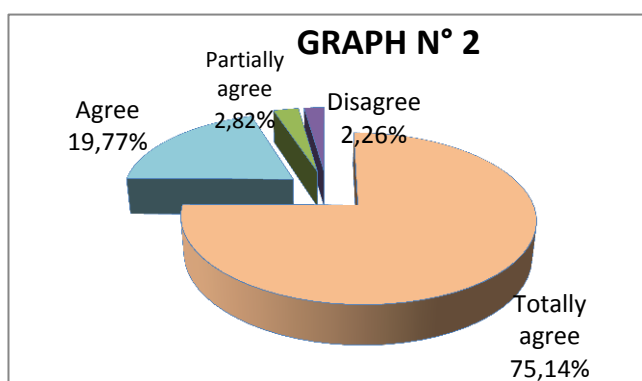
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above shows that 133 students that represent 75,14% totally agree that their teachers use activities to reinforce all learning skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) in the classroom. Similarly, 35 students (19,77%) also support the fact that teachers' activities help them to reinforce their language skills.

These results reveal that in spite of the large amount of students in the classroom teachers are concerned to improve the levels of proficiency of the students

in all areas: listening, speaking, reading and writing. To support this assertion, Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the integration of all aspects of language or language skills make instructions meaningful to students.

The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.

GRAPH N° 3
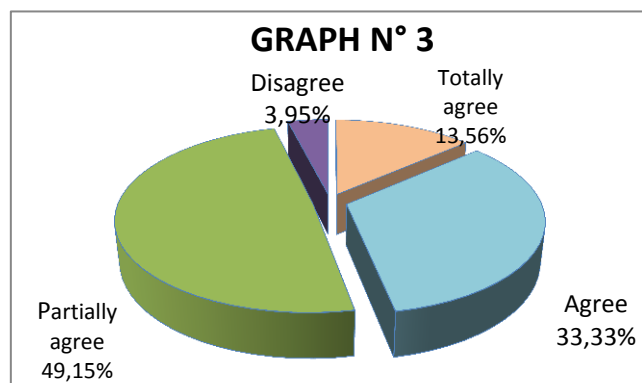
Author: Paola Tutiven
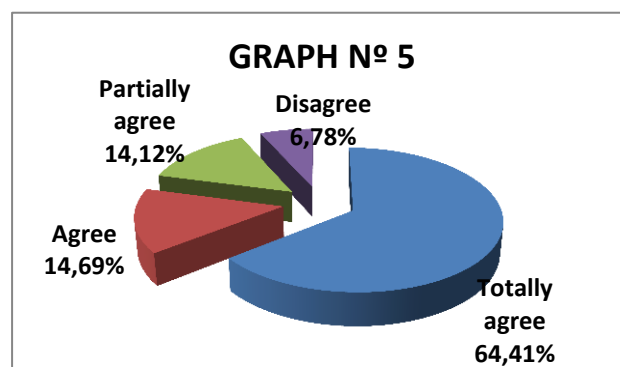Source: Students questionnaire

Most of students (49,15%) partially agree with this statement and the 33,33% of the interviewed students agree. These results indicate that students are not always attentive to teacher's guidance; it happens because in classes with large amount of students it is often difficult to maintain a good level of concentration and involvement in the learning activities. In this regard, Blatchford (2003) claims that is difficult for students to be engaged in the lessons due to the noisy environment of large classes.

Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.

GRAPH Nº 4

Partially agree 7,91%
Disagree 0,55%
Agree 16,94%
Totally agree 74,57%
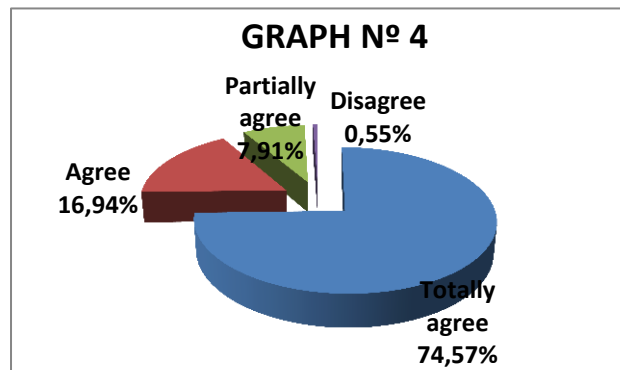
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

This graph confirms that 132 students that correspond to 74,57% of them totally agree that teachers use varied activities to teach their classes. In the same way, other 30 students (16,94%) also agree with this statement. On the other hand, only a minority group (7,91% and 0,55%) of students answered in a negative way. These results demonstrate that teachers are implementing varied activities in the classroom, especially those related to pair and group work activities because those are considered to be the best activities for working with large classes. In this regard, Baker and Westrup (2000) suggest that group and pair work are very significant procedures to implement in large classes because all the students have the opportunity to get involved and not only few stronger and confident students.

Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.

GRAPH Nº 5

Partially agree 14,12%
Disagree 6,78%
Agree 14,69%
Totally agree 64,41%

28

According to the graph above, 114 students (64,41%) totally agree with this fact. Similarly, there were 26 students (14,69%) who also agree. On the contrary, 25 students (14,12%) and 12 students (6,78%) disagree with this item. These results indicate that teachers implement competitions, games, plays, debates, and other activities related inside the classroom; in fact, it was noticed that students were high motivated when they were asked about this topic.

In this point, Doff (1988) states that large classes need good activities to work with; this is essential to keep students focus in the target language.

Students can cheat during the test.

GRAPH Nº 6

Totally agree 21,47%
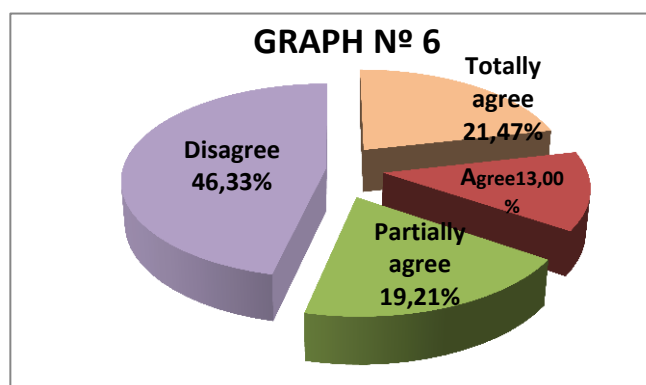
Agree 13,00%

Disagree 46,33%

Partially agree 19,21%

In the graph above, it is clearly observed that 82 students (46,33%) disagree with this statement; also, 34 students who represent the 19,21% partially agree, 13% of them agree, and finally 38 students totally agree with this fact.

Based on these results, it is stated that cheating is not possible during the exams. However, in large classes this problem is sometimes possible because of the

amount of the students, the noise, the seating arrangement, the quality of feedback, or simply due to the lack of students' honesty.

About it, Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005) establish that good feedback provides students with a clear understanding about the topics they are learning in order to avoid learning difficulties that can make students cheat during the tests.

Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects
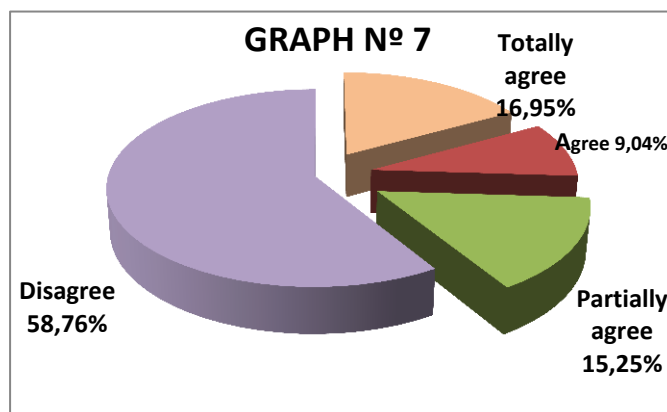
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

Based on the results above, it was found that 104 students (58,76%) disagree with the statement about the ease to get distracted at doing assignments of other subjects in the English classes. Also, 27 students who represent 15,25% of the sample partially agree, 16 students (9,04%) agree, and 30 students (16,95%) totally agree with this fact. These results demonstrate that despite the large amount of students, teachers try to maintain discipline and are aware that students do not get distracted by doing activities that have nothing to see with English language. To reinforce this asseveration Capel, Heilbronn, Leask and Turner (1997) state that a fundamental skill for teachers is to be able to maintain control in their classes.

The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.

GRAPH Nº 8

- Partially agree 6,21%
- Disagree 10,17%
- Agree 7,91%
- Totally agree 75,71%
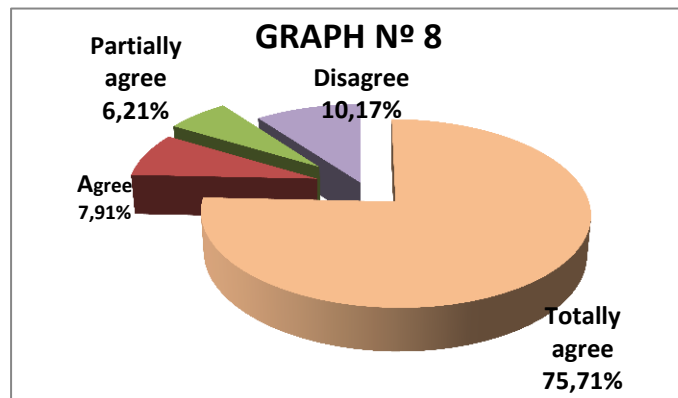
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

In this statement, it was found that 134 students (75,71%) totally agree that the seating arrangement made by teachers in the classroom is suitable to develop the different kinds of activities. Besides, 14 students (7,91%) also agree with this statement, but 11students (6,21%) partially agree, and 18 of them (10,17%) disagree. These results confirm that teachers are doing a good job at the moment of arranging the students' seats to develop the different activities in the classroom in order to facilitate the students' interaction.

As Ming-tak and Wai-shing (2008) state, classroom space and seating arrangement have a significant effect on children's learning, and should be one of the top priorities of classroom management.

Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.

GRAPH Nº 9
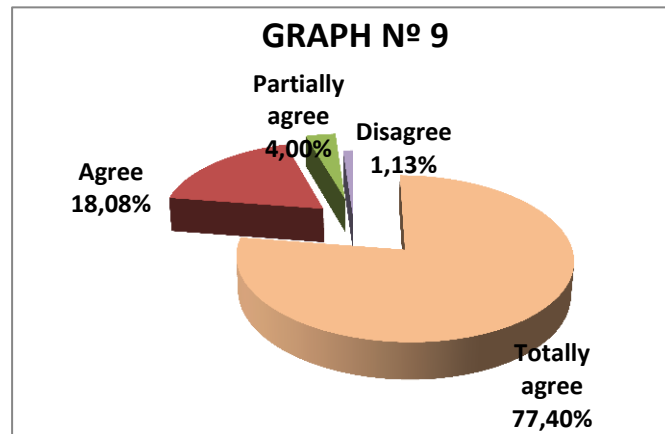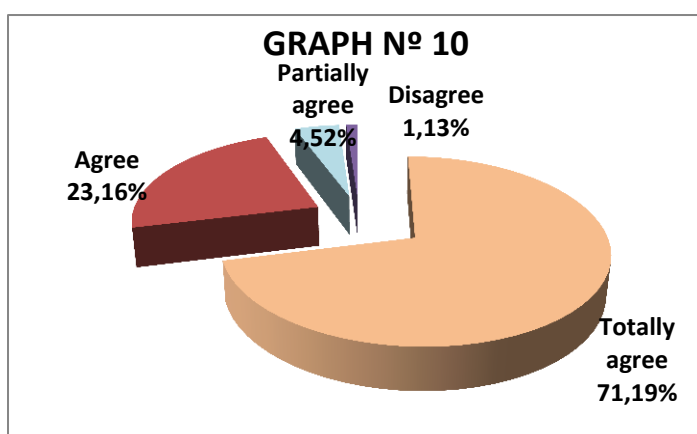
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above clearly shows that the majority of students (137) that represent 77,40% of the sample totally agree that they do not receive appropriate feedback from their teachers due to the large amount of students in the classroom. Also, 32 students agree with this statement. On the other hand, only few students (4% and 1,13%) disagree with this asseveration. These results show that large classes represent a big problem for students at the moment to receive regular feedback from their teachers who also have a real challenge at the moment to explain a class to more than 35 students who are not always quiet and focus in the lesson.

According to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) for feedback to be successful, it needs to be focused on a specific level of skill or knowledge in students, and for this purpose effective communication is required.

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

| N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
10.	There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.	126	71,19	41	23,16	8	4,52	2	1,13	177	100
11.	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.	122	68,93	34	19,21	13	7,34	8	4,52	177	100
12.	The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.	83	46,89	45	25,42	37	20,90	12	6,78	177	100
13.	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.	74	41,81	49	27,68	24	13,56	30	16,95	177	100
14.	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.	28	15,82	28	15,82	25	14,12	96	54,24	177	100

There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.

GRAPH Nº 10

Partially agree 4,52%

Disagree 1,13%

Agree 23,16%

Totally agree 71,19%

Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above confirms that 126 students that represent 71,19% of them consider that exist good interaction between students and teachers and also between teachers and students inside the classroom. Some other 41 students (23,16%) also manifested their agreement with this statement. On the contrary, 8 students that correspond to the 4,52% and 2 students (1,13%) expressed that they disagree with this item. These results reveal that regardless of the large amount of students, there is a good environment where students and teachers enjoy interacting inside and outside the classroom. Marzano, Pickering & Pollock (2001) highlight that "for successful managing learning, effective communication is required between teachers and students"; especially when they are teaching in large classes.

Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.

GRAPH № 11

Partially agree 7,34%
Disagree 4,52%
Agree 19,21%
Totally agree 68,93%%
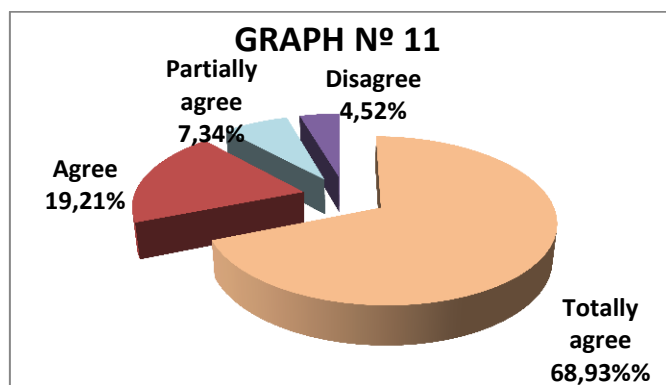
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The good communication between students in the classroom is very noticeable as it is stated in the graph above. It was found that 122 students (68,93%) totally agree that in large classes they have more opportunities to interact with more people. Similarly, 34 students that represent 19,21% also agree with this statement. Through these results it can be seen that for teenagers, it is very important to have the opportunity to meet more people inside and outside the classroom; at this point, large classes constitute a positive aspect that increase students' confidence; for this reason,

Bray and Kehle (2011) state that "class size is one observable and malleable dimension of classroom environments that has the potential to benefit all students".

The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.

GRAPH № 12
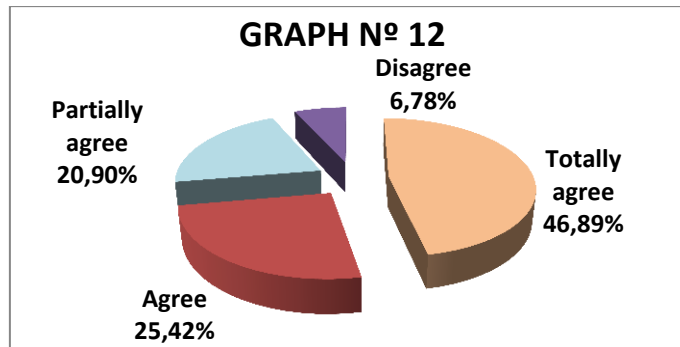
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above demonstrates that 83 students (46,89%) totally agree with this statement. It means that teachers don't remember the name of some students due to the large class size. It is stated that teachers often remind the names of those weaker and stronger proficiency students, but they do not remember average students' names. Some other 45 students (25,42%) also agree with this item. On the contrary, 37 students (20,90%) expressed that they partially agree with this statement.

According to Thiessen and Cook-sather (2007), to remember students' names is fundamental for their motivation in the classroom because students feel that they exist and that they are also recognized by their teachers.

The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.

GRAPH Nº 13

Disagree
16,95%

Partially
agree
13,56%

Totally
agree
41,81%
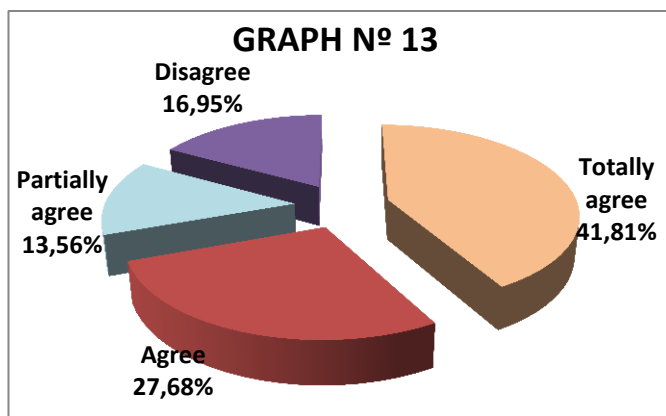
Agree
27,68%

Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

In this statement, 74 students (41,84%) totally agree that in large classes there is less probability that the teacher makes questions to the same students. There were 49 students (27,68%) agree with this item, 24 students (13,56%) partially agree, and 30 students (16,95%) disagree. These results confirm that in large classes the environment is less stressful for students because everybody has the same opportunity to answer any particular question according to the activity the teacher is performing in the classroom. Besides, this is a positive aspect of large classes because it is necessary that whole students participate in class to test if they are progressing in their English proficiency. In this regard, Lewis and Bedson (1999), claim that all the activities that take place in the classroom must involve to all students.

It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without been seen by the teacher.

GRAPH Nº 14
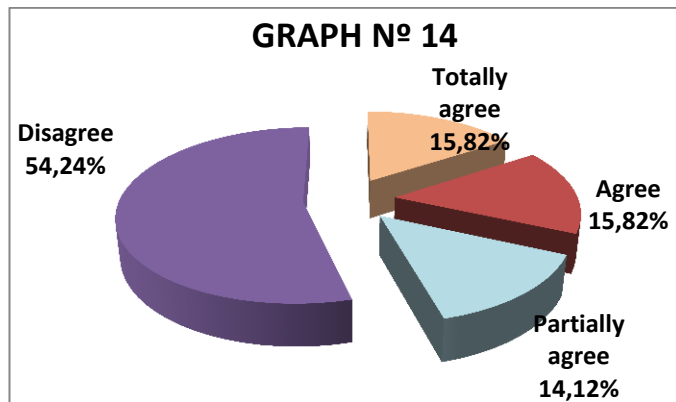
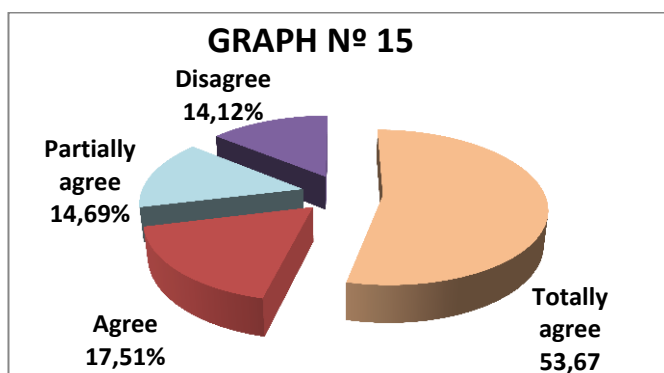Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above shows that 96 of the students surveyed (54,24%) disagree with this statement, 25 students (14,12%) partially agree, 28 students (15,82%) agree, and other 28 students (15,82%) totally agree. These results revealed that students are not allowed to use cell phones or any other electronic machine without the permission of the teachers. In fact, the use of such devices is prohibited during the classes because they distract students and make them lose interest in the subject.

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

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
15.	Environment in classroom is stressed	95	53,67	31	17,51	26	14,69	25	14,12	177	100
16.	I feel uncomfortable at the moment to speak in front of my classmates	47	26,55	36	20,34	23	12,99	71	40,11	177	100

17.	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.	62	35,03	69	38,98	14	7,91	32	18,08	177	100
18.	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.	51	28,81	33	18,64	31	17,51	62	35,03	177	100
19.	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.	111	62,71	41	23,16	11	6,21	14	7,91	177	100
20.	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.	126	71,19	34	19,21	14	7,91	3	1,69	177	100
21.	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.	56	31,64	30	16,95	20	11,30	71	40,11	177	100

The atmosphere is stressful.

Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above shows that 95 students, that correspond to 53,67% of the

total of participants, totally agree with this statement. Other 31 students (17,51%)

also agree, 26 students (14,69%) partially agree, and 25 students (14,12%) disagree

with this item. These results reveal that students that belong to large classes are

constantly stress out due to the noise that everybody produces, especially when they

want to speak at the same time or when they are planning an event. In this regard, Blatchford (2003) explains that working with a large group of students is a challenge as far as discipline is concerned because students cannot be concentrated due to the noisy environment of large classes; as a consequence, a high level of stress is produced on students.

Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest.

GRAPH Nº 16

Disagree 40,11%
Totally agree 26,55%
Partially agree 12,99%
Agree 20,34%
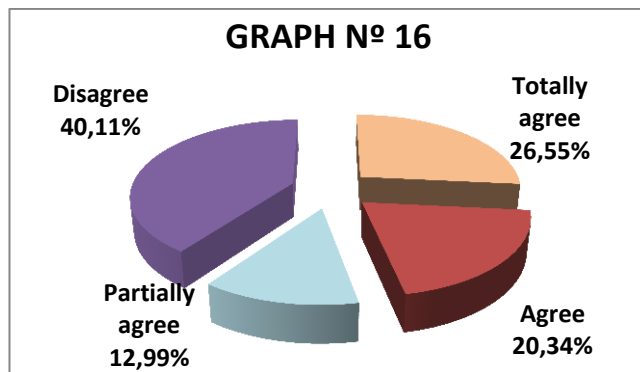
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

This graph proves that 40,11% of the students disagree with this statement because they do not feel uncomfortable at the moment of speaking in front of their classmates. Other 23 students (12,99%) partially agree, 36 students (20,34%) agree, and 47 students (26,55%) totally agree with this statement. Those last students represent to the shyer ones, who are not confident when they have to speak in front of the rest of their peers.

Concerning this, Fassinger (1997) states that "students in their relationships with and among each other can play a key role in creating the kind of norms and emotional climate needed to facilitate classrooms' interaction".

Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.

GRAPH Nº 17
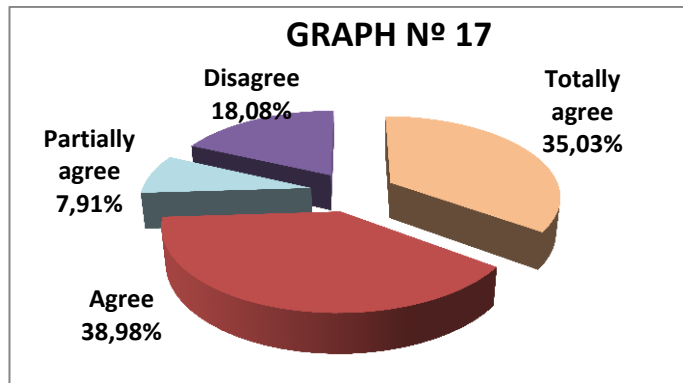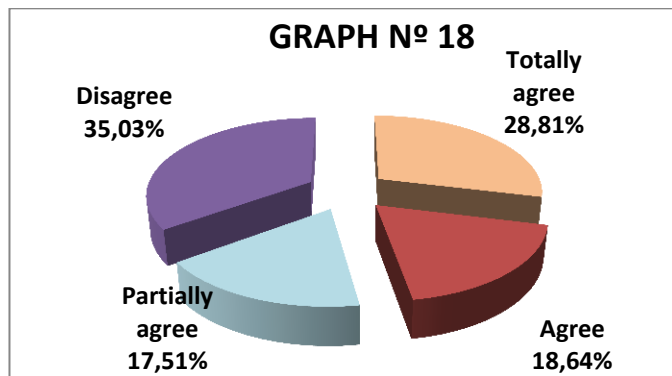

Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above confirms that 62 students, represent 35,03% of the participants, totally agree with this statement; other 69 students (38,98%) agree, 14 students (7,91%) partially agree, and 32 students disagree with this item.

These results confirm that students feel that they have less opportunity to express their opinions inside the classroom due to the large amount of students. It is very common that students from large classes have this feeling; so teachers, need to give the same opportunity to listen carefully to all of the students in the classroom. This is not easy to perform but good teachers apply good techniques to manage the classroom. When the questionnaire was applied, it was noticed that if students wanted to say something they had to raise their hands before to speak; so it was confirmed that the teacher had a good discipline and classroom control.

Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.

GRAPH Nº 18

Totally agree 28,81%

Disagree 35,03%

Partially agree 17,51%

Agree 18,64%

Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

This graph shows that there are several opinions about this statement. 62 students (35,03%) disagree with this item, 31 students (17,51%) partially agree, 33 students (18,64%) agree, and 51 students (28,81%) totally agree. The results reveal that most of the students surveyed answered that they do not feel shy at the moment to participate in the several activities performed inside the classroom. On the other hand, the students that affirmed that they feel shy at the moment to take part in the activities that the teachers plan for them is because they are afraid of making mistakes specially at the moment to develop the English speaking activities. To support this asseveration, Gibbs and Jenkins (1992) affirm that students become invisible in large classes; they are confident and good contributors in smaller groups but tend to be quiet in large ones.

The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.

GRAPH Nº 19

Partially agree 6,21%
Disagree 7,91%
Agree 23,16%
Totally agree 62,71%
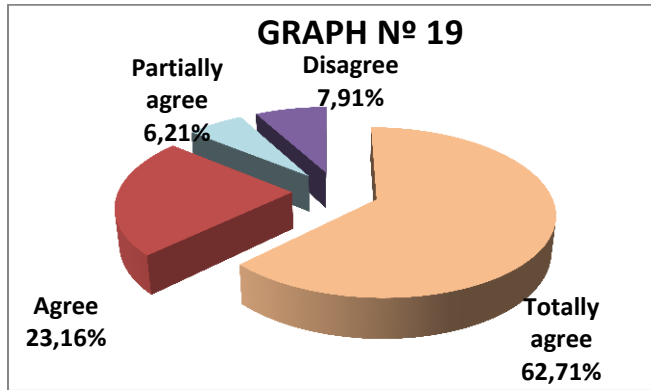
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

The graph above demonstrates that 111 students that represent 62,71% of the participants totally agree with this statement. Also, 41 students (23,16%) agree, 11 students (6,21%) partially agree and 14 students (7,91%) disagree with this item.

These results confirmed that teachers do not pay attention to all the students in the same way due to the large number of students in the classroom and the lack of time to work with these students. It is supported by Blatchford (2003), who indicates that the class size affects the quality of teaching and it is not possible for students to be always the focus of teachers' attention.

Students feel they can act competitively with other students.

GRAPH Nº 20

Partially agree 7,91%
Disagree 1,69%
Agree 19,21%
Totally agree 71,19%
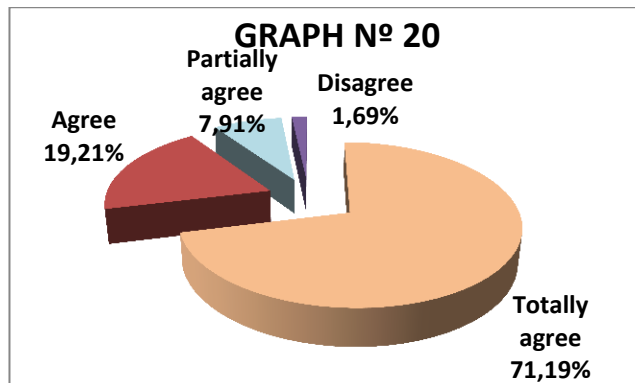
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

This graph reveals that 126 students (71,19%) totally agree that in large classes they can compete with their classmates about topics related to knowledge and English proficiency. Some other 34 students (19,21%) agree with this statement, 14 students (7,91%) partially agree and 3 students (1,69%) disagree. These results demonstrate that most of the students surveyed like to compete between classmates but only in a sane way. In this case, large classes constitute a positive aspect in the teaching-learning process because through competition students can prove themselves and demonstrate their abilities. Concerning this, Crebbin (2004) states that competition is a normal and a natural part of life and so students need to learn to live in a competitive context to respond appropriately to it.

Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.

GRAPH Nº 21

Totally agree 31,64%

Disagree 40,11%

Partially agree 11,30%

Agree 16,95%
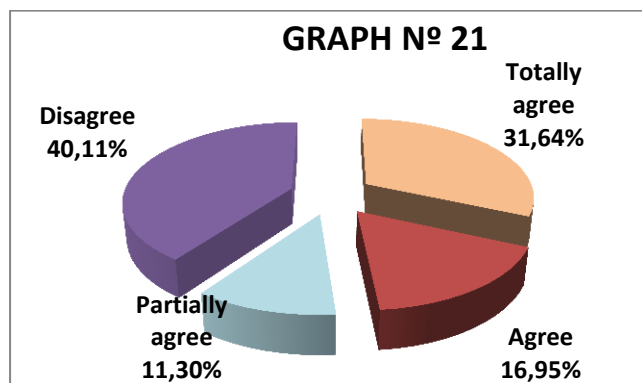
Author: Paola Tutiven
Source: Students questionnaire

This last graph shows that 71 students that represent 40,11% of the students surveyed disagree with this statement. Some other 20 students (11,30%) partially agree, 30 students (16,95%) agree with this item and finally, 56 students totally agree. These results demonstrate that students don't think that they can be unperceived by the teacher only because they belong to a large class; indeed,

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teachers are watching everything in the classroom, no matter how many students they have, they care about every single student. As Erickson, Peters, and Strommer (2006) claim that teachers have to avoid that their students feel anonymous and disconnected inside and outside the classroom, and despite any obstacle teachers are responsible for students' achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

- According to the instructional implications, this research reveals that large classes do not constitute a problem for teachers and students at the moment to perform the different activities inside the classroom.

- In classes with more than thirty five students, it is very difficult to give appropriate feedback to all students due to the lack of time that teachers have to explain the lessons (40 minutes), and also the few hours the English subject has per week (2 or 3 hours per week) per classroom.

- It is very difficult to have an appropriate seating arrangement in overcrowded classrooms because of the class size and the limited classroom space which makes it difficult to organize the group work activities and the use of some teaching resources.

- Related to social implications, it was found that large classes have a positive impact in the teaching-learning process because students feel comfortable with the fact that they can meet more people.

- Another positive implication of large classes is that students can compete in a sane way with their classmates encouraging themselves to use their talents and abilities.

- Along with psychological implications, large classes are considered to be widely problematic for language learning because students encounter the environment of the classroom stressful and inappropriate for keeping themselves concentrated on the lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institutions should help teachers with more teaching training courses so they can implement more activities that allow students to participate in the class with the goal of improving their communication skills.

- It is suggested that teachers increase the level of competition between students by dividing the class into smaller groups because a sane competition within the class will increase the levels of motivation in students to participate in all the activities performed in class.

- Providing good feedback to all the students is very difficult when teaching to large classes; consequently, it is recommended for teachers to give general feedback to the whole class and specific feedback only to those students who really need it, in order to transform passive students into active constructors of knowledge.

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INSTRUMENTOS

Estimado estudiante:

Este cuestionario tiene como objetivo conocer la influencia de las clases numerosas en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje del inglés.

La información que usted brindará a continuación se usará únicamente con fines académicos-investigativos. Le rogamos contestar honestamente de acuerdo a la siguiente escala de referencia.

Muy satisfactorio:	Totalmente de acuerdo
Satisfactorio:	De acuerdo
Poco satisfactorio:	Parcialmente de acuerdo
Nada satisfactorio:	En desacuerdo

Datos informativos:

Nombre de la institución:

Tipo de institución: Pública ( )   Privada ( )

Curso: 8vo ( )   9no ( )   10mo ( )

1ro. Bach. ( )   2do. Bach. ( )   3ro. Bach. ( )

Ciudad:

Instrucción: Marque con una X según su criterio.

A. Aspectos académicos

N°	En clases con bastantes estudiantes:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
1	Se realizan actividades que permiten poner en práctica lo aprendido.				
2	Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de escucha, habla, lectura y escritura.				
3	Todos los estudiantes están atentos y participan en las actividades desarrolladas				

		Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
	en la clase, inclusive los estudiantes de la última fila.				
4	Se utilizan actividades variadas dentro de la clase; como por ejemplo, actividades en grupo, actividades individuales, actividades en pareja, etc.				
5	Se utilizan actividades tales como dramatizaciones, concursos, debates, juegos, etc.				
6	Se puede copiar durante los exámenes.				
7	Se puede realizar tareas de otras materias.				
8	El espacio de la clase te permite desarrollar adecuadamente las actividades asignadas por el profesor.				
9	No puedo recibir una retroalimentación adecuada por parte del profesor debido al número elevado de estudiantes.				

B. Aspectos sociales

N	En clases con bastantes estudiantes:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
10	Existe interacción entre los estudiantes y entre el profesor y los estudiantes.				
11	Tengo la oportunidad de relacionarme con más personas.				
12	El profesor no recuerda el nombre de todos los estudiantes.				
13	El ambiente es menos tenso ya que hay menor probabilidad de que el profesor realice preguntas constantes al mismo estudiante.				
14	Puedo usar mi teléfono celular o algún otro dispositivo electrónico sin ser descubierto por el profesor.				

C. Aspectos psicológicos

	En clases con bastantes estudiantes:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio

15	El ambiente es estresante.				
	Me siento incómodo al momento de hablar frente a mis compañeros.				
	Tengo menos oportunidad de expresarme.				
	No me gusta participar porque me siento tímido.				
	El profesor no presta atención por igual a todos los estudiantes.				
	Siento que puedo competir sanamente con otros estudiantes.				
	Me siento relajado porque puedo pasar por desapercibido.				