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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

Doctora.

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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 Cruz Calderón Idalia Elena, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, mayo, 2015

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo, Idalia Elena Cruz Calderón 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 la Dra. Ana Lucía Quiñónez Beltrán directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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DEDICATION

To an angel, Hubert Cruz Sirou, my father, who lived on earth and gave love and happiness to the family.

Idalia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to say thanks to God for guiding me during my life.

Idalia

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ABSTRACT

This research “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools” is aimed to determine whether or not large classes affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools.

Three research questions were proposed to carry out the investigation; and, a questionnaire was structured and applied to two hundred nine students from three public educational institutions and one private high school in the city of Quito who were selected at random. They were attending to eight year of basic to third year of secondary and their ages oscillated between 12 and 18 years old.

The information was presented in charts and graphs. The quantitative method and a statistical approach were used in order to analyze the results.

The analysis of the research shows that large classes do not influence negatively on the teaching-learning process of English in Ecuadorian secondary schools. It demonstrates that English teachers apply suitable methods and techniques, as well as technological and updated materials which allow the students to be involved in a variety of activities to accomplish learning goals.

Key words: Large classes, EFL Teaching, Ecuadorian high schools.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación "La influencia de las clases numerosas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua Inglés en los colegios de Ecuador", está encaminada a determinar si las aulas numerosas afectan o no el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en instituciones educativas ecuatorianas.

Se propusieron tres preguntas de investigación para llevar a cabo el proyecto, y se estructuró un cuestionario que se aplicó a doscientos nueve estudiantes de tres instituciones educativas públicas y un colegio privado en la ciudad de Quito que fueron seleccionados al azar. Ellos asistían a octavo de básica hasta tercer año de secundaria y sus edades oscilaban entre los 12 y 18 años de edad.

La información fue presentada en cuadros y gráficos. El método cuantitativo y un enfoque estadístico fueron usados para analizar los resultados.

El análisis de la investigación muestra que la enseñanza en aulas grandes no influye negativamente en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en colegios secundarios del país. La mayoría de los educadores aplican estrategias, métodos, técnicas adecuadas, así como material tecnológico actualizado de manera que los estudiantes participen en una variedad de actividades que les permita cumplir los objetivos de aprendizaje.

Palabras claves: Clases numerosas, Enseñanza EFL, Colegios ecuatorianos.

INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching-learning English in our country has not been the ideal for a long time. Most of the high school graduates do not accomplish the basic skills in order to communicate in the target language. For this reason, the government of Ecuador has made some changes concerning to educational affairs. For instance; teachers are involved in training programs in order acquire the English proficiency and improve students learning skills.

The research “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools” is aimed to establish whether or not large classrooms have a negative impact in the process of teaching and learning English in Ecuadorian high schools.

In order to achieve the main goal of the research, the following questions were analyzed: What instructional implications do large classes have during the process of teaching and learning the English language? What social implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process? And, what psychological implications do large classes have on the teaching-learning process.

In order to elucidate some other information and have a scientific support about the subject matter of this research, some related studies in other countries have been investigated and presented below:

Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Martin (2003) performed a study aimed to analyze how the size of the classrooms on students’ accomplishments influences on English primary educational institutions in London, UK. Specifically, the authors wanted to find out if class size differences influence students’ knowledge; and, to analyze the connections between class size and learning process.

The investigators mention that some limitations appeared at the moment of developing the research such as: there may be found other results regarding to class size differences that were not taken into account. They also claim that although the sample and previous studies were chosen tidily, other aspects could have been important to obtain more reliable and objective outcomes.

Bahanshal (2013) conducted a study aimed to determine the effect of large classes in students' attainments during the English teaching-learning process, and, to give some recommendations about techniques and procedures that public high school educators in Saudi Arabia should use to surpass difficulties and ease the learning.

Regarding the limitations the researcher implies that during the process of the investigation, it was realized that the sample was too small. The data was obtained from interviews applied to six teachers, which it is not sufficient in order to generalize the findings to the context and arrive to a clear understanding of the subject matter.

Besides, the investigator claims that although the study includes observational issues to have details about the real situation in large classes, the difficulties in teaching-learning English in these classes are too significant to be determined in one survey.

The last study was performed by Ndlovu, & Mangwaya (2013). Its specific objectives were aimed to point out the advantages and disadvantages that imply teaching and learning English in large classes regarding primary students' experience in some elementary schools in Zimbabwe, South Africa. Besides, the study will be considered as the base to find out strategies and techniques to improve the teaching-learning process of the English language in large classes.

Finally, it is to say that the present study can be used as a base for future investigations about the teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools where English

language is being taught. Besides, it is hoped that this research will be useful for all the people involved in English education.

Regarding the limitations, it is important to mention that it was not found any problem during the development of the research.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

The present research was developed in the city of Quito, Ecuador. The sample consisted of two hundred nine students who were selected from 5 classes in three public high schools and one private educational institution. The learners belonged to English classes from 8th of basic education to 3rd senior high school. Students' age oscillated between 12 and 18 years old.

Procedures

The present investigation started with the collection of material related to the teaching-learning process of English in large classes. Also, 5 previous studies regarding the theme were investigated. The gathered information was set down in the Literature Review section. The information was obtained through different sources like: books, English journals and the Internet, in order to provide theoretical support to the research.

Then, the field investigation was accomplished. The quantitative method was used to get the information as well as a survey containing questions about instructional, social and psychological implications. The questionnaire was applied to each of the selected students.

The data collected was tabulated, presented in tables and in bar graphs to be deeply analyzed by utilizing the descriptive method to explain the results obtained from the study. In addition, the scientific material was used as a base to the current analysis. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations came out regarding the proposed questions.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

The present section contains information about themes concerning the teaching-learning process of English as a second language in large classes. This project also includes some previous studies related to the topic.

Teaching approaches and methods

Communicative Approach deals with the use of the language in real contexts. Teachers become in facilitators inside the classrooms. They organize the materials and apply adequate techniques that involve communication tasks, so that students get the learning goals.

Another aspect of using this method is to make that students practice daily communicative activities such as: asking for resources or permission, which encourage them to communicate with each other using the second language. On the other hand, when using this method, the learners are required to cooperate with their classmates to work in groups and to develop some projects, which lead them to achieve the language skills (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995).

To this concern, Richards & Rodgers (2001) refer that Communicative Approach is a learner-centered technique that utilizes real life context to motivate the students to communicate something according to their needs, so they get engage in themes of their interest. Besides, they mention that the application of this method get the students immersed in communicative competence which is the principal objective of second language education. They also mention that Communicative Approach is a method that takes into consideration grammar focus only to succeed in communication.

Diaz-Rico & Weed (1995) refer to Natural Approach as a method created for beginners where teachers emphasize in listening and comprehension. Also, it focuses on students' needs to acquire enough comprehensible input, so they can learn by themselves how to talk. They

mention that at using this technique, speech and grammar structures are not of great importance but teachers need to be sure their students are listening and comprehending during the class time. In addition, they asseverate that this approach uses a similar process as the acquisition of the first language during childhood.

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001) Natural Approach is based in the use of the language in communicative affairs regardless of mother tongue. Further, they state that the exposition to the language for a long period of time, help the learners to acquire comprehensible input. Besides, they imply that at using this approach, grammar rules are not explained during the teaching learning process but vocabulary is of extreme importance. Also they infer, language is considered as a means of communication, and learning occurs only when students catch the idea in the new language.

Total Physical Response is an important approach that deals with the way children learn their mother tongue. First, they listen. Second, they understand kinesthetically, and finally, they are able to speak. To apply this method, tutors need to give orders through mimes and gestures so the learners can imitate them and understand the instructions. Thus, the other skills such as reading and writing are taught only by means of commands (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995).

Likewise, Richards & Rodgers (2001) agree that Total Physical Response is a method based in the linkage of movement and oral utterance. Students learn basically by motor activities followed by a good teaching-learning pedagogy. Moreover, they mention that while more information the memory receives through oral and motor actions, learners will associate and remind effectively. Through the application of this approach students acquire listening skills before they can produce speech, since when listening and comprehension have been stated, the oral skills come out easily.

Content Based Instruction is a method created in order to teach a second language using subject matter contents that take the students to develop critical thinking, oral and written skills through themes of their interest. Besides, this method lets educators to work with the students on specific topics without neglecting the school program (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995).

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001) Content-Based Instruction is used to teach any other language affairs than only following the syllabus contents. This method is developed under two aspects: the first one refers to the best way people can learn a second language when they need to use the language to get information by means of communication instead of learning a new idiom. The second one infers that many content- based plans are developed to train English students for academic issues.

Grammar Translation Method, also called Traditional Method, has to do with the ability the students need to acquire to translate a language into another, especially from the target language to the mother tongue. Although this method has been criticized for a long period of time, many educational institutions all over the world continue using this technique (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995).

Similarly, Richards & Rodgers (2001) refers to Grammar Translation Method as a means of learning a new language by an intensive study of grammar structures, and also through the utilization of this background to translate texts and other material from the aim language to the native one or vice versa. This method focuses on reading and writing. Vocabulary is taught in isolation according to the chosen texts, using bilingual dictionaries and memorization of words. In addition, they state that this approach considers that the utterance is the principal medium for the teaching-learning process, grammar is learnt in a deductive way, and preciseness is needed.

Class Size

Students in small classes can learn as effective as students in large ones since the quality of the teaching is more important than class size. A class could be considered large, medium or small depending on the number of learners per classroom. However there is not a clear reference to say it. In some educational institutions a class of 25-30 students can be considered as “large”, while in other schools the same number of pupils per class can be named “medium or small”.

Nevertheless, there are some benefits and also some difficulties when teaching in large classes. The advantages are: Students are able to share great amount of personal experiences and knowledge that improve and enrich their learning. In this kind of classes, cooperative learning is a good strategy, which emerges spontaneously during the class time. Teaching to a large number of students becomes in a big challenge for educators who design the best lesson plans, take advance of their abilities to organize, manage, and create a comfortable environment in which the process of learning can lead not only to teachers but to students to be successful.

Some difficulties have to be managed when teaching to large classes such as: To make that students speak in front of many classmates. They can feel uncomfortable to do it. In a small class, the students are more confident to speak and to discuss in front of the others. Besides, interaction between student-student and teacher-student is not so easy in a big class as in a small one. Another problem that teachers have to face in large classes is misbehavior. It is more difficult to control a large number of pupils than a small group of them (UNESCO, 2006).

To this concern, Blatchford (2003) infers that teaching in small classes involve a better learning than in large ones. In large classes, educators waste more time to control students' behavior while in classes with a small number of pupils they spent little time to get

students' attention and to have interaction between their learners. Teachers in small classes can manage successfully students' discussion and social issues.

On the other hand, in large classes, to keep students on activities is more complicated than it seems, due to most of the time learners' behavior is not the appropriate. Besides, students in small classes receive individual attention and feedback, which supports and benefits the teaching-learning process. It will not be likely when educators have to handle a big number of students inside a class.

Managing Learning

Managing Learning refers to those activities which are necessary to create and maintain an orderly learning environment. The success in managing learning depends on a good organization during the class activities. To this concern, it is important to take into account some aspects like: instructions, feedback, discipline and timing.

Giving directions and explaining the activities to be performed is very important inside and outside the classroom. Teachers must impart clear instructions to the students which will help them during learning process. On the contrary, if the students do not understand the guidelines, they can feel confused, frustrated and lost, respecting to the tasks they have to develop.

When students receive feedback, they realize about the mistakes and consequently, the learning takes place. Feedback is a useful practice inside the class, but it can be applied only if teachers believe that learners will perform the tasks after they get the corrected material back.

One of the most important aspects of managing learning deals with control behavior. To manage an effective students' behavior, it is necessary to establish and transmit clear rules to the students, what they are supposed to do inside the class, depends on how easy to

understand are teachers' directions related to how the learners need to behave in order to accomplish the tasks efficiently (Duke, 1982).

Another aspect of managing learning is timing. It deals with how much time a particular task needs to be performed. The time for each activity is generally set in the lesson plan. No matter if it takes a little more time or a little less time to develop one activity, or if one of the tasks was not completed because of some interruption, teachers should be able to include it to the next class. On the other hand, if there is available time, teachers will have extra-activities to do in class such as: songs or any other material of students' interest (Underwood, 1987).

According to Harmer (1991), giving clear instructions about what the learners have to do during the class time is one of the aspects of managing learning. He mentions that the success of the activities the students perform in a class depends on teachers' organization, and also on how understandable instructions are given.

Harmer (1991) infers that feedback takes place after the students have achieved some activity. He states that feedback is a kind of assessment, which main purpose is to know the students' progress or learners' backward in order to fill the learners' lack of knowledge. The researcher asseverates that it is hard for teachers to give individual feedback to their students when they manage large classes. Thus, he agrees that to handle feedback in large classes, some educators utilize the "portfolio" method. It consists in a folder that holds samples of students' tests, essays, and others, which are chronologically ordered. This information is used to follow the sequence of learners' improvements.

Concerning discipline, Harmer (1991) says that before starting the class, teachers should tell the students what they expect from them. Discipline rules must be different considering the age of the students. It is not the same to control children behavior than to set a disciplinary code for adult learners. Educators should be strict to make the students fulfill

the behavior rules. They need to avoid students' interruptions once the activities are being developed. For instance, if misbehavior occurs, teachers must act in an unpredictable way like: ignoring the student behavior, changing the tone of their voice, turning the lights, asking for something, or finally, changing the activity to maintain the classroom domain.

Concerning timing, McKenzie (2006) mentions that when teachers plan a lesson, they have lot of things to include. She implies that to give a period of time for each activity students have to perform during a class is imperative. Also the researcher asseverates that timing is extremely helpful for both teachers and students, in order to get all of the lesson objectives, and also indicates some tips to succeed in time management: having clear purposes and follow the steps to achieve them; to be enthusiastic and let the students to take the control when it is necessary; when the lesson implies complex activities, teachers must develop the tasks before they plan the lesson to set the proper time; do not forget extra time for students inquiries; considering extra time when the tasks imply discussions, role plays, group work and others.

Managing large classes

About this subject, UNESCO (2006) implies that teaching in large classes entails a great defiance for educators. Teachers in big classrooms have the opportunity to take advantage of the students' abilities, experiences, likes, and dislikes. It encourages to the lecturers to design interesting and motivating activities to get the students' attention in order to achieve the aims. Likewise, students in crowded classes can obtain benefits like sharing knowledge and learning from each other.

On the other hand, the study infers, there are some advices that can be used by teachers who work with a large amount of pupils, as follow:

- Teachers need to develop lesson plans according to the class size which will have different and multiple activities within the syllabus.

-Set a friendly environment where pupils acquire a sense of community so that the process of learning will be feasible.

-In large classes, teachers need to assess their students periodically. In this way, they can notice about the students' progress which also evidences the teachers' proficiency.

Relating to the same topic, some researchers state, that working in large classrooms is a difficult matter. Educators that cope with this situation have to manage discipline, make group works, and apply diverse and useful techniques in order to succeed in teaching-learning affairs. The following tips can be used in order to guarantee the learning in large classrooms.

Teachers who work with a big number of learners must communicate with them by increasing the tone of the voice so that they can be heard by the whole class. The resources to use on the board should be seen by all the pupils in the schoolroom.

Educators should walk around the class, so they can check activities, encourage the learners to participate, and control students' behavior.

Join the learners in pairs and in groups. Divide the class in two or three parts when it is necessary.

Make sure that strong learners can assist weaker ones, so that they can share knowledge, pick home works up, and offer some feedback (Shamin, Negash, Chunku, Chinyere, & Demewoz, 2007).

Activities for working with large classes

There are many activities to work with in large classes. Some of them are explained below:

The following activity is used to have real communication into the classroom: Set the learners in groups of four and tell them to debate about the human means of communication. It can be through words, mimes, pictures, and signs. Then, place the students in pairs and ask

them to make a classroom drawing indicating the ways they communicate with one another and with their teacher. The students interchange the work with the other pair group. The learners look at the figures and explain what they interpret. After that, they are able to argue about the positive and negative communication aspects in which the class is involved, and what they can do to overcome this weakness.

Arranging jumbled paragraph: To practice writing, the teacher starts the activity by writing a jumbled passage on the board. Then he invites the students to propose how to reset it. To develop the task, separate the students in small groups. Deliver the jumbled article to each group and give them the instructions to do it. The students will work alone during 15 minutes to reorder the passage, using a sheet of paper. Then, they join to the group to support their ideas, discuss about them, and restructured the handed paragraph (Shamin, Negash, Chunku, Chinyere, & Demewoz, 2007).

In addition, UNESCO (2006) suggests some useful activities to be applied in large classes. **Round:** Chose a topic of students' interest and according with their age. Ask them to investigate about it. Give them the chance to speak about the theme for 2 or 3 minutes during the class. When a student is giving the discourse, the others are listening while they are waiting to participate. This activity will help the students to feel confidence to speak in front of the others.

Brainstorm: Elicit the students to talk about an algid situation at the school or in the community in general. Then, ask them to write down why it is happening. Arrange the students in groups to evaluate their ideas and find out the possible solutions to the problem. The teacher will emphasize about the benefits of working together instead of alone.

Simulations and games: Students will be involved in role-plays. The learners will create the environment that seems to be real, like "a bullying situation". They have to change

their roles so that each student can experiment the anxious position in order to be able to feel empathy to the others.

Seating arrangement and classroom space

The vast majority of teachers in large classes face problems with the space of the room. A big number of students into a small room become a disadvantage for teachers to move the desks properly in order to achieve the lesson objectives. How students are placed to develop cognitive activities influences directly the learning process, since if a class is not well arranged, it is impossible to control students' behavior, especially in large classes. A good classroom environment promotes student-student interaction as well as teacher-student communication.

How the seats are accommodated into the classroom depends on the activity to be performed. If the students are involved in a discussion group, the desks have to be moved in a semi-circle arrangement.

To work in cooperative activities, the class should be divided into small groups, and the seats must be set at round tables. This kind of technique fosters the interaction between learners.

To get students' attention and encourage individual assignments, it is important to place the students in rows. It facilitates teacher-centered classes (McIntyre, 2007).

Regarding the same topic, Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005) state, the way how a teacher arranges the classroom to interact with the participants, makes the difference at the moment of getting learning goals. To establish the places where students should be positioned into the classroom is imperative in order to carry out the different activities students have to develop during the class time. When teachers manage large classes in small spaces, they have troubles to move around the class, and it is difficult to place the students in different sites to perform some tasks.

In small classrooms, the horseshoe arrangement lets the students to communicate face to face between them, and also allows the interaction among teacher-student. On the other hand, in large classes, it is preferable to manage two horseshoes.

When teachers are going to test the learners, or when reading and writing activities are going to be performed, the whole class or individual work is suggested, since if students are placed in this way, they have more opportunities to concentrate.

Different levels of proficiency

In many educational institutions it is a common practice to have a class with various levels of proficiency or a multilevel classroom. In this kind of classes, teachers must take into account that students have different level of language proficiency before they plan their lessons.

Some of the advantages of working with several level of learners' proficiency are: Matching high-level students with intermediate or low-level learners create a sense of solidarity since strong learners can give support to weaker ones. Besides, this kind of classes promotes an environment where learning becomes in a pleasant affair, which basically depends on teachers abilities to guide the different stages where the teaching-learning process takes place.

On the other hand, there are some disadvantages that teachers have to face when they teach in multilevel classes. Students with low-level proficiency can experience frustration, and low motivation, since they are conscious of their weaknesses. They usually have troubles to perform class activities, demand individual support from teachers and classmates as well. When the learners have to develop task discussions, the different levels of proficiency cause difficulties, because the learners do not perform the language skills at the same level. (Roberts, 2007).

Similarly, Hessam (2008) implies that a multi-level or heterogeneous class deals with the variation of students language skills and how they demand individual attention in order to succeed in their classrooms. When teachers face different levels of proficiency into the class, they use to apply teacher-centered methodology which it is a disadvantage for students since educators do not take into account students' needs, especially if they work in large multi-level classes.

The study also implies that teachers believe that in a multilevel classroom, they cannot control students' behavior; they are not able to give individual support to the students, and only a few of the learners achieve the target goals.

On the other hand, the researcher mentions that there are some advantages at working with different levels of proficiency into the class. Learners have more opportunities to interact with one another. Students feel selves confident to work in groups and in pairs. The different background knowledge, enrich the classroom environment since the students learn from each other. Working in heterogeneous classes, allows teachers to apply student-centered technique, and students can take control of their own learning.

Some related studies have been researched to contribute with scientific information related to the theme, as follow:

Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Martin (2003) conducted a research to analyze how influences the size of the classrooms on students' accomplishments in elemental educational institutions in London, UK. The study had two specific objectives: To find out if class size differences influence students' improvements; and, to analyze the connections between class size and lesson process.

A multi-method procedure was applied in order to perform this research. The sample was chosen at random, and it was taken from three different sizes of classrooms, small, medium and large. The instruments utilized during the process of this investigation were

some semi-structured and structured questionnaires as well as observation sheets. The surveys were applied to the educators who were chosen for the sample, and the direct observations were achieved during the development of the lessons.

The researchers conclude that there are important differences between class size and students improvement that affect both teachers and students. The analysis implies that in large classes teachers face more difficulties such as: lack of learners' attention, behavior problems. In contrast, in small classes students receive more individual aid from teachers and have more contact with them. The study also concludes that the success in both small and large environments depends on teachers' proficiency to overcome any situation with respect the number of students in a class.

Bahanshal (2013) made a research which principal aims are to determine the effect of large classrooms during the teaching-learning process, and to give some recommendations about the techniques and procedures the educators should use to overcome the difficulties and ease the learning.

To develop this study, it was employed the qualitative method to collect data through guided interviews applied to English teachers in six public high schools in Saudi Arabia, in order to determine their perceptions about the teaching-learning process according to class size. Besides, some classroom observations were carried to sustain and clarify the data.

The research concludes: the amount of students per class affects directly the students' achievements into the classroom. In large classrooms, teachers need to be more diligent to apply adequate techniques to manage students' needs. On the contrary, in small ones teachers are able to get the goals more effectively

Ndlovu, & Mangwaya (2013) conducted an investigation with the purpose of pointing out the advantages and disadvantages that exist during the English teaching-learning process in large classrooms. To collect information, the qualitative method was used. In addition, the

research used observations as instruments to obtain information in order to find out what teachers and students really do into the classroom. The sample was taken from four elementary schools in Zimbabwe through the observation to teachers' performance. The educational institutions belong to different social contexts, such as: a rural school, a religious school, a council school and a former group. All of them have a large number of pupils per classroom (an average of 60 students).

The results of this investigation indicate that in large classes, teachers are able to lead the students to an effective learning. They use different methods and strategies inside the classroom such as group work and whole teaching which let them to control learners' behavior. Even though the limitations they have to face, such as lack of materials, inadequate classroom space, the students in large classrooms show abilities to work in group activities. They have good class interaction, and also they are competent to develop oral and written assignments, as well as in small classrooms.

Adeyemi (2008) developed a research, which main purpose was to ascertain the impact class size has in the quality of educational outputs in high schools in Nigeria.

To carry out the study it was necessary to apply the descriptive, quantitative and qualitative methods. The data collection was obtained through a sample of 120 schools which were selected at random. Semi-structured surveys were addressed to high school headmasters to get related information, and the content analysis technique was used to evaluate the outcomes.

The research concludes that the amount of students per classroom set the quality of education in high schools in Nigeria. The study also establishes that learners in small classrooms get better results in education affairs than students who attend to large classes.

Mahmood (2004) made a research in some public high schools in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The main objective to develop this study was to discover and review the real

difficulties that teachers and high school authorities have to deal with at the moment of managing large classes, during the process of teaching English as a second language. To find out and emphasize the use of appropriate techniques, methods, and strategies that lead not only teachers but students in large classrooms toward an effective learning environment in English classes.

Then, the qualitative and quantitative methods were used to conduct the current investigation. Some direct observations were performed to collect information. In addition, some informal discussions were carried out to get a clear understanding of the problem and to find out the possible solutions.

Some conclusions and several recommendations were considered after finish the research. There is no teachers' training to manage large classrooms. Educational institution authorities do not present especial programs to overcome the real problems teachers face during the process of teaching English in large classrooms. Some of the problems are lack of adequate resources, obsolete curriculum, inaccurate test system and others. Teachers must control students' behavior. Educators must have training programs. They must give individual feedback to weak students. They need to have a reliable assessment framework. Teachers should bring upgraded resources into the class in order to make progress in learning English as a second language.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

The present section contains the quantitative analysis of the data collected which is presented in tables and bar graphs.

Quantitative analysis

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

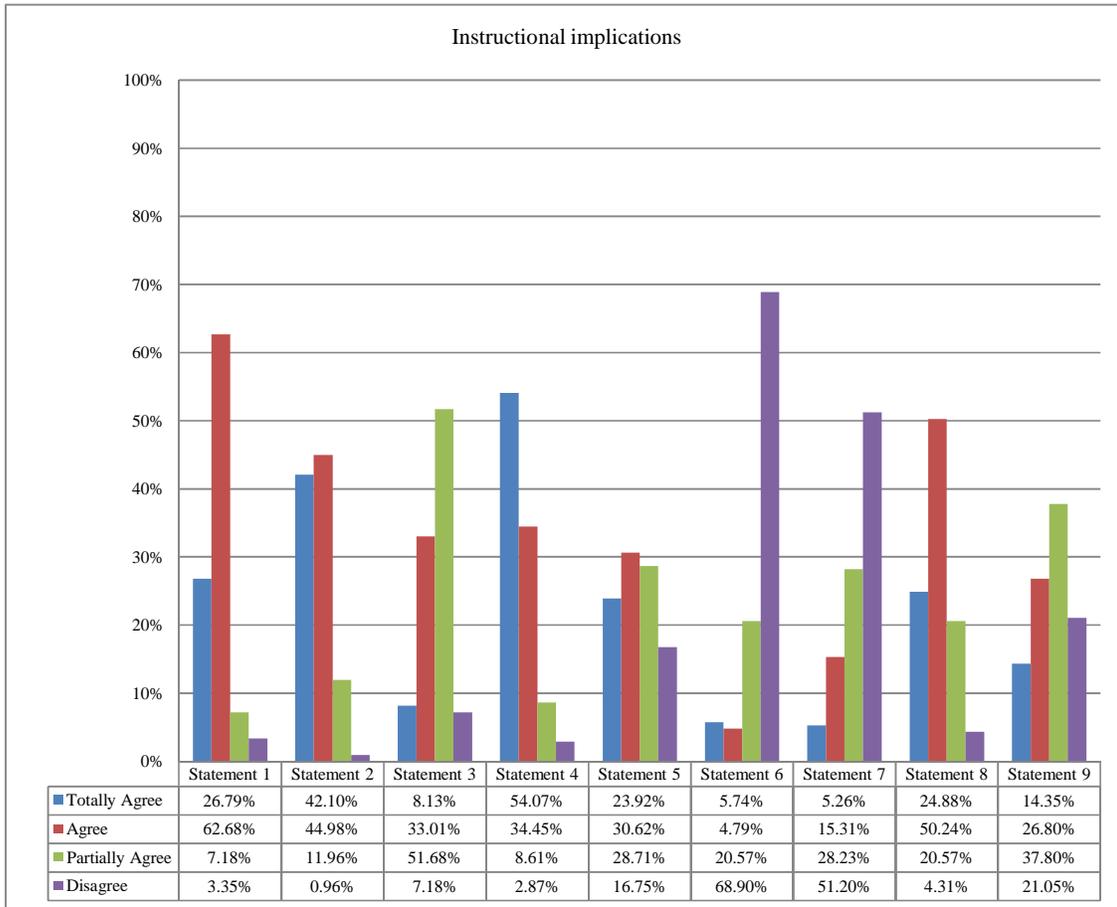
Chart 1

N ^o	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.	56	26.79%	131	62.68%	15	7.18%	7	3.35%	209	100%
2	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	88	42.10%	94	44.98%	25	11.96%	2	0.96%	209	100%
3	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.	17	8.13%	69	33.01%	108	51.68%	15	7.18%	209	100%
4	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.	113	54.07%	72	34.45%	18	8.61%	6	2.87%	209	100%
5	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.	50	23.92%	64	30.62%	60	28.71%	35	16.75%	209	100%
6	Students can cheat during the test.	12	5.74%	10	4.79%	43	20.57%	144	68.90%	209	100%
7	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.	11	5.26%	32	15.31%	59	28.23%	107	51.20%	209	100%
8	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.	52	24.88%	105	50.24%	43	20.57%	9	4.31%	209	100%
9	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	30	14.35%	56	26.80%	79	37.80%	44	21.05%	209	100%

Author: Cruz Idalia

Source: Students' questionnaires

Graph 1



Author: Cruz Idalia

Source: Students' questionnaire

As it can be seen in chart 1, concerning the question about instructional implications in classrooms with a large number of students, the results to statement 1 show that the vast majority of the students (89.47%) asseverate the activities developed into the classroom help them to apply what is learned in class. In contrast, only a low percentage of the surveyed learners (7.18% and 3.35) disagree with the statement.

According to the information mentioned above, it can be noticed that teachers are well prepared and experienced to design and develop activities to convey teaching to students in classes with a big number of attendants.

UNESCO (2006) infers that teaching in large classes involves a challenge for educators, since they have the chance to make use of students' background, experiences, and abilities, to develop interesting tasks inside the classroom in order to motivate the learners to cooperate, share knowledge, and create a friendly environment where learning take place.

On the other hand, Blatchford (2003) claims, that in large classes, to keep students on activities is more complicated than it seems, due to most of the time learners behavior is not the appropriate. Besides, learners in small classes receive individual attention and feedback, which support and benefit the teaching-learning process. It will not be likely when educators have to handle a big number of students.

Analyzing the statement number 2, it was noticed that (87.08%) of the respondents students agree the class activities allows them to put in practice the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. While a small amount (12.92%) of the inquired learners differ with the assertion.

Regarding the students responses it can be assumed that educators make use of the adequate methods to teach their pupils and encourage them to apply the four skills into the classroom. However, the negative answers evidence that some students have difficulties to practice the language abilities during the lesson time.

There are hundreds of activities aimed to develop the four skills in large classes. Regarding the topic, some researchers assert that to practice language abilities into large classes, teachers must arrange the students in groups and tell them to debate about a theme of their interest, using adequate materials in order to get them involved in communicative tasks. Then, place the students in pairs and ask them to make a classroom drawing indicating the ways they communicate with one another and with their teacher. The students interchange the work with the other pair group. The learners look at the figures and explain what they interpret. After that, they are able to argue about the positive and negative communication

aspects in which the class is involved, and what they can do to overcome this weakness. The researchers set that the application of these techniques helps learners to reinforce listening and speaking skills.

Besides, the scientists infer that arranging jumbled paragraph is a good strategy to practice writing. The teacher can start the activity by writing a jumbled passage on the board. Then he invites the students to propose how to reset it. To develop the task teachers must separate the students in small groups, deliver the jumbled article to each group and give them the instructions to do it. The students will work alone during 15 minutes to reorder the passage, using a sheet of paper. Then, they join to the group to support their ideas, discuss about them, and restructured the handed paragraph (Shamin, Negash, Chunku, Chinyere, & Demewoz, 2007).

To analyze the statement 3, and taking into account the results, 41.14% of the respondent students believe the activities they realized into the class let them to be attentive and participative inside the class. In contrast, a high percentage (58.86%) of the surveyed students asseverates there are difficulties in large classes to pay attention and to have a good interaction during the English lessons.

Even though the difference between these two tendencies is not too significant, it is clear that for more than half of the participants, to attend to large classes does not allow them to participate actively during the development of the lesson activities. This situation could be due to factors such as discipline and the place where they sit into the classroom.

Some scientists asseverate that working with a large number of students presents complications into the class. To handle the situation, teachers should apply diverse and useful strategies to motivate students. They must raise the tone of their voice to be heard by the entire class. Educators should move around the classroom to control students' behavior,

revise class activities that encourage the learners to participate. Shamin, Negash, Chunku, Chinyere, & Demewoz (2007)

To analyze the statement 4, it was important to consider the results showed in the chart, which demonstrate that most of the inquired students (88.52%) coincide that teachers make different arrangements inside the class, as group work, individual tasks, and pair group activities. On the other hand, a low percentage of the learners (11.48%) asseverate the activities they develop in class are not the adequate.

To this concern, McIntyre (2007) suggests that how the teachers place the seats into the classroom the best results they can obtain from their learners. When students have to perform discussion activities, the desks must be arranged in semi-circles. If students are going to accomplish teamwork assignments, the students should be put into small groups. To catch learners' attention it is imperative to place the students in lines, especially in large classes.

With regard to the following item, 54.54% of the surveyed students agree with the content stated in statement 5, since they mentioned that activities such as role play, competitions, debates, games, and others are applied into the large class. Otherwise, 28.71% of the questioned learners affirm that they realize this kind of tasks hardly ever, and finally, 16.75% assure that in large classes they never perform activities aimed to improve their knowledge.

Consequently, it is to say that if almost half of the students in large classes are not totally involved in the different activities inside the classroom, both of them teachers and learners face difficulties to accomplish the goals.

According to the scientific information, UNESCO (2006) implies that to have good results in large classrooms, students should be involved in creative and motivating activities such as: role plays, games, discussion, and competitions, in order to use the target language.

For instance: One activity to be applied in a large class is “Round” in which teachers choose a topic of students’ interest and according with their age. Ask them to investigate about it. Give them the chance to speak about the theme for 2 or 3 minutes during the class. When a student is giving the discourse, the others are listening while they are waiting to participate. This activity will help the students to acquire confidence to speak in front of the others.

Another interesting activity to be used in large classes is “Brainstorm”. It deals with eliciting the students to talk about an algid situation at the school or in the community in general. Besides, ask them to write down why it is happening. Then, arrange the students in groups to evaluate their ideas and find out the possible solutions to the problem.

Role plays is a useful activity to consider in a large environment with a big number of pupils, it will create spaces that seem to be real, like “a bullying situation”. They have to change their roles so that each student can experiment the anxious position in order to be able to feel empathy to the others.

In accordance with statement 6, most of the inquired learners (89.47%) asseverate they do not make trick when they are assessed. Only 10.53% of the learners mention they cheat during the tests. The results show that most of the students in big classrooms are honest when teachers evaluate their knowledge. It may occur due to teachers manage large classrooms in rows and use different tests to prevent students’ cheating.

To this concern, Harmer (1991) suggests that to control discipline, teachers should establish clear rules into the class. They must be imperative to make the learners accomplish the behavior patterns. Another aspect of managing learning in large classrooms deals with giving feedback to the students, so they can achieve their goals efficiently.

The results for statement 7 are as follow: 79.43% of the students deny they make other assignments during the English class. The other percentage (20.57%) of the respondent learners express that they do develop other tasks during their English lessons.

Analyzing the outcomes, only a low percentage of the students in the researched large classes believe they are not motivated to accomplish English tasks instead of doing other activities during the class time which it is profitable for them. It could be due to teachers have a vast experience to teach large classes.

UNESCO (2006) focuses on the importance of designing interesting and motivating activities to be performed in large classes, so teachers can get students' attention in order to achieve the learning goals.

In relation to statement 8, a high percentage of the interviewed learners (75.12%) affirm that seating arrangements help them to accomplish the different assignments during the lesson time. Furthermore, 24.88% of the inquired students mention that this kind of technique does not promote their learning during the class time.

The outcomes suggest that teachers in large classes do not make seating arrangements very often during the class time. Sometimes they apply whole group activities to teach their lessons. It can occur due to they do not have a suitable space to arrange the class adequately.

Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005) mention that to make seating arrangements and create a good environment where learning takes place, there are good strategies to be applied into the classrooms, especially when teachers have to manage large number of pupils in small spaces.

The researchers also infer that to manage large classes in small spaces, teachers face difficulties to move around the class, and to place the students in different sites in order to perform the tasks.

The study claims that a horseshoe arrangement lets the students to communicate each other face to face; and also, this strategy allows the interaction among teacher-student. In large classes, it is preferable to manage two horseshoes. In addition, the researchers say that when teachers are going to test the learners, and perform reading and writing activities, whole group or individual work is suggested, since if students are placed in this way, they have more opportunities to concentrate.

To finish the analysis of chart 1, the results to statement 9 show that (58.85%) of the surveyed learners think that although the amount of learners into the large class, they receive feedback from their teachers. On the other hand, there were a considerable number of students (41.15%) who mentioned that the quality of aid they can obtain is not the adequate due to the size of the class.

Undoubtedly, the results mentioned above may respond to the number of students that teachers have to manage inside a large class, which do not let them to give individual feedback to the total number of students.

Harmer (1991) suggests that feedback occurs after the learners have performed the activities they were asked to do in class. This aspect of managing learning is commonly used to test students' improvement and to fill the gasps within the class period. The researcher assures that it is very difficult for teachers to give individual feedback to the students in large classes. However, he mentions that teachers who manage large classes can apply the "Portfolio" method that deals with files containing students' essays, and any other quiz which are ordered in a chronological way to follow learners' attainments.

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

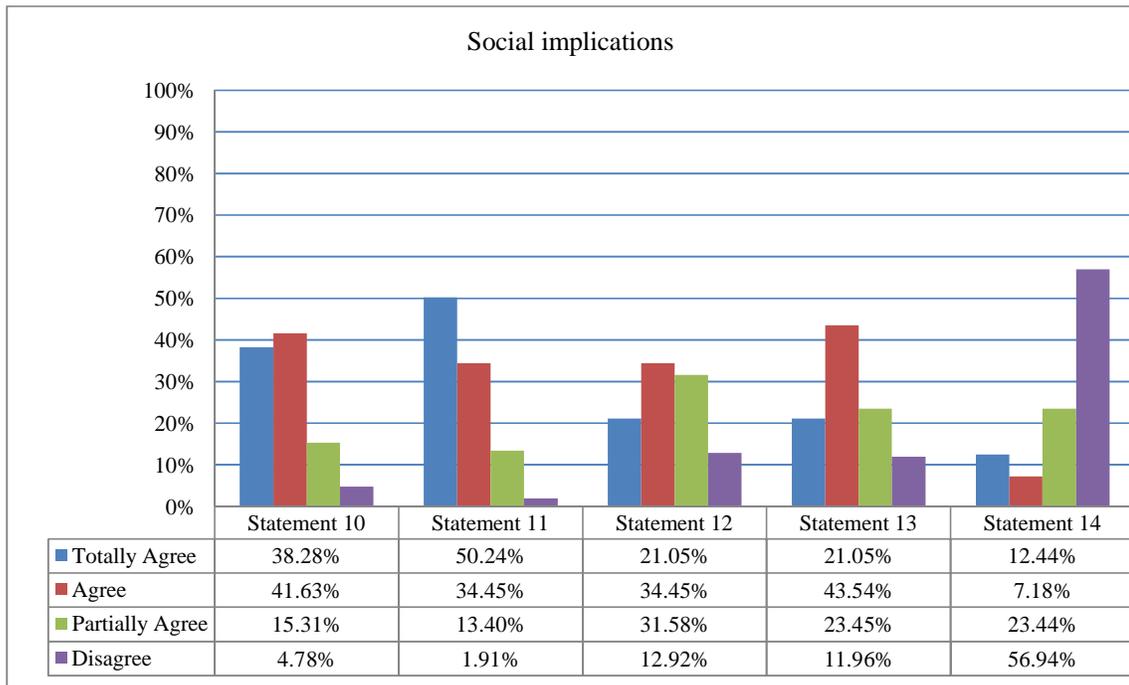
Chart 2

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	80	38,28%	87	41,63%	32	15,31%	10	4,78%	209	100
11	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates	105	50,24%	72	34,45%	28	13,40%	4	1,91%	209	100
12	The teacher has problems remembering all the students names	44	21,05%	72	34,45%	66	31,58%	27	12,92%	209	100
13	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student	44	21,05%	91	43,54%	49	23,45%	25	11,96%	209	100
41	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.	26	12,44%	15	7,18%	49	23,44%	119	56,94%	209	100

Author: Cruz Idalia

Source: Student's questionnaire

Graph 2



Author: Cruz Idalia

Source: Student's questionnaire

As it can be seen in chart 2, regarding social implications in the classrooms, the responses to statement 10 expose that a clear majority of the participants (79.91%) affirm that there is an adequate equilibrium concerning interaction between all of the members into the large class. In contrast, there are a low percentage of learners (20.09%) who stated, there is not a good interaction among student-student and teacher-student in the class due to the big number of classmates.

In spite of the few learners who disagree with the utterance, the results show that in large classes students can experiment low interaction with their teachers and peers due to the amount of attendants per class. In addition, it can be said that this situation may occur due to in this environment it is difficult to keep a good relationship among the participants.

To cope with a big number of pupils in a small space, teachers should make different seating arrangements in order to get the lesson objectives. A good classroom environment fosters the interaction among the entire class which also entails the use of communicative skills. The researcher suggests that cooperative techniques involve arranging the class in round tables which benefit interactive activities (McIntyre, 2007).

To continue with the analysis of chart 2, the students' responses to statement 11 demonstrate that in large classes, the learners have more opportunities to engage in relationships with their classmates (84.69). Only few of the surveyed students (15.31%) affirm that the size of the class do not promote the interaction with their peers.

The outcome can be due to the fact that many of the students attending the same institution since their early years of study.

Hessam (2008) suggests that there are some advantages at working with a big number of pupils with different level of proficiency, since they have more chances to interact and to learn from each other. Students feel more confident at working in groups or in pairs and motivation is widely increased.

The statement 12 deals with the problems teachers face to remember all the students' names when they work in large classrooms. According to learners' responses, it is to say that over half of the class, (55.5%) agrees that teachers cannot recall all of their names. On the other hand, nearly half of the students (44.5%) assure their teachers remind the names of the whole class.

It can be due to the sample was taken from classes with a big number of students which make difficult for teachers to remember all their students' names, especially at the beginning of the school year.

Regarding the utterance 13, most of the students (64.59%) asseverate that the atmosphere inside large classrooms is not stressful since the teachers do not press the same

students to participate in class. On the other hand, the rest of the students (35.41%) affirm that the climate in large classes is strained since the educators monitor their learning all the time.

Even though, the percentage of learners who disagree with the asseveration is low, it is not less important that there are students who feel apprehension inside a large class. It can occur due to the sample was taken in private institutions with few students in large classes.

UNESCO (2006) infers that teachers who work in large classes must create a friendly environment which students get involved in collaborative tasks, so they can share knowledge to achieve learning goals, and to low learners' stress.

The 14th statement to be analyzed, deals with the use of cellphones or any other electronic appliance learners bring to the class. Most of the respondent students (88.38%) mentioned that their teachers fall into account when they are using mobile devices in large classes. Only a few of them (19.62%) agree they can use this kind of equipment during the lesson class without any trouble.

Regarding discipline, Duke (1982) infers that educators should set behavior rules to be accomplished by the students: If norms are clear, the pupils can fulfill them successfully. The course of progress make in learning depends on how students behave during the lesson time.

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

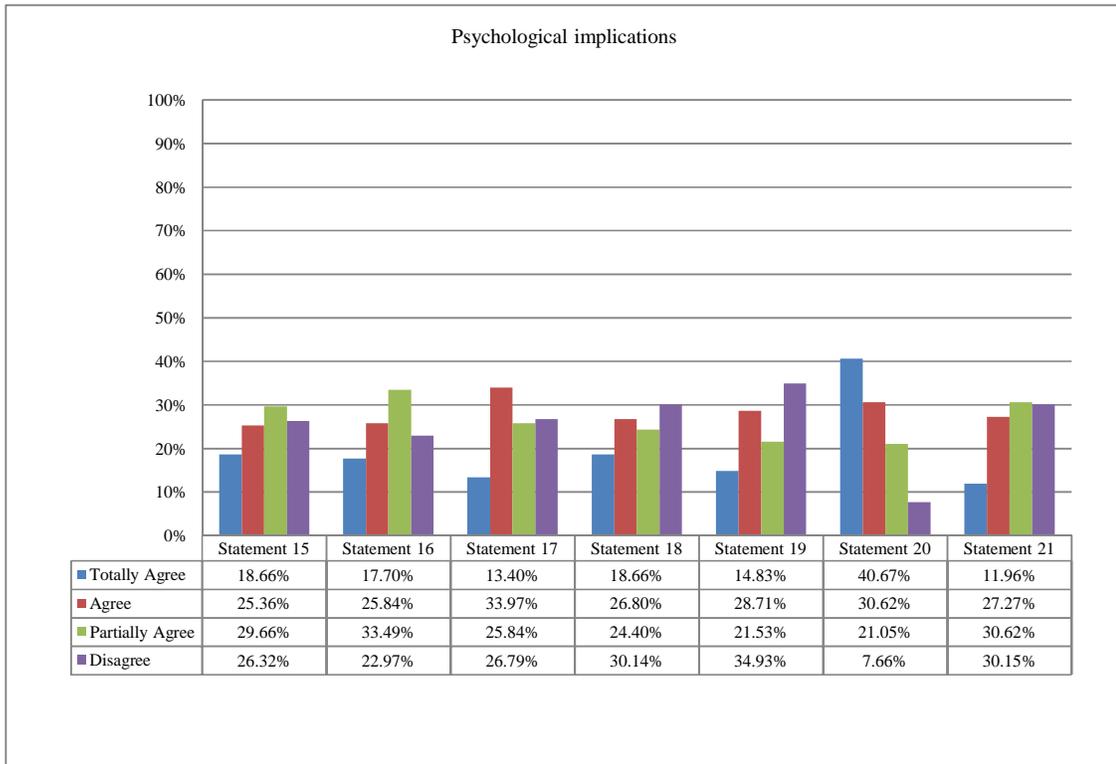
Chart 3

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	TOTALLY AGREE		AGREE		PARTIALLY AGREE		DISAGREE		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
15	The atmosphere is stressful	9	18,66%	53	25,36%	62	29,66%	55	26,32%	209	100%
16	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest	37	17,70%	54	25,84%	70	33,49%	48	22,97%	209	100%
17	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions	28	13,40%	71	33,97%	54	25,84%	56	26,79%	209	100%
18	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid	39	18,66%	56	26,80%	51	24,40%	63	30,14%	209	100%
19	The teacher does not play equal attention to all his/her students	31	14,83%	60	28,71%	45	21,53%	73	34,93%	209	100%
20	Students feel they can act competitively with other students	85	40,67%	64	30,62%	44	21,05%	16	7,66%	209	100%
21	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed	25	11,96%	57	27,27%	64	30,62%	63	30,15%	209	100%

Author: Cruz Idalia

Source: Student's questionnaire

Graph 3



Author: Cruz Idalia

Source: Student’s questionnaire

The third variable of the present study is about psychological aspects. To statement 15, most of the students’ responses (55.98%) infer that the climate environment where they receive English lessons is not stressful. In contrast, many learners (44.02%) consider that they feel anxious inside the large classes.

Since most of the learners feel comfortable in the atmosphere where English lessons take place, it is to say that students who experiment anxiety could belong to the institutions where there are a lower number of peers in the class, even though it is considered a large class.

An adequate classroom environment improves the teaching-learning process. To this matter, Roberts (2007) suggests that in large classes with learners in different level of

proficiency, teachers can create solidarity climates that make the students feel comfortable at the moment of acquiring language skills. Otherwise, the researcher implies that students in multi-level classrooms can experience stress, since the low-level learners are aware of their weaknesses compared with students in high level of knowledge.

Regarding the utterance 16, students' answers reflect they feel comfortable speaking in front of their peers, since the majority of them (56.46%) are partially agree and disagree with the statement. On the contrary, (43.54%) of the surveyed students agree they have problems to speak in front of their classmates.

Due to in large classes there is a multi-level English proficiency, weaker students can experience stress when speaking in front of their peers with a higher level of knowledge.

To this concern, UNESCO (2006) infers that to encourage the students to speak in large classes is a difficult matter. Speaking in front of a large auditorium, take the learners to experience apprehensiveness, while in small classrooms students are more confident to develop speech activities.

Analyzing the statement 17, it is evident that in large classes, most of the surveyed students (52.63%) are able to express their thoughts when they receive English classes, in contrast to the rest of their classmates (47.37%) who asseverate they cannot participate actively during the lessons.

Since the difference is high, it is important to mention that this inconvenient can be given by multiple reasons: lack of English teacher proficiency, the number of students that teachers have to handle in large classes, which does not allow to a group of learners to participate.

Blatchford (2003) expresses that when teachers work in large classes, they usually face some difficulties, for instance; to get the students involve in discussion activities, due to it is complicated to control students' behavior. Learners in small classes can interact and

participate more often than in large ones. Besides, in small classes, teachers are able to give individual attention and feedback to the pupils which benefit the learning process

In accordance with statement 18, the students' responses evidence that there is a high percentage (45.46%) of learners who feel uncomfortable during class participation. Otherwise, 54.54% of the interviewed pupils affirm they can interact actively during the English lessons.

Similarly with the results to statement 16, the phenomenon can happen because of the diverse levels of students' English knowledge educators have to manage in large classes, which make some pupils to feel disadvantaged.

Roberts (2007) claims that in classes with different level of students' proficiency, teachers can encourage their learners to participate by applying cooperative learning techniques, in which strong learners can support weaker ones. However, when educators work in multilevel classrooms, students with low English knowledge will experience lack of motivation and fearfulness of making mistakes when developing activities inside the class.

To analyze the statement 19th, the outcomes show that 56.46% of the respondents' learners mention that their teachers pay attention to the whole class in the same way. On the other hand, 43.54% of the surveyed students complain they do not receive the same grade of attention during the lesson time.

It is clear that students' perceptions about this limitation can be due to they attend to classes with a high number of classmates so they cannot receive individual attention by their teachers.

Some researchers suggest that to manage large classes, there are some tips teachers can apply to improve the learning process: They have to raise their voice in order to be heard by the entire class, all of the students must have access to the resources, they need to move

around the class to observe tasks development, encourage students' participation and to give learners' attention (Shamin, Negash, Chunku, Chinyere, & Demewoz, 2007).

Taking into account the information stated in the charts, the results to statement 20 demonstrate that the vast majority of the inquired learners (71.29%) assure they can race with their peers during the activities they perform in large classrooms. Otherwise, (28.71%) of the surveyed students feel unable to compete with their classmates.

The information mention above evidences that few of the respondents' learners do not feel safe to compete with their peers. It ca be due to in large classes there are students with high level of knowledge which it is a disadvantage for weaker learners.

In a multilevel classroom, students with low level of proficiency can be frustrated since they are conscious that their classmates take advantage of their knowledge at the moment of performing some tasks (Robert, 2007).

Analyzing the statement 21, the responses of the learners show that more than half of them (60.77%) asseverate they do not relax within the class and they are always noticed by their teachers. On the contrary, there are (39.23%) of students who say that teachers do not realize of their presence so they can do activities concerning to other subjects.

Even though, the difference in the percentages is not too significant, it is to say that it is probable that some students do not behave properly due to the number of students teacher manage in large classes.

Giving clear and concise instructions about what students have to do inside the classroom is imperative during the teaching-learning process, since if students do not have a good comprehension of teachers' directions, they can deviate their attention to other assignments which are not related to the class (Duke, 1982).

CONCLUSIONS

- Concerning instructional implications, the vast majority of the surveyed learners (89.47%) agree that large classes does not influence negatively on the teaching-learning process in the researched Ecuadorian high schools, since most of the educators apply suitable strategies and methods to get students involved in a variety of activities that allow them to accomplish the learning goals.
- A significant percentage of students (75.12%) assure than in large classes, educators are able to make seating arrangements that help the learners to develop the different assignments designed in the lesson plans that take them to achieve learning goals.
- A high percentage of the surveyed learners (58.80%) asseverate that they receive regular feedback from their teachers although the big number of learners into the class. However, there are a great amount of pupils (41.20%) who claims that teachers do not aid them during the lesson time.
- Regarding social implications, most of the students (84.69%) asseverate that during the teaching-learning process in large classes, they have more opportunities to construct good relationships which promote a good interaction between all the participants during the class.
- A high percentage of learners (64.59%) agree that the atmosphere in large classes let them to feel less anxiety during the teaching-learning process because they are not exposed to be asked by the teacher the whole time.
- With regard to psychological implications, during the teaching-learning process in large classes, there are students who cannot express their opinions due to the big number of attendants to the class, which affects directly their learning skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Concerning instructional implications, teachers should give individual feedback to weaker learners. They must also create a sense of solidarity among all the participants so that high level students can support low level ones, to avoid feelings of frustration and low motivation during the lesson time in large classes.
- Regarding social implications in large classes, teachers should build a good class atmosphere where the students can feel comfortable to improve learning.
- With respect to psychological implications, teachers should apply adequate strategies and use different kind of activities to promote that the whole class can participate actively during the lesson time.

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