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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this achievement with all my love to God, who has given me the opportunity to live. I also want to dedicate it to all my family who has always encouraged me to continue with the development of my research work. In a very special way, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my children and my husband, from whom I stole their very special time to do my project, but they stimulated me a lot since the beginning of my studies and have always been a very significant source of inspiration.

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Contents

Abstract

This research analyzed the influence of large classes in the English language teaching –learning process in Ecuadorian high schools. During the field research, five classes were observed to identify the instructional, social, and psychological implications that large classes have on the teaching - learning process. This study was carried out in five public and private high schools located in the city of Jipijapa, in the province of Manabí, Ecuador in 2013. The sample consisted of students from 8th to 10th year of basic education, where each class has more than 35 students. The methods used in this research were quantitative and qualitative in order to obtain accurate information about the main implications that influence the English language teaching-learning process in large classes. The results of this research show that the factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process are lack of skills in managing learning, class size, among others. The obtained results will benefit teachers and students who are involved in the teaching learning process because they will have better opportunities in their academic and professional lives.

Key words: class size, classroom space, seating arrangements, large class.

Resumen

La presente investigación analiza la influencia de las clases numerosas en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en los colegios del Ecuador. Durante la investigación de campo, se observaron cinco clases para identificar las consecuencias educativas, sociales y psicológicas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. El estudio se llevó a cabo en cinco colegios públicos y privados ubicados en la ciudad de Jipijapa provincia de Manabí, Ecuador en el año 2013. La muestra estuvo conformada por estudiantes del 8vo al 10mo año de educación básica, donde cada aula tiene más de 35 estudiantes. Los métodos utilizados en este estudio fueron el cuantitativo y cualitativo para obtener información de las principales implicaciones que influyen en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en clases numerosas. Los resultados de esta investigación muestran que las principales implicaciones en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje son la falta de manejo de las destrezas, el tamaño de las clases, entre otros. Los resultados obtenidos beneficiarán a los profesores y alumnos que están involucrados en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje porque tendrán mejores oportunidades en su vida académica y profesional.

Palabras clave: tamaño de las clases, el espacio del aula, arreglos de asientos, clases numerosas.

Introduction

Improving the quality of education is one of the aspects that the current Ecuadorian government has considered in the organic law of intercultural education. From that point of view, the Ministry of Education (2013) established a set of quality standards in order to improve the teaching-learning process in high schools. However, there are important issues that still hinder the interaction and English language acquisition in the classroom; one of those factors is class size. Nowadays, there is a high demand of student registration at the beginning of each school year in Ecuadorian high schools. For that reason, the purpose of this research is to determine the effects of learning English in large classes.

Determining whether large classes affect the English teaching-learning process involves the following research 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 responses to those questions will make possible to provide teachers and educational authorities with a set of important actions in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning English in large classes.

Class size has awoken an important debate all over the world, and other researchers have investigated its influence on teachers and learners. Therefore, this investigation revises five previous studies from which three are briefly presented in this section.

Thaher (2005) conducted a study to determine if the instructional, psychological, and social factors affect large classes on EFL students at An-Najah National University. The researcher found that these factors have a great impact on

students' English learning and that classroom interactions in large classes are negatively associated with class size.

Furthermore, Yetunde (1999) conducted a study to explore the effects of over-crowded classrooms on teacher - student interactions. The researcher found that seating arrangement in overpopulated classes limits the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and students as well as on the quality of teaching and learning.

Likewise, Adeyemi (2008) conducted a study to find out the influence of class-size on the quality of output in Secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The researcher concluded that class-size is a critical factor in determining the quality of output from secondary schools; he found that in small classes the students had better quality than in schools with large classes.

Some of the benefits of the current investigation are that it shows the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools, so that the authorities will have the possibility to improve the level of English of the students. In addition, this research will provide to the future EFL researchers with useful information that they can use as a bibliographical source for increasing the study about of this theme.

In spite of the significance of the results found in this research, there were two limitations, first the fact that some students exaggerated their behavior, while others were shy as a result of the presence of the researcher in the classroom, and the second limitation was related to the questionnaire, because some students mentioned that the questions were difficult to understand.

Discussion

Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to present a revision of important literature related to the English teaching-learning process as well as to class size. The main topics included in this section are: teaching approaches and methods, learning managing, and seating arrangement. In addition, five studies done by different researchers on large classes are described in order to provide the necessary support for analyzing the results.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

There are different approaches and methods that teachers may use during the development of their classes, and these are applied according to the objectives of each lesson. One of these methods is the Total Physical Response which is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action. According to Richards and Rodgers (2011), the purpose of this method is to use body movements for helping students to comprehend the meaning of the target language. The method was developed by Asher who observed that children learn a language from interpreting the physical gestures associated with the words they listen from adults. In the same way, he believes that this process can be applied in adults in order to facilitate their learning and it can also reduce learner´s stress that people feel when studying a foreign language.

Another approach used by teachers to teach English in the classroom is the Communicative Language Teaching. According to Hymes (1972), when a person gets communicative competence he or she acquires both knowledge and ability for

language use. Thus, teachers are facilitators who use a lot of real world material to encourage learners to communicate each other using the target language.

Moreover, language forms are selected according to learner´s needs. In that way, learners are able to identify the most commonly used structures that will allow them to communicate in a natural environment. In addition, Littlewood (1981) distinguished the activities in Communicative Language Teaching between functional communication activities and social interactive activities; the first one incorporates tasks such as comparing sets of pictures, following directions and solving problems; the second one contains activities such as discussion session dialogues, debates and role plays. In this way, the teacher encourages students to practice and develop communicative skills.

Another important approach which serves as an instrument for teachers is the Whole Language Approach which emphasizes the learning process in reading and writing skills. Richards and Rodgers (2011) mention that the learning theory is based on the humanistic and constructivist schools, as a result, constructivist learners "create meaning," "learn by doing" and work collaboratively "in mixed groups on common projects." At the same time, the teacher is a facilitator, who creates a climate that will carry collaborative learning process; another characteristic of this approach is that teachers prefer to use real- world material than commercial texts as newspapers, storybooks etc, encourage to work in cooperative learning process in small groups of reading and writing activities, where the students are also evaluators, evaluating themselves and others' learning, with the help of their teacher.

Similarly, another approach which involves cooperative activities in pairs and small groups of learners is Cooperative Language Learning, because learning English

depends on the socially structured information exchange between learners groups and in which each learner cheers up herself/himself and can encourage to their partners in order to increase their learning. Olsen and Kagan (1992) consider that with this approach the teacher builds a positive relationship among students, focuses his attention into language structures, and communicative functions through the interactive tasks that he/she uses. In this way, learners can increase their motivation and reduce their stress.

Regarding the Content – Based Instruction (CBI), Brown (2002, p.234) claims that "content- based language teaching integrates the learning of some specific subject- matter content with the learning of a second language". According to the author, learners acquire knowledge not only about the language but also about the contents being taught such as geography, culture, history, or math; in integrated skills. In the same way, Larsen (2000) describes that during the language class, the language teacher focuses on helping students process the language in order to understand the academic content presented by the subject teacher; in fact, teachers help students to complete academic tasks such as writing term papers, improving their note-taking abilities, and reading academic textbooks assigned by the teacher.

Concerning the Task- Based Language Teaching (TBLT), it uses communicative tasks in which learners have to demonstrate their level of knowledge of the language; meaning, communication, task completion and assessment, which are important aspects that teachers have to take into consideration. Moreover Pica, Kanagy, and Falondun (1993) consider that tasks can be classified according to the type of interaction that occurs in task accomplishment, for instance, Jigsaw tasks,

Information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks, and opinion exchange tasks, which will be done in pairs, or small groups.

In contrast with the previous methods which include interactive activities and develop the four skills, there is a method that increases only reading and writing skills; this method is called "Grammar- Translation". Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention that Grammar translation is a way of studying a language through the analysis of its grammar rules, memorization and lists of vocabulary with the purpose of applying this knowledge of translating sentences and text into and out of the target language.

In brief, there are different methods and approaches that are useful for teachers and they can be applied according to the teaching objective of a lesson.

Class size

The amount of students in a classroom is a factor that teachers need to consider in order to plan a lesson. In this respect, Mayer (2000, p. 31) claims "that the way teachers implement the course content, instructional pedagogy, and technology used in the classroom may all be influenced by the number of students in the class." A long debate in class size support small classes especially with students that come from lower social and economic backgrounds. The author considers that students learn better in small classes because teachers are able to use techniques and pedagogy effectively. An interesting point mentioned refers to the limited number of research done about the effects of class size in the teaching process. Studies have focused frequently on the relationship between class size and teachers´ ability to deal with disciplinary problems.

Similarly, Blatchford (2003) also refers to different points of view that support small classes and others that support large classes. Basically, this author states that enthusiast who claim in favor of small classes argue that teachers can apply teaching strategies appropriately. On the other hand, a high cost of class size reduction is the main argument of those who hold teaching in large classes. In sum, this author expresses that there is little research done about the effect of class size in students´ learning success.

With regard to large classes, Brown (2002) does not give evidence of the effect in the learning process but he explains that some problems evidenced in classrooms with more than thirty students are: variety of abilities and proficiency, individual attention is reduced; students have fewer opportunities to practices speaking and it is hard to provide feedback to students' written works.

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

The instructions are an important tool that teachers give to the students. In fact, Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) mention that teachers should first make sure everyone is listening and watching the instructions in order to get the student´s attention. Another tool is the use of a simple language and short expressions that are entirely appropriate to a situation where the students accept the teachers´ authority in order to make language practice efficient and to avoid confusion and uncertainty. Additionally, it is convenient to support instructions with visual clues such us real object, pictures, gestures and mime or giving written instructions on cards or pieces of paper. After the teacher gives a demonstration or an example to explain the instructions, and finally he checks that students have understood what they are required to do.

Likewise, Scrivener (2005) suggests that one important reason why learners may not successfully follow activity instructions is that they do not actually hear them, perhaps because they do not fully pay attention when they are given. In this sense, teachers often invest energy finding appropriate ways to work their instructions instead of focusing on getting students' attention before telling them how to develop the activities.

Feedback is another important aspect that teachers should apply in their classes. According to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher, whereby teachers can help their students evaluate their success and progress. In addition, feedback can take a number of forms: giving praise and encouragement; correcting; setting regular tests; having discussions about how the group as a whole is doing; giving individual tutorial, etc. The type and extent of feedback and its timing depends on a variety of factors such as culture, the stage of the lesson, and the type of activities.

According to Scrivener (2005), feedback can be provided at the beginning and at the end of a lesson, at the end of a week, at the beginning or at the end of a new course book unit, or before and after class activities. Thus, doing feedback of any sort may be difficult for teachers the first time, but at the end it results in increased honesty, openness and mutual respect; certainly, it has a great long-term benefit.

An additional aspect that teachers need to control in the class is discipline, which depends on a number of factors such as the age of the students because children need to be more disciplined than adults. Other aspects are the reasons for learning and the motivation of the students because in some cases they are obliged to be in class. It is more difficult to keep a good atmosphere in a large class than in a

small class because the atmosphere and methods of the educational institutions impact in the behavior of the students too.

Moreover, timing is a significant factor in the teaching-learning process because teachers can use time management in the classroom to optimize learning opportunities for students. In other words, moving quickly through the planned learning activities.

About timing, Cowley (2009) mentions different reasons by which managing time is important in English teaching; for example, to give students enough time to work adequately, to control behavior, and also to clear up doubts. In addition, the author comments that each activity on a lesson plan must have an adequate amount of time but sometimes it is not easy for teachers to develop their lessons as they planned.

In summary, managing learning in the classroom is necessary in order to develop the teaching-learning process efficiently.

Managing large classes

In many countries, the main constraint for teachers on creative teaching is the size of the class. Common difficulties include problems to move in the classroom, teachers are not able to provide equal attention to all students, and the discipline in this kind of class can be a big problem. In order to overcome these difficulties, Scrivener (2005) suggests some ideas to be applied with large classes such as rearranging the classroom furniture, pushing the seats up against the wall, or negotiate a discipline contract with students in order to have them working quietly.

From a similar point of view, Woodward (2001) considers important to control interaction in the classroom through investing plenty of time in learning students' names. Another strategy mentioned by this author is to break up the group

and have fleeting one-to-one with lots of different students. Also, it is important to maintain clear eye contact with individuals, and do not bank on achieving group control by simply speaking loudly. Instead, the author remarks that it is recommended to use other systems for attracting students' attention such as hands up, tapping on the board, ringing a little bell to attract their attention.

In addition, Woodward (2001) suggests a plan to establish a certain amount of routine in the large classroom. Nevertheless, it is important not to make routines too fixed, or the class will go into automatic pilot and it will be very difficult to turn them once they have started. Besides, the author recommends keeping students involved from the beginning of the lesson in order to achieve a working atmosphere. The author also proposes the use of plenary phases and large display surfaces, such as the board, as a way of returning the whole class to cohesion after group work.

In order to maintain the cohesion of the group, UNESCO (2006) considers that establishing reasonable rules for student behavior helps the class to work effectively. Students need to know their limits, as well as how to behave with others and respect their rights. Another suggestion given by this author concerns with involving students in managing the classroom's physical space since it helps them to develop a sense of responsibility. Students can hang up their pieces of work, create bulletin boards, and place their instructional materials in a safe place in order to clear space between rows. Students can also be helpful in solving space problems. When a problem occurs, such as students bumping into each other or inadequate seating space, ask them to suggest solutions.

Activities for working with large classes

According to Harmer (2007), despite the problems of big classes, there are things that teachers can do such as using worksheets to hand out worksheets for many of the tasks which they would normally do with the whole class. Pair work and group work play an important part since they maximize students´ participation. There are ways of doing this: first rows turn to face second rows, third rows to face fourth rows, etc. It is important to make instructions especially clear, and agree on how to stop the activity.

An additional activity is chorus reaction where the class can be divided into two groups, the front five rows and the back five rows. Then, each row/half can speak a part in a dialogue, ask or answer a question, and repeat sentences or words.

Similarly, Hubbard, Jones, Thornton and Wheeler (1985) discuss several approaches and suggest some accompanying activities such as dramatization and role-play. They also recommend class sections because it is often very helpful to have two established sections in the classroom so that the teacher can direct his attention to just one of them from time to time. They consider that games are often wrongly regarded as an end-of-term activity or something to fill in the last five minutes of a lesson.

According to Roger, Diane, and Steve (2005), a role play is when students take part of a particular person, and can be used to give the students an opportunity to try out language recently introduced in order to improve their fluency. Likewise, Harmer (2007) claims that role plays simulate the real world in the same kind of way, but the students are given particular roles, they are told who they are and often what they think about a certain subject.

Other complements in the classes are games. Roger, Diane, and Steve (2005) mention that many conventional games can be adapted to foreign language teaching. As with any communication activity, the areas of language produced may be predictable, and therefore useful as a guided activity, or less predictable and suitable for a freer stage. On the other hand, they remark that in multinational classes some games can be a problem if some students know the game and others have never heard of it. The latter are at a disadvantage at first.

UNESCO (2006) mentions that there are three main objectives in using small groups in large classes, first, to provide energy and interaction, to enable students to think during class, to participate actively, and to generate more ideas about a text or topic; second, to give the teacher an opportunity to interact with more students while he moves around the room, to provide a short break and shift in energy, which will make students more likely to listen to the teacher's next 20 minutes of lecturing.

This author mentions other active learning activities for large classes, which require individual answers. In large classes, there might not be enough time. However, all of the students should be given the chance to participate in many of them. The challenge lies in selecting the type of activity to match the purpose or objective of the lesson, as round. Each student has a 2 or 3 minutes opportunity to express his or her point of view on a given topic, or passes, while others listen. The teacher could also make a brainstorm where the students individually think about an issue or a problem , after listing the possible causes and finally ask them to share their ideas and compile a list of solutions possible, another is concept model in which the teacher: gives students handouts, or lists on the chalkboard, a series of leading

questions. Students work in small groups then figure out how something works or builds a conceptual model.

Seating arrangement and classroom space (physical space- big/small rooms)

The teacher´s position and the way that the teacher organizes the position of the students in the class are of great importance. According to Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005), the location where the students sit in a classroom determines their attitude towards their classmates and the teacher. The authors state that seating arrangement influences the type of interaction and activities in the classroom. In this sense, the arrangement of the classroom furniture always affects the learning atmosphere to some extent because the choice sometimes is out of the teachers' control. The authors add that seating arrangement is defined by the type of teaching-learning activities. Horseshoe allows easy, face –to-face contact between the students and between their teachers. One variation is the double horseshoe that consists on facing seats in rows; it helps if the two halves are slightly at an angle.

Another seating style described by Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005) require that students sit around their tables to discuss a topic; it is known as cafe style. This type of arrangement allows all students to see what is going on the front of class clearly and comfortably. On the other hand, the authors mention that individual activities can be developed by moving furniture to the edges of the classroom for creating a space in the center of the room allowing the students to move around. According to the authors, all those styles show that seating arrangement depends on the size of the class, the size of the groups, the types of activities and the style of the furniture.

In the same way, Scrivener (2005) considers that change in seating arrangement helps students to interact in order to establish a leaner-centered class.

The author states that even seats are fixed, semi-fixed or large, it is possible to have students working in relation to the activities designed. Some alternatives might include asking students to turn around their seats to work with a classmate behind. Also, students in a row can work with others in the next row. In case the classroom is not big enough to move seats, the author recommends asking students to stand up and exchange their seats with other classmates.

In addition, Scrivener (2005) highlights that teachers may add interaction and fun to seating arrangement by relating it to the teaching context such as simulating a train carriage, a plane, a town center, etc. Moreover, the same author mentions that students may push seats against the class walls for creating a forum environment in order to discuss topics.

However, other arrangements are possible like a circle or horseshoe; learners can make eye contact with everyone else in the group and thus interact much more naturally. The author also suggests pushing all seats up against the wall and make a large, open forum space in the middle of the room; another strategy is to divide the classroom into separate groups at far corners of the room. The author says that in a standard classroom there can be pairs, enemy corners, opposing teams, face to face, panel, public meeting, buzz groups, and wheels.

Another important aspect is the influence of physical classroom in the students' learning. According to Feinstein (2006, p. 368) "When students´ attention is drawn to a perceived threat, the brain´s ability to learn and remember new information may be minimized." By threats this author refers to a combination of different factors such as social interactions, academic challenges, or physical

elements like lighting quality, noise, air quality and temperature that not allow learners to concentrate well in classes.

Regarding physical classroom, Dimmock (2000, p. 109) "addresses that students learning involves creating favorable conditions for learning. These conditions include the physical and emotional state of the student, and the physical classroom environment". An important aspect about the physical context is the use of space, changing furniture and designing adequate space increases the probability of good learning.

Different levels of proficiency

One of the biggest problems teachers confront are classes where the students are at different levels, where some with quite competent English competed, some whose English isn't very good, and some whose English is only just getting started. According to Harmer (2007, p.176), teachers "regularly face mixed-ability groups where different individuals are at different levels and have different abilities. What are the possible ways of dealing with this situation?". According to the author, the differentiation, in other words, treating some students differently from others is possible by using different material and technology, encouraging students to do different tasks depending on their abilities, for example, while one group is working on a piece of language study, the other group might be reading a story or doing Internet-based research. Later, while better groups are discussing a topic, the weaker group or groups might be doing a parallel writing exercise, or sitting round a CD player listening to an audio track.

Some teachers adopt a strategy of peer help and teaching so that better students can help the weaker ones. However, this has to be done with great

sensitivity so that students do not feel alienated by their over-knowledgeable peers or oppressed by their teaching role.

Similarly, Scrivener (2005) mentions the most common reasons why there are many learner's level, as when students are grouping by age, and this seems very likely to lead to problems if some learners are significantly stronger or weaker than others; another typical problem in many schools is caused by the fact that it is often less troublesome for school administration to keep learners together as a class, because learners will progress at different speeds. This means that, even if a group was similar in level at the beginning of a course, there may be very different exit levels' at the end. The author also states the placement procedures as another cause of 'mixed-level' problems, because the placement testers sometimes give priority to friendship or personal requirements rather than place students according to real level obtained in the placement test.

Besides, in many cases learners may be together in the same class because the school does not have sufficient levels to fine-tune the classes more. Scrivener (2005, p. 68) says that "If we check the overall abilities of each person, we find some are 'weak Pre-Intermediate', some 'mid-Pre-Intermediate' and some 'strong Pre-Intermediate', maybe there are even some people who seem to belong to another level classification, say 'Elementary' or 'Intermediate'." In some cases, learners have good knowledge in grammar, and their vocabulary is a little weaker, but their speaking and listening are very much poorer.

To conclude with the literature review, it is necessary to examine a series of studies regarding the influence of large classes in the English language teaching – learning that were developed in different parts of the world.

Firstly, Yetunde (1999) did a research to identify the major problems caused by overpopulated classes in Nigeria with a view to making suggestions that could help to alleviate the problems. He applied a simple random sampling technique where eight schools were selected out of thirty secondary schools in the township. However, two types of instruments were used. One involved the use of class registers to obtain pupil enrolment by classroom and the second instrument was a questionnaire made by the researcher to determine the most serious effect of over-crowded classroom on teacher - student interactions.

In this study, the author concluded that seating arrangement in overpopulated classes limits the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and students. Other issues that include punishment as a negative reinforcement is not an educationally expedient, these are direct results of poor quality training of teachers.

The second study was done by Adeyemi (2008) in order to examine the influence class-size had on the quality of output from secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The instrument used for collecting data for the study was an inventory. Based on this finding, it is concluded that class-size is a critical factor in determining the quality of output from secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Students in schools having small class-sizes had better quality of output than students in schools having large class-sizes.

The researcher recommended that the State Government should build more classrooms in all schools. In doing this, much emphasis should be given to the provision of more classrooms in the annual capital budget. Likewise, the approved teacher quota of one and one - half teacher per class should be allowed to remain but should be properly used in the distribution of teachers to school.

The third study was carried out by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Lyamu (2006) who investigated whether teaching methods, teaching resources, and classroom physical space had some influence in the English teaching- learning process. This study was performed with senior secondary students from five public schools in Nigeria; they answered a questionnaire with questions related to the aims of the research. In addition, the researchers observed classes in each high school to analyze the type of methods and resources used to teach English; students´ attitude towards the language, and behavior in the classroom was also observed.

The analysis of the questionnaires showed that students did not feel comfortable in the classrooms, and they complained about the lack of space and amount of students. As a result of the observations, researchers found that classes were teacher-centered and traditional materials (textbooks, chalkboard) were used to teach English classes. At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that the English teaching process did not have a good quality and this caused that students did not perform well in university language tests because of their poor skills.

The fourth study was performed by Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein and Martin (2003) who studied whether class size differences affect pupils' academic achievement; and the connections between class size and classroom processes, which might explain any differences found. The information was collected from classes in terms of class size (as on the school register, and also in terms of the number of children in the class at a given point in the term, too the information on teachers in the study was collected from self-completed questionnaires called 'experienced' class size). The method comprised whole class and selected child observations in terms of event sampling of significant events; semi-structured interviews with teachers and headteacher.

The results showed that there was a clear effect of class size differences on children's academic attainment over the (first) reception year. In the case of literacy, the lowest attainders on entry to school benefited most from small classes, particularly below 25. Connections between class size and classroom processes were examined and a summary model of relationships presented. Effects were multiple, not singular. In large classes there are more large groups and this presented teachers with more difficulties. On the other hand, in smaller classes there was more individual teacher contact with pupils and more support for learning, and in larger classes there was more pupil inattentiveness and off-task behaviour.

At the end of this study researchers concluded that much will depend on how teachers adapt their teaching to different class sizes and that could be done in teacher training and professional development to address contextual features such as class size.

The fifth study was done by Thaher (2005) who determined what effects (instructional, psychological or social) large classes have on students by investigating and analyzing EFL students´ attitudes toward large classes at An-Najah National University in Palestine. A questionnaire was applied according to a random distribution in English. The sample of the study consisted of 230 non-English major EFL students.

The findings of the study reveled that instructional effects have the highest mean over the social and the psychological effect. It appeared that despite the negative aspect of learning English in large classes, there can be some positive aspects that teachers could make use of.

<center>**Method**</center>

Setting and Participants

This research was conducted in five public and private high schools in which students from 8th to 10th basic year were selected as a sample. The participants were adolescents whose ages ranged between 12 and 14 years old, and who belonged to a low and middle social-economic condition. The students attended classes in the mornings.

Procedures

The investigation began with a review of bibliographical resources such as printed and digital books, websites, journals, among others. The topics considered for this research were related to the influence of large classes in the English language teaching – learning process; teaching methods and approaches, class size, managing learning, managing large classes, activities for working with large classes, different levels of proficiency, seating arrangement and classroom space. Furthermore, five studies were included in the revision of the literature in order to support the current investigation.

This study followed a quantitative and qualitative approach. Quantitative because data was tabulated and frequencies were calculated for its analysis, and quantitative because data was carefully described and analyzed. According to the research design, the techniques were surveys and note taking, while the instruments were questionnaires and statistical charts.

The questionnaires were used to gather students' perceptions on the instructional, social, and psychological effects of large classes in the teaching-learning process. For that purpose, twenty one Likert scale questions were included

<center>**Method**</center>

Setting and Participants

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in the questionnaires. Each item asked students whether they totally agree, agree, partially agree, and disagree with the statements provided.

After gathering the results, it was necessary to calculate the frequencies and percentages for each question. The statistical information was presented in three statistical charts, and it was used to analyze and discuss students' perceptions about the instructional, social, and psychological implications of large classes in the teaching-learning process.

In order to provide a solid foundation for the analysis, the theories presented in the literature review were used to discuss the results of the investigation. Finally, the most important findings were considered for writing the conclusions and recommendations of this research.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

The following analysis determines the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools, according to instructional, social and psychological implications that have been obtained from the data collected from students' questionnaires applied in public and private high schools.

Quantitative Analysis

Instructional implications

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

Academic issues

No	In classes with a large number of students:	TOTALLY AGREE		AGREE		PARTIALLY AGREE		DISAGREE		TOTAL
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
1	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.	54	37	62	42	23	16	7	5	100
2	The activities done allow students to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills	76	52	46	32	24	16	0	0	100
3	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom	18	12	42	29	76	52	10	7	100
4	Varied class activities such as group activities, individual activities, pair activities are used.	97	67	40	27	9	6	0	0	100
5	Role plays, debates and games are used.	32	22	38	26	57	39	19	13	100
6	Students can cheat during the test.	18	16	10	7	23	12	95	65	100
7	Students can do tasks from other subjects.	13	9	13	9	43	29	77	53	100
8	Class space allows you to develop the activities assigned by the teacher properly.	60	41	54	37	24	16	8	6	100
9	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	14	10	53	38	51	36	22	16	100

1. *The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.*
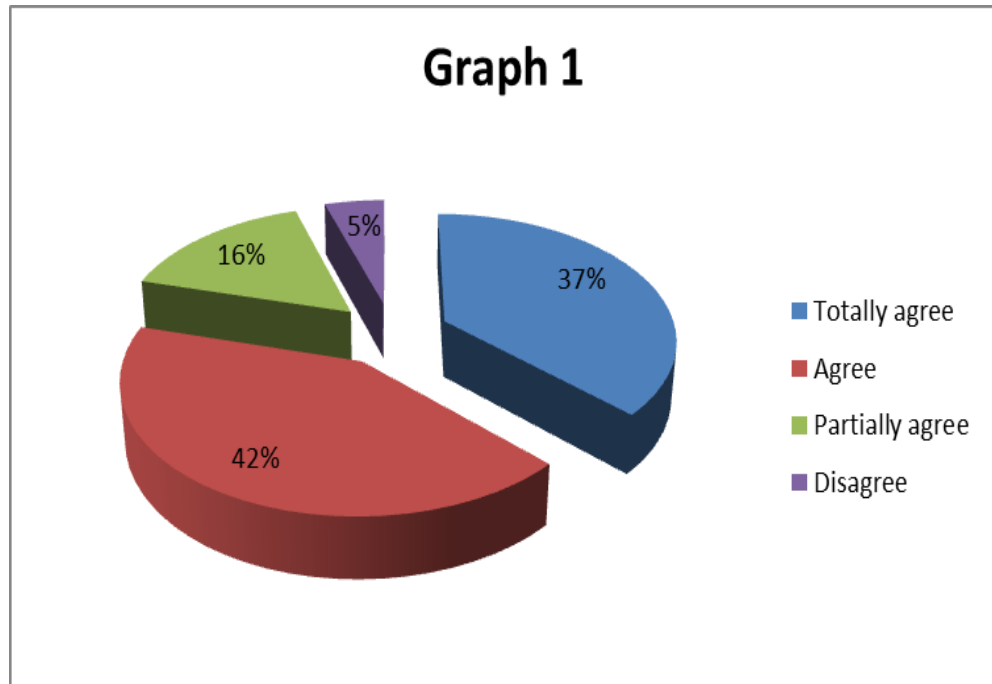
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

According to the results observed in graph N° 1, 42% of the students agreed with the activities done in the class which help them to apply what is learned even though when being in a large class. Students who are provided well-planned activities, are able to apply what they learn despite being part of large classes; in the same manner, 37% of the students totally agreed with the activities provided in large classes because they can foster learning and be used without inconvenience.

Nevertheless, not all students feel the same way. Sixteen percent of the students partially agreed with this regard. On the other hand, 5% of them disagreed. These results indicate that not all the strategies or activities work in every classroom especially with every student.

According to the students' answers from both public and private high schools showed in graph N°1, 42 % of the students tend to be positive. It might mean that the activities done in class help them to apply their knowledge. In addition, 37% of them considered that the activities in class allow them to apply everything learned.

Many students resist group work even though the ability to work well in a group is an essential skill for most students. In addition, students who learn in collaborative settings both learn and retain as not much as students who learn individually. Nonetheless, the 16% and 5% showed that learners consider that in large classes it is very difficult to put knowledge into practice, because of the amount of students and the inadequate size of the classroom. Additionally, teachers do not use the appropriated activities for the large classes.

Harmer (2007) states that despite of the problems of large classes; teachers can hand out worksheets to work with the whole class while students complete the exercises. Other solutions presented by this author are pair work and group work since these types of activities maximize student's participation.

Students who learn in collaborative settings both learn and retain more easily than students who learn individually; however, Harmer (2007) explains that some students struggle to work with others. The results showed that some students consider that it is very difficult to put knowledge into practice. Therefore, they might have difficulties to work in groups and it leads them to give a negative opinion about the suitability of learning activities.

Another aspect that influences when putting knowledge into practice is the physical classroom. Dimmock (2000, p. 109) claims that, "Addressing how students best learn involves creating favorable conditions for learning. These conditions include the physical and emotional state of the student, and the physical classroom

environment". An important aspect about the physical context is the use of space; changing furniture and designing adequate space which increases the probability of good learning.

Based on this information and in concordance with the authors, it is clear that students who were part of in this study could see that there are different conditions such as the physical classroom environment, the size of the class, the emotional state of the student, among other aspects that do not allow them to apply what they learn.

2. *The activities done allow students to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.*
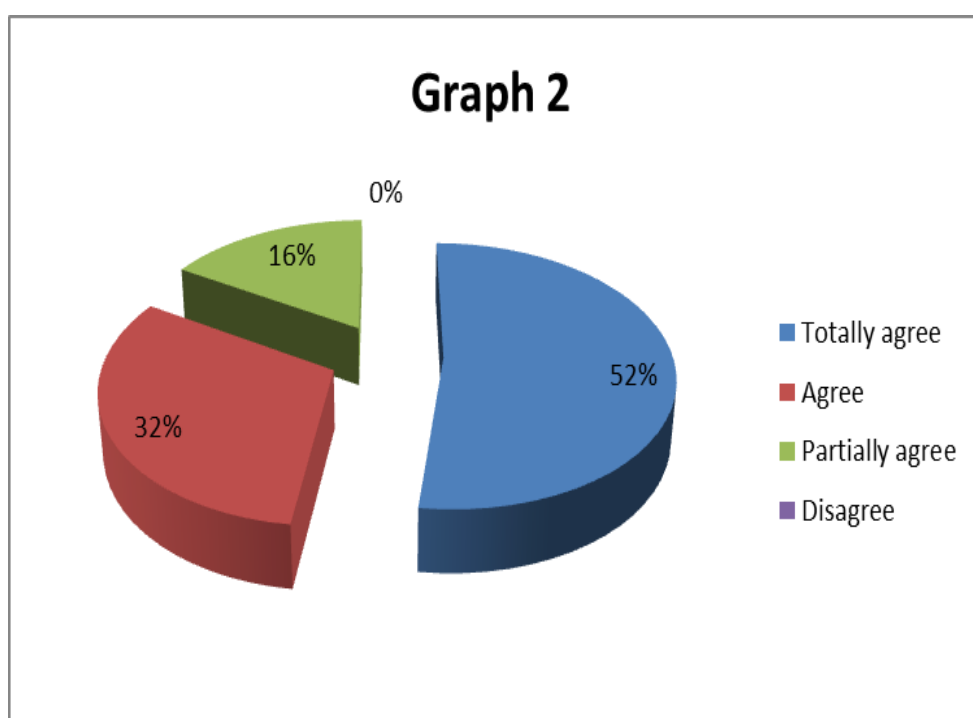
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

It can be observed in graph N° 2 that 52% of the students totally agreed with the question; they considered that the activities done in the classroom allow them to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, while 32% of students agreed

with this aspect. Perhaps it is important to consider that most of the students recognize that the activities during the class allow them to practice the four skills.

Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) mention that "traditionally we have four language skills: two receptive (listening and reading), and two productive (speaking and writing)". These authors consider that integrated skills allow the practice of language which aims to replicate the real word communication. It helps to develop language skills among students. Moreover, language forms are selected according to the learner´s needs. In that way, learners are able to identify the most used structures that will allow them to communicate in a natural environment.

On the other hand, the 16% of the participants partially agreed, they believe that the activities in class do not allow them to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; they mention that it is more difficult to communicate among them.

The results in graph N° 2 are to some extent related to the results observed in graph N° 1 in which students indicated that activities done in the class allow them to apply their knowledge. In this sense, the majority of students state that class activities are appropriate for practicing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

According to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005), integrated skills allow the practice of language through the use of activities related to the real word. In this way, learners improve the development of language as part of the process of becoming a full language user. Nevertheless, the author mentions that class size or level of noise are some of the factors that affect the quality of activities in the classroom.

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

Graph 3

- Totally agree
- Agree
- Partially agree
- Disagree

12%
29%
52%
7%
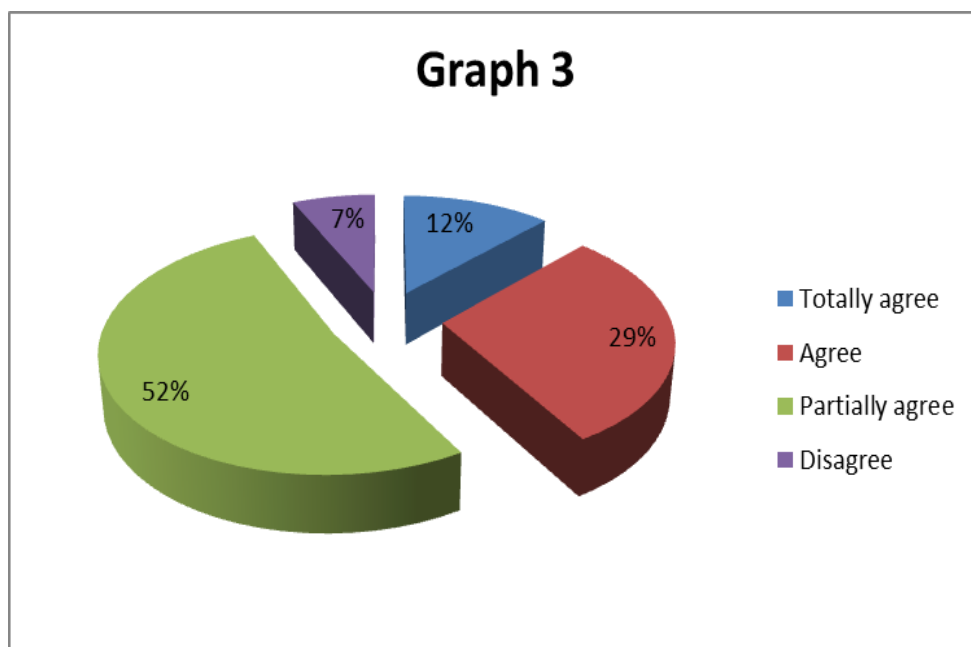
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Regarding the level of attention and participation in large classes, graph N° 3 shows that 7% of students did not agree with the question; 52% of learners partially agreed; 29% of students agreed; and, 12% totally agreed. Although the answers tend to be positive, an important group of students do not seem to be convinced of the ease to pay attention and to participate in large classes.

Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) mention that the larger the class, the more difficult is for learners to achieve the learning goals. They state that sometimes in large classes it is possible only to give feedback briefly. Therefore, it is important to ensure that everyone is listening and watching in order to draw the students´ attention in the topic. Using a simple language and concise expressions will help students to accept the teachers´ authority and to show good disposition towards the lessons in order to make language practice efficient.

In addition, an aspect that influences the level of attention and participation of students in the class activities is the teacher's position and the way he organizes the students' seats in the class. In this sense, Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005) indicate that classroom furniture always affects the learning atmosphere, and sometimes teachers are not able to control the seating arrangement in the classroom.

Likewise, the students' results, and the information provided by the authors make possible to confirm that in a large class, not all the students pay attention and participate in the class activities, including students in the last row, due to different reasons such as the size of the classroom, discipline, and seating arrangement, which affect the learning process.

Even though students might perceive that large classes make difficult to participate, teachers could apply the activities suggested by the authors above to improve the level of lesson involvement in the classroom. Certainly, managing learning in large classes requires from teacher much effort to achieve the objectives of the lessons. By organizing the classroom creatively into a convenient learning environment, teachers would be able to increase students' level of participation.

4. *Varied class activities such as group activities, individual activities, and pair activities are used.*
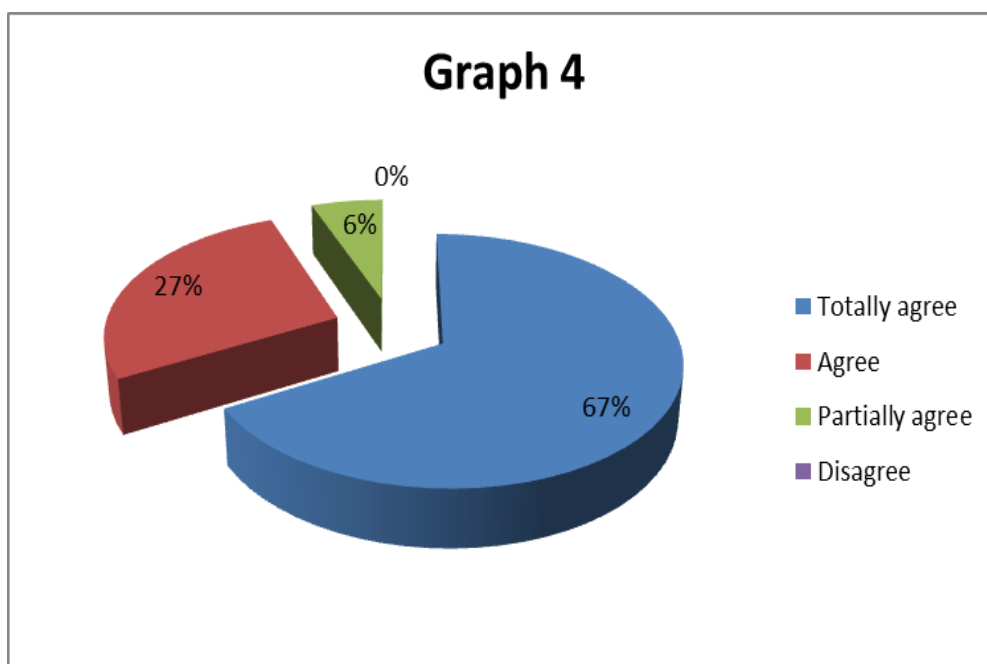
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

The results above indicate that 67% of students totally agree about the activities used in the class such as group, individual, and pair work activities. In addition, 22% students agree, and 6 % of them partially agree with the statement.

Students' responses seem to indicate that teachers applied different activities that promote collaboration and communication between students to practice language skills. According to Olsen and Kagan (1992), Cooperative Language Learning involves activities in which students are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups to exchange information between groups of learners. The authors remark that learning is increased through the use of cooperative activities because students cheer up between them and motivate their partners to work correctly. Also, cooperative language teaching helps teachers to build a positive relationship among students and encourages them to focus their attention in language structures and communicative

functions through interactive tasks; in this sense, learners increase their motivation and reduce stressful situations.

In addition, Harmer (2007) explains that pair work and group work play an important role in the language teaching-learning process since they maximize student participation. He describes different ways of doing collaborative activities such as first rows turn to face second rows, third rows to face fourth rows, etc. Also, the same author remarks that pairs and groups encourage students to participate actively, and they also have more chance to experiment with the language than in a whole-class arrangement. Both pair work and group work give students the opportunity for greater independence. Because the students are working together without the teacher controlling every move, they take some of their own learning decisions. Finally, the author states that it is important to give clear instructions and agree with students about when to stop the activity.

Certainly, the students' responses and the theory provided by the aforementioned authors allow concluding that the use of different activities such as group and pair work might generate a collaborative classroom environment, thus giving the students opportunities to interact and use the target language as well.

5. *Role plays, debates and games are used.*
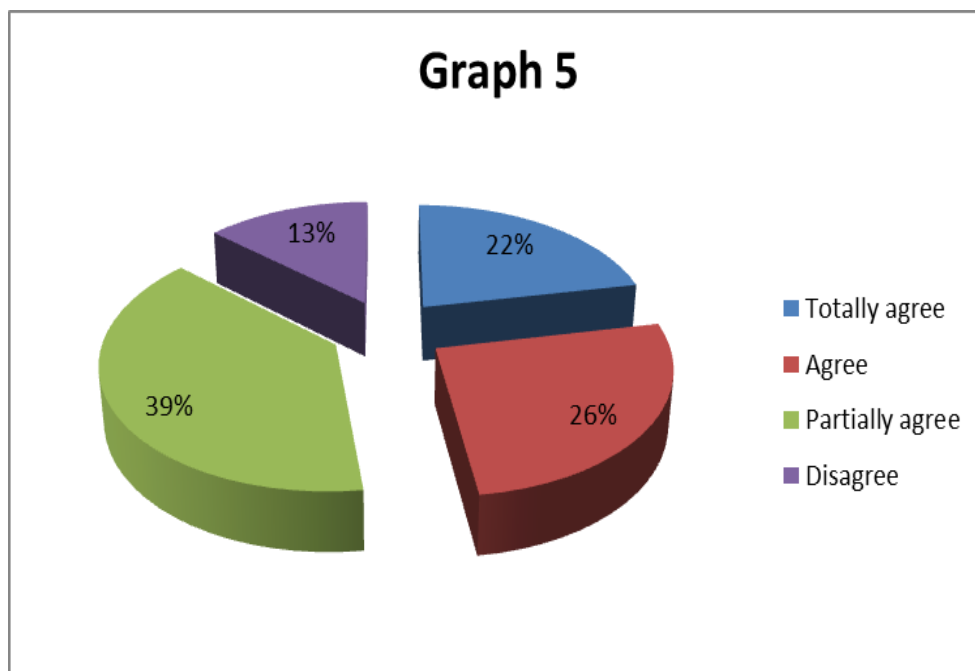
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Regarding the use of role plays, debates and games in the classroom, table N°
5 shows that 39% of students partially agree with the use of these strategies,
meanwhile 26% agree, 22 % of students totally agree, and 13% disagree. In this
aspect students recognized that it is more difficult to apply activities such as role
plays or debates in large classes. Based on the Communicative Language Teaching
method, the activities such as discussion session dialogues, debates and role plays are
called social interactive activities. In this way, the teacher encourages students to
practice and develop communicative skills.

Similarly, Hubbard, Jones, Thornton and Wheeler (1985) discuss several
approaches and suggest some accompanying activities such as dramatization and
role-plays. It is often very helpful to have two established sections in the classroom
so that the teacher can direct his attention to just one of them from time to time.

According to UNESCO (2006) claims that there are three main objectives in using small groups in large classes, first to provide energy and interaction, enabling more students to think during the class, to participate actively, and to generate more ideas about a text or topic; second to give the teacher an opportunity to interact with more students while he moves around the room, and provide a short break and shift in energy, which will make students more likely to listen to the teacher's next 20 minutes of lecturing.

This author mentions other active learning activities for large classes, which require individual answers. In large classes, there might not be enough time; however, all of the students should be given the chance to participate in many of them. The challenge lies in selecting the type of activity to match the purpose or objective of the lesson. Each student has a 2 or 3 minute opportunity to express his or her point of view on a given topic while others listen him or her. The teacher can also make a brainstorm where the students individually think about an issue or a problem, lists its possible causes and asks them to share their ideas and compile a list of possibilities. Another technique is called a concept model which consists on giving handouts to the students or listing words on the board. These words will form series of leading questions. Students work in small groups then figure out how something works or builds a conceptual model. According to graph N° 5, 39% of students partially agree with the use of role plays, debates and games, while 26% of them agree. In addition, 22 % of students totally agree, and 13% disagree. Regarding this aspect, the students appear to recognize that teachers apply activities such as role plays, debates, and games.

In fact, the use of role plays, debates and games is supported by authors such as Roger, Diane, and Steve (2005) as well as Harmer (2007) since they consider that

those activities give students an opportunity to try out language recently introduced and to improve their fluency as if they were in real situations.

The theory presented by the aforementioned authors seems to corroborate the students' acceptance of the use of role plays and games. Nevertheless, an important group of students (39%) are not totally convinced of the benefit of those activities. Probably, class size might be a factor that could affect their responses. Regarding this aspect, Brown (2002) explains that students in large classes have fewer opportunities to practice speaking.

In fact, the way teachers control discipline and creativity in their classes will facilitate an effective application of these strategies. In other words, making classes more interactive in which students can learn by doing fun-tasks such as role plays will improve students´ motivation.

6. *Students can cheat during the test.*

Graph 6

- 12% — Totally agree
- 7% — Agree
- 16% — Partially agree
- 65% — Disagree
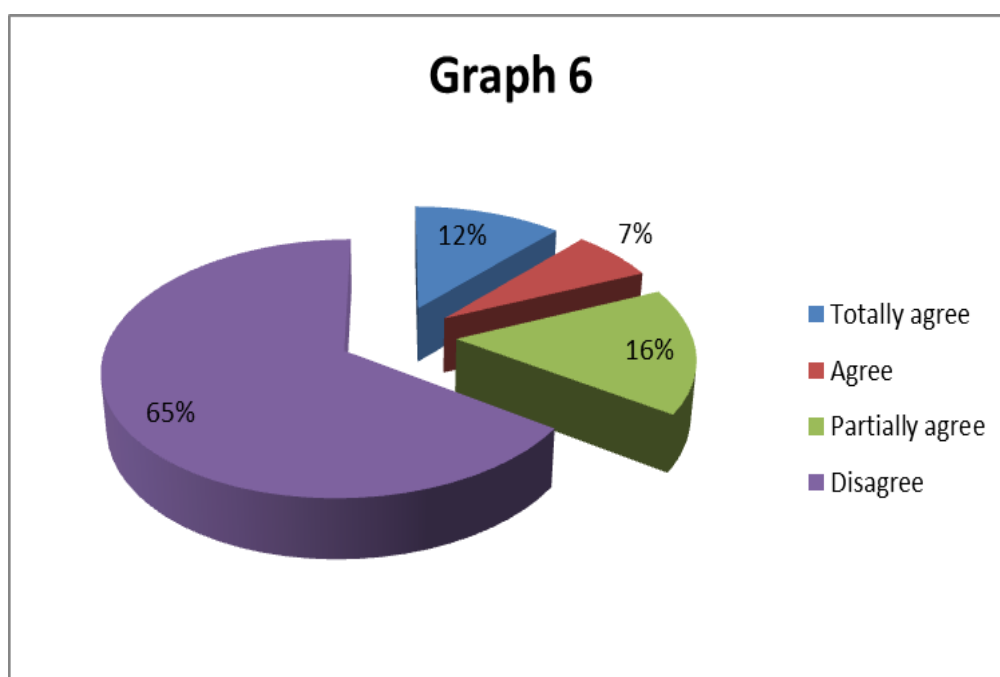
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

In graph N° 6, the results show that 65% of students disagree with the question while 16% of them partially agree. On the other hand, 12 % of the students totally agree, and 7% agree. Therefore, the percentages demonstrate that a great majority of students indicate that they cannot cheat during exams.

It seems that students consider that teachers are able to give instructions appropriately and control misbehavior in order to avoid difficulties during the exams.

According to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005), it is important for teachers to be sure that students listen and look at the instructions given in the class. Also, it is important to use simple language and short expressions to explain how to proceed in an activity or exam. In fact, short instructions are entirely appropriate for this situation because students need to be guided in the evaluation process in order to avoid confusion and uncertainty.

Based on the article 224 of the Organic Law of Education about academic dishonesty, it is considered as a severe fault, to copy the academic work or exams of someone with or without their permission or allow someone to copy an academic work or exam. Moreover, article 226 mentions that students who act with academic dishonesty will be exposed to disciplinary action and its exams will be graded with zero.

7. *Students can do tasks from other subjects.*
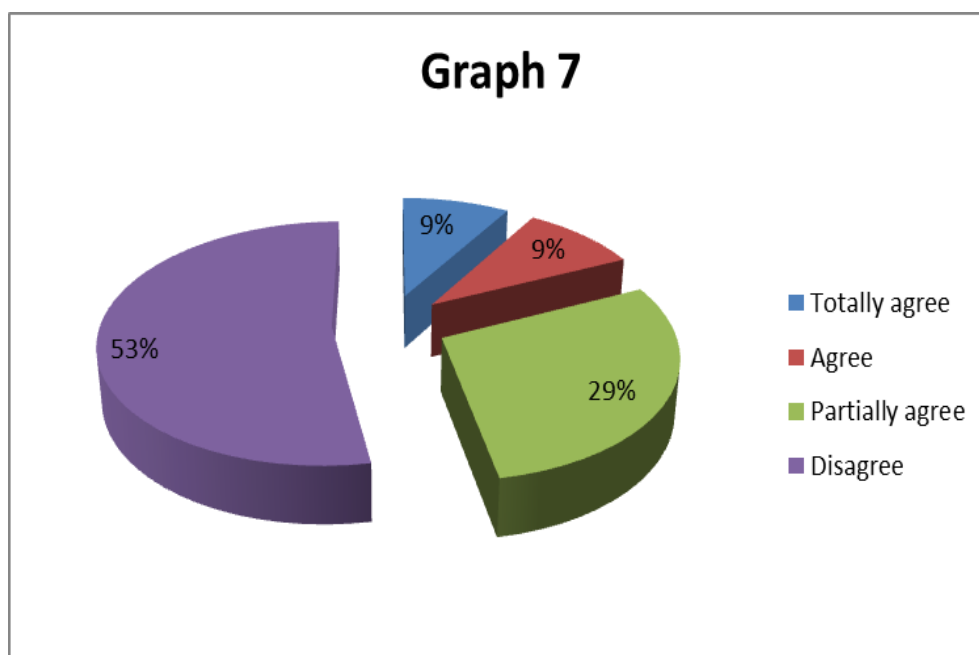
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

It can be seen in graph Nº 7 that 53% of students disagreed when they were asked if they can do tasks of other subjects, while 29% of them partially agreed. Also, 9% agreed and 9% of them totally agreed. These results show strong disagreement on the question stated to the interviewees.

According to the results, students affirmed that they do not do tasks of other subject during the English class, maybe because teachers apparently establish reasonable rules for student behavior.

All classrooms need rules to function effectively; students need to know the limits, as well as how to behave with others and respect to their rights. Another possible aspect that teachers seem to manage in large classes is planning. Without it, as the same author affirms, students can develop other subjects in the English class because they are not assigned with timed activities.

Besides, Woodward (2001) suggests a plan to establish a certain amount of routine in which he advises not to make the routines too fixed, though, or the class will go into automatic pilot and it will be very difficult to turn them once they have started. Moreover, the author suggests to keep students involved since the beginning of the lesson so that a working atmosphere is achieved while social energy is high. He also suggests to give instructions with demonstrations when necessary.

Based on the aspects previously analyzed, students perceived that teachers manage large classrooms properly and assign them appropriate amount of work to maintain their level of engagement in lessons. In such a way, students do not have time to develop activities that are not related to English learning.

8. *Class space allows you to develop the activities assigned by the teacher properly.*
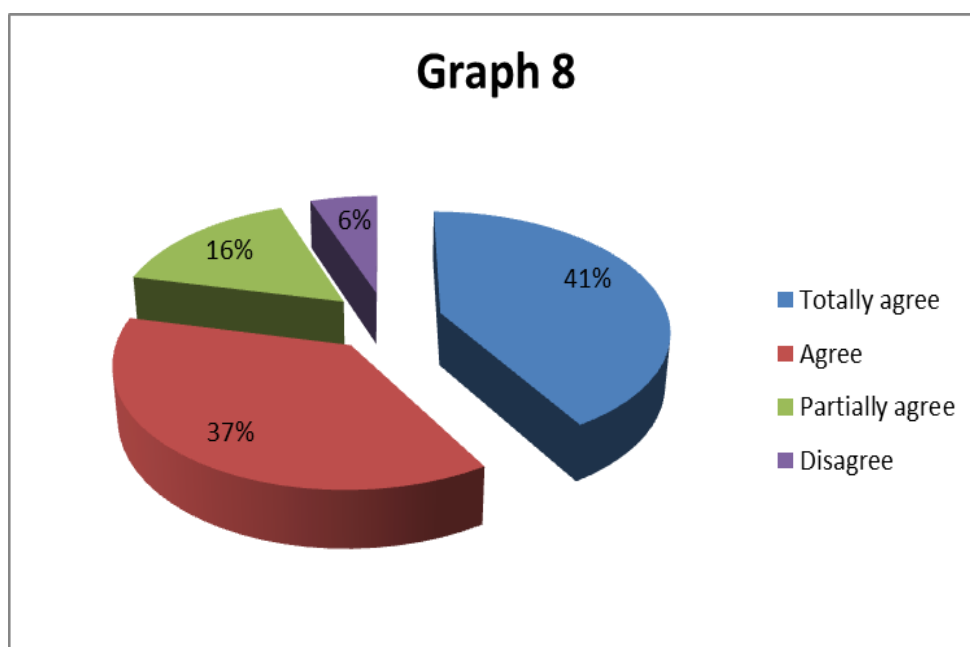
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Concerning the results showed in graph N° 8, 41% of students totally agree that class space allows them to develop class activities properly. In addition, 37% of students agree with the question. On the other hand, 16% of students partially agree, and 6% of students disagree. The high percentages are around positive criteria which indicate that classroom space is used adequately in large classes.

The organization of space influences the way, in which students behave in the classroom, as well as, how much attention they pay to instruction. According to Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005), the location where the students are sit in a classroom determines their attitude towards their classmates and the teacher. The authors also state that seating arrangement influences the type of interaction and activities in the classroom.

Moreover, Blatchford (2003) refers to different points of view that support small or large classes. Basically, this author explains that theorists who claim in favor of small classes argue that teachers can apply teaching strategies appropriately. On the other hand, a high cost of class size reduction is the main argument of those who hold teaching in large classes. In sum, this author expresses that there is little research about the effect of class size in students' learning success.

On the other hand, Feinstein (2006) argues that students' attention is drawn when they perceive threats such as difficult social interaction, noisy spaces, low quality air; all of them related to the appropriateness of classroom space.

This analysis shows that appropriate use of classroom space helps students answer positively to the stated question. In conclusion, it may seem impossible to organize dynamic and creative teaching and learning sessions in the large classroom due to lack of space.

9. Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.
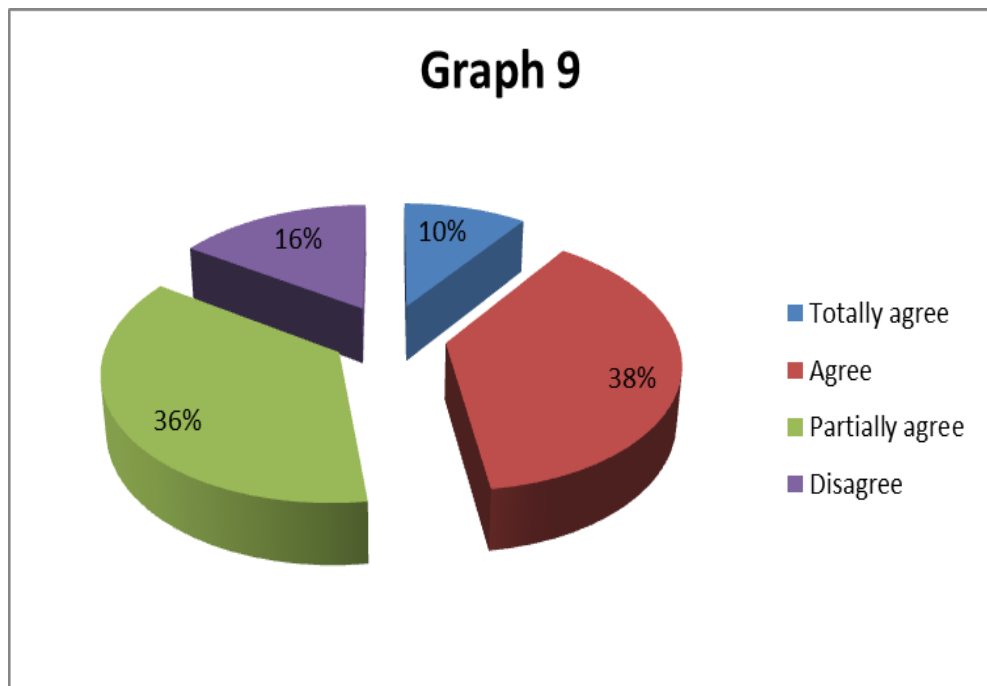
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

According to graph N° 9, 38% of the students mention that they cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students, they consider that students cannot receive adequate feedback from the teacher because of the high number of students, 36% of students partially agree, while the remaining 16% of students disagree. It is important to mention that only the 10% totally agree.

According to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005), feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher, whereby teachers can help their students evaluate their success and progress. Feedback can take a number of forms: giving praise and encouragement; correcting; setting regular tests; having discussions about how the group as a whole is doing; giving individual tutorial; etc. The type and

extent of feedback and its timing depends on a variety of factors such as culture, the stage of the lesson and the type of activities.

According to Scrivener (2005), feedback can be given since the beginning until the end of the lesson, at the beginning of a new course book unit, at the end of a week, before or after the class. Thus, giving feedback of any sort may be difficult for you the first time, but at the end it results of increased honesty, openness and mutual respect will almost certainly have a great long-term benefit.

The way the teacher gives feedback and corrects such mistakes is another important aspect. Harmer (2007) mentions that there are many reasons why students might make mistakes, whichever kind of mistakes they are. As a result, they might make a slip, produce a deeply ingrained error, or just rely on their first language when making an attempt.

Whatever the reason for the students getting it wrong, it is vital for the teacher to realize that all students make mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. By working out when and why things have gone wrong, students learn more about the language they are studying.

In general, it is the teacher's job to point out when something has gone wrong and see if the students can correct themselves; however, sometimes they cannot correct mistakes on their own, so the teachers have to help them.

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

Social issues

No	In classes with a large number of students:	TOTALLY AGREE		AGREE		PARTIALLY AGREE		DISAGREE		TOTAL
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
10	Interaction among students and between teacher and students	56	38	48	33	33	23	9	6	100
11	Students have the opportunity to build relationships watt their classmates.	64	44	60	41	16	11	6	4	100
12	The teacher does not remember the student's name.	29	20	47	32	43	29	27	19	100
13	The environment is less stressful because there is less probability that the teacher makes questions to the same students.	44	30	54	37	38	26	10	7	100
14	Students can use cell phone or another electronic device without being noticed by the teacher.	13	22	12	8	32	9	89	61	100

10. Interaction among students and between teacher and students.
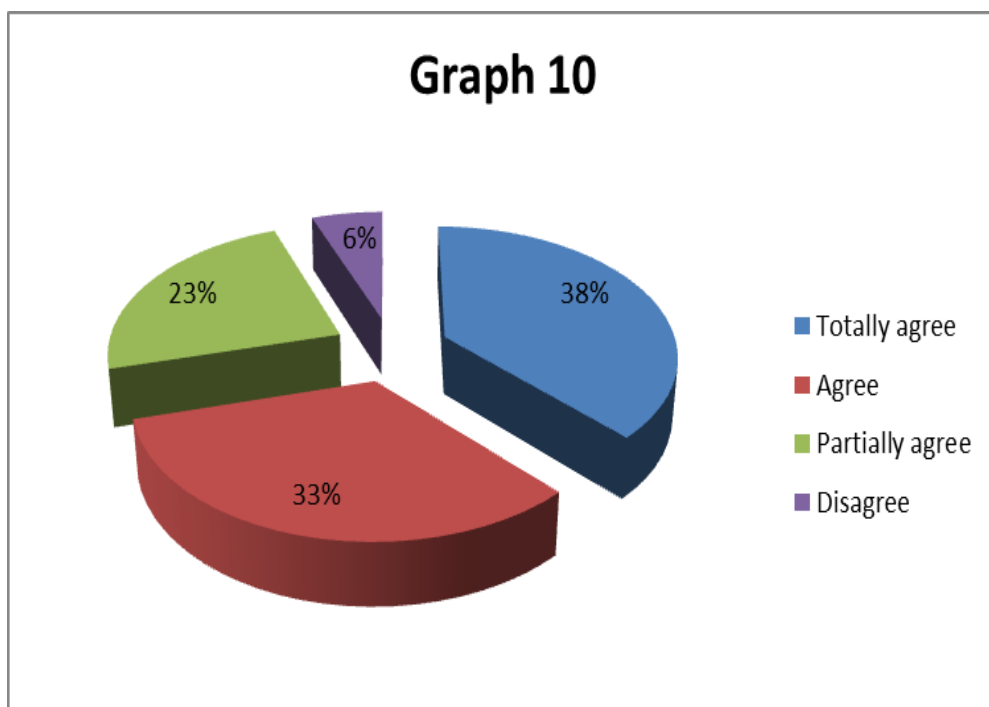
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Graph N° 10 shows that 38% of students totally agree about the interaction among them and between teacher and students in the classroom, 33% agree, 23% partially agree because they consider that there isn´t interaction teacher-students, and 6% of the students disagree with this aspect.

In this graph, students recognize that there is interaction among students and between teachers and students since a common activity where there is interaction is pair and group work. According to Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005), activities such as pair work and group work depend on the particular lesson. Students should take advantage of each opportunity to talk to each other when asking about unknown words, to compare their answers to tasks, to correct each other's work as well as to be part of activities set up mainly with pair groups and practicing dialogues.

In large classes you can quickly divide the class into three or four large groups and then do the grouping activities with random cards, divide the class by numbers, or make a line according to the first letter of the students´ names.

Some teachers adopt a strategy of peer help and teaching so that better students can help the weaker ones. However, this has to be done with great sensitivity so that students do not feel alienated by their over-knowledgeable peers or oppressed by their mandatory teaching role.

In fact, the author's point view and the results are shown in graph N° 10, where 38% of students totally agree and 33% agree; this means that not all the students consider that there is interaction among students and between teacher and students because of different factors such as social interactions, academic challenges, or physical elements.

11. Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.
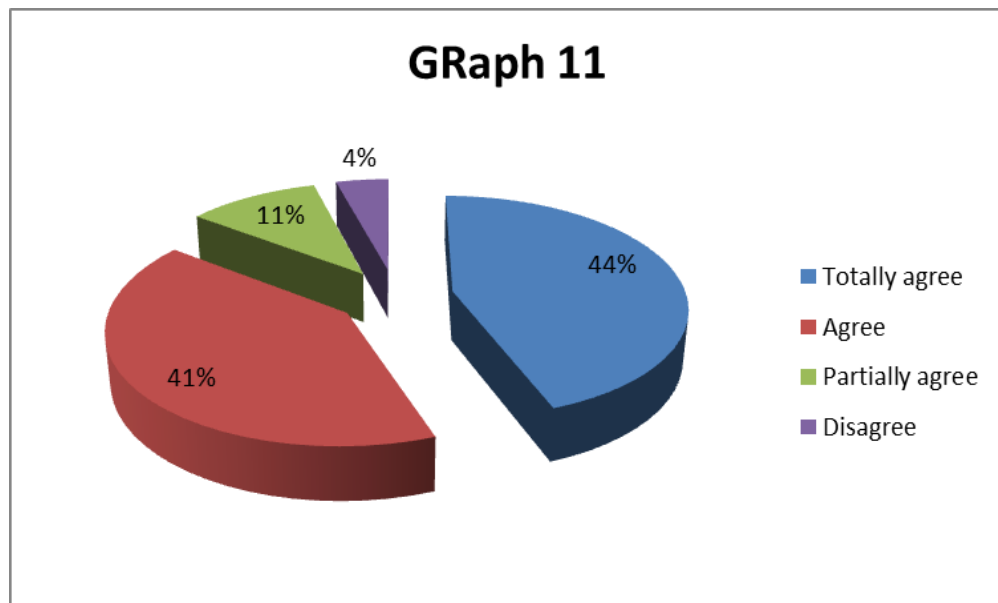
According to graph N° 11, 44% of students totally agree, while the remaining 41% of them agree. On the other hand, 11% partially agree, and 4% disagree with this aspect. The students consider that they have the opportunity to be in contact with more people.

To complement the information about group work activities, it is worth saying that Harmer (2001) states that groups of five students encourage involvement and participation, stimulate interpersonal interaction, and encourage skills cooperation and negotiation.

Likewise, Scrivener (2005) considers that the change of seating arrangements can help students interact with different people, change the teacher´s focus appropriately and allows a range of different situations to be recreated within the classroom, fixed, semi-fixed and large seating as turn around and sit backwards, then

work with the people behind them; sit on the ends of their row and work with people in the next row are the more common seating arrangements.

According to this information, the contact among students is more visible that the contact between students and the teacher, when focusing on the few activities developed during the class.

12. The Teacher does not remember the students' name.
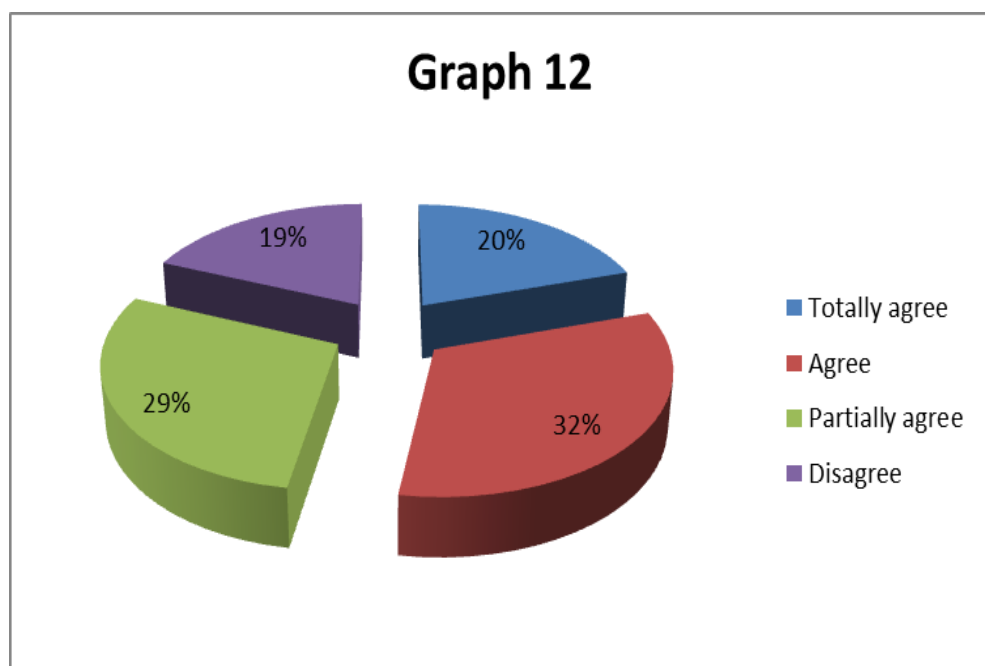
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Concerning the results showed in graph N° 12, 20% of students totally agree with the question; 32% of participants agree; 29% of respondents partially agree; and, 19% of them do not agree. These numbers allow seeing that more than half of the participants consider that large classes impede teachers to remember their names.

According to Woodward (2001), one of the first aspects in managing large classes consists on investing plenty of time in learning students' names. In this way, teachers can nominate individuals for breaking up the group and having fleeting one-

to-one with lots of different students. Another important thing is to use clear eye contact with individuals, and do not bank on achieving group control by simply speaking loudly. In addition, the authors suggest teachers to use other systems for attracting students' attention such as hands up, tapping on the board, ringing a little bell to attract their attention.

Similarly, Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) mention that it is important for teachers to know their students' names as soon as possible in order to demonstrate interest on them and make learners feel appreciated. The authors remark that it is difficult for teachers to control the class without memorizing students' names.

The results above support the information provided by the authors since students feel that it is important for their teachers to remember their names. Specifically, teachers must be able to identify each student in the classroom in order to assign them the activities or for determining which students need individual attention. In addition, learning the names of students who tend to misbehave helps teachers to plan strategic intervention in order to engage them in the learning process.

Thus, the results in graph N° 12 show that students are aware of the implications of large classes in teachers' ability for learning names. It seems that participants consider that interaction in the classroom flows easily when teachers are able of remember the students' names.

13. The environment is less stressful because there is less probability that the teacher makes questions to the same student.


Graph 13

- Totally agree
- Agree
- Partially agree
- Disagree
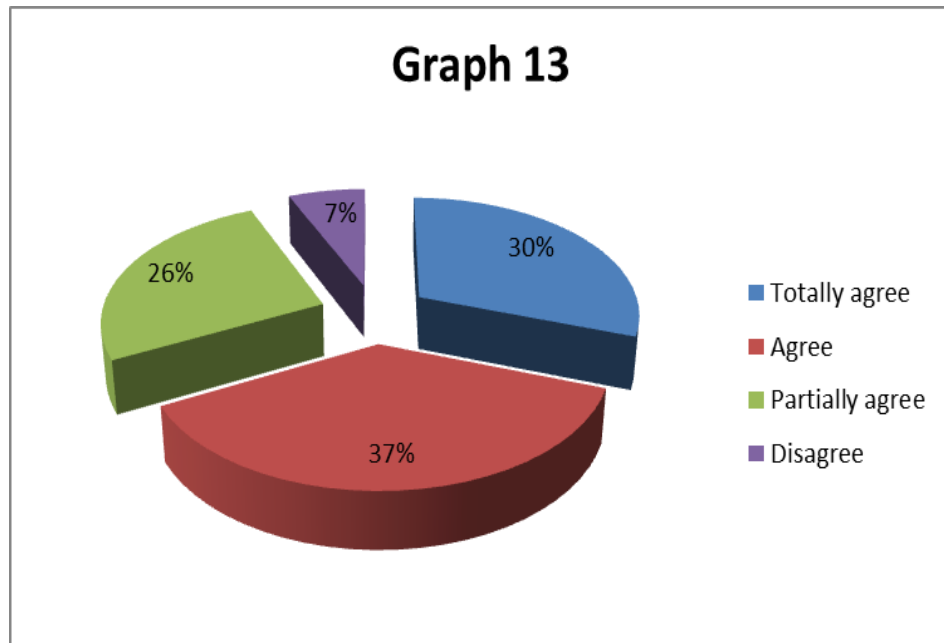
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Graph N° 13 indicates that 37% of the students agree with the question, 30% of them totally agree, 26% partially agree, and, 7% disagree. These results show an important number of participants who consider that the environment is less stressful because there is less probability that the teacher makes questions to the same student.

According to Brown (2002), the environment in large classes may be stressful due to some factors such as a variety of abilities and language proficiency, low levels in students' attention, and fewer opportunities for practicing speaking skills due to high number of students. In addition, the author mentions that teachers have difficulties for providing students feedback, especially about their written work.

Therefore, students' perceptions corroborate the information provided by (Brown, 2002). In large classes, students do not participate in class in the same percentage because teachers are not able to give all of them opportunities during the class hour.

14. Students can use their cell phone or another electronic device without being noticed by the teacher.
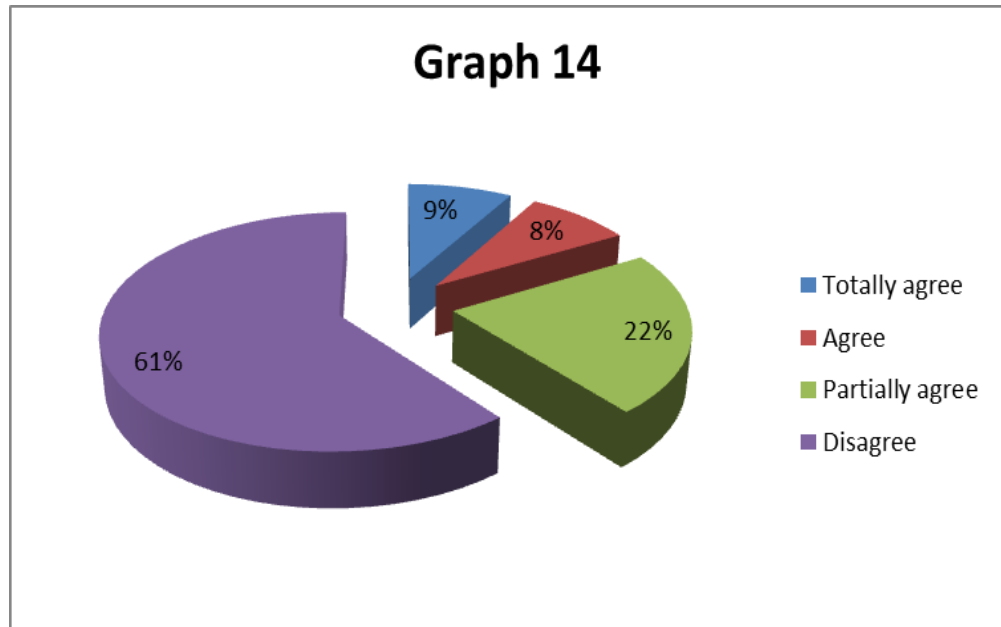
Graph 14

- 9%
- 8%
- 22%
- 61%

Legend:
- ■ Totally agree
- ■ Agree
- ■ Partially agree
- ■ Disagree

Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Concerning the results showed in graph N° 14, 61% of students disagree, while 22% partially agree. In the same way, 8% of students agree, and 9% totally agree. According to the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI), article 330 mentions that students´ faults can be trivial, severe or very severe. According to this article, the use of cell phones or other strange objects can distract students´ attention during class time or educational activities.

The great majority of students consider that it is not difficult for the teacher to notice if any student is using any electronic device or cell phone. According to a report published by El Telégrafo (2014), the current regulations in the ministry of education ordered the 70-14 agreement, which explains the regulations for the use of cell phones in educational institutions as well as educational tools. This agreement stipulates that the teacher is responsible for authorizing the use of cell phones, with

educational purposes considered in the lesson plan. Moreover, cell phone use in the tests shall be punished as an act of academic dishonesty in accordance with Article 224 of the LOEI (Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural.

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

Psychological issues

No	In classes with a large number of students:	TOTALLY AGREE		AGREE		PARTIALLY AGREE		DISAGREE		TOTAL
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	%
15	The environment is stressful.	18	14	34	28	48	39	23	19	100
16	Students feel uncomfortable to speak in front of their partners.	37	30	34	28	30	24	22	18	100
17	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.	24	19	29	24	34	28	35	29	100
18	Students don´t like to participate because they feel afraid.	28	22	28	22	36	29	34	27	100
19	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.	34	28	25	21	31	25	32	26	100
20	Students feel that they can compete harmonically with others students.	39	32	44	36	27	22	12	10	100
21	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.	14	12	27	23	35	30	40	35	100

15. The environment is stressful.

Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

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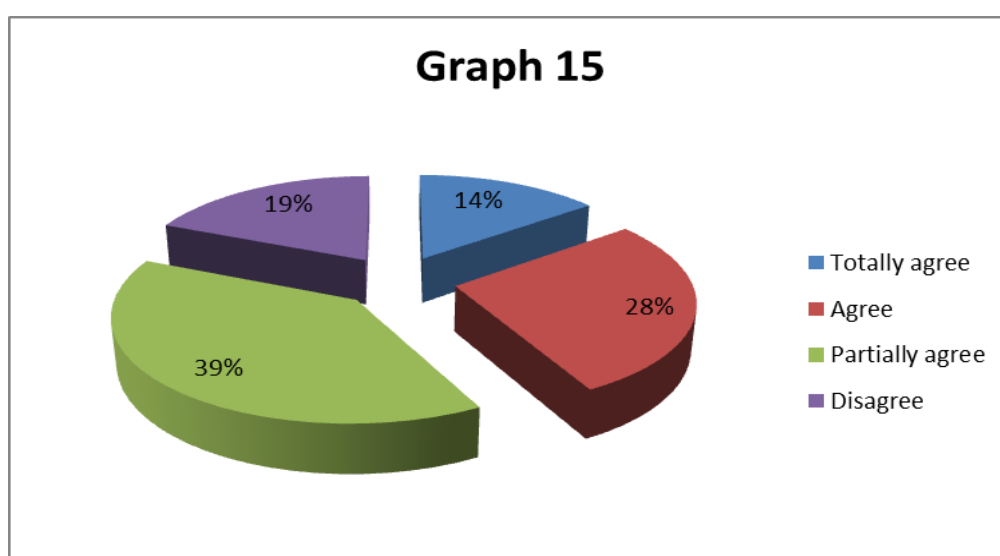
Graph N° 15 indicates that 39% of students partially agree that the environment in the classroom is stressful, while 28% of students agree, 19% disagree, and 14 % of them totally agree.

Students mention that the environment is stressful; due principally to space in the class, number of students, and the weather because the coast region is very hot. Based on the influence of physical classroom in the students' learning, Feinstein (2006, p. 368) claims that when its attention is drawn to a perceived threat, the brain´s ability to learn and remember new information may be minimized." By threats this author refers to a combination of different factors such as social interactions, academic challenges, or physical elements like lighting quality, noise, air quality and temperature that do not allow learners to concentrate well in classes.

An additional aspect that teachers need to control is the discipline in the classroom, and this depends on a number of factors such as the age of the students, because children need to be more disciplined than adults; other factors are the disinterest for learning, or the little motivation of the students by part of the teacher. In some cases students are obliged to be by their parents in the class; also the atmosphere of the institution influence in the behavior of the students; for these and other reasons it is more difficult to keep a good atmosphere in a large class than in a small class.

Moreover, another factor that makes the environment stressful is timing. This is a significant factor in the teaching - learning process because teachers can use time management in the classroom to optimize learning opportunities for students. In other words, moving quickly through the planned learning activities. It is important

to give a limited time to all the activities based on a lesson plan, and this way to get

the aim learning review every lesson.

*16. Students feel uncomfortable to speak in front of their partners.*
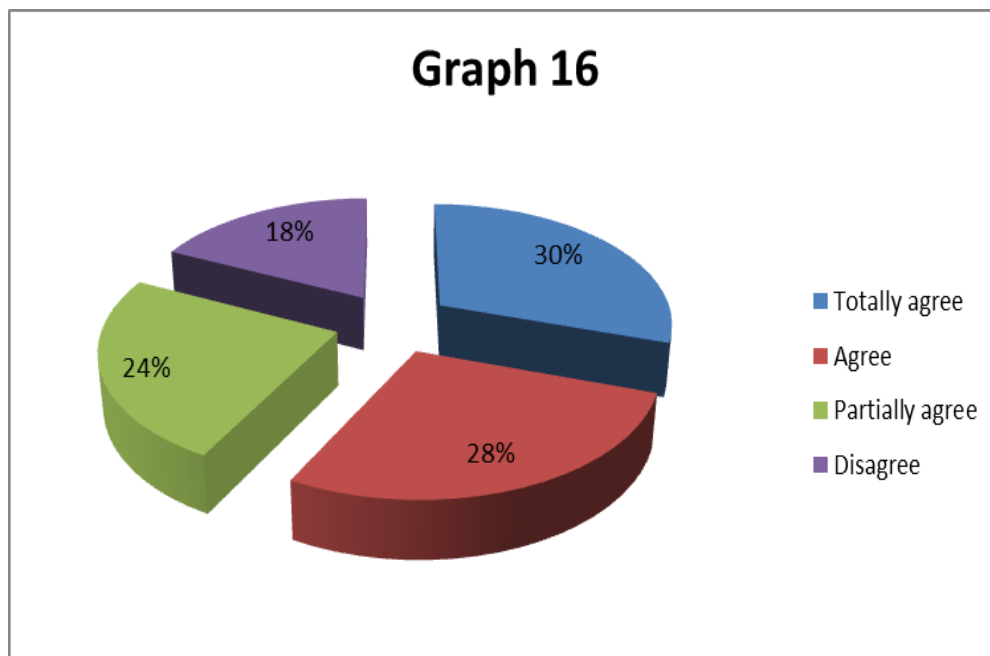
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

According to graph N° 16, there is a positive trend towards the fact that

students feel inhibited when they speak in front of their peers. The results allow

seeing that 30% of students totally agree, 28% of respondents agree, 24% of the

students partially agree, and, 18% disagree.

As Harmer (2007) explains, teachers must determine the reasons that

motivate students to feel inhibited of speaking in the class. Sometimes, students'

attitude may be influenced by the characteristics of personality. In other cases,

students are dominated and could intimidate others in the class. The author adds that

some students are not familiarized with speaking freely in a classroom setting;

perhaps they suffer fear of making mistakes; therefore, it is difficult for them to be

exposed to their classmates and teacher.

Whatever the reasons are, it makes no sense to try forcing such students to talk. It will probably only make them more reluctant to speak. The important aspect that the author mentions is the intimidation by part of other students, and the lack of knowledge that in some case does not give students the security they need to speak in front of the class.

17. Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.
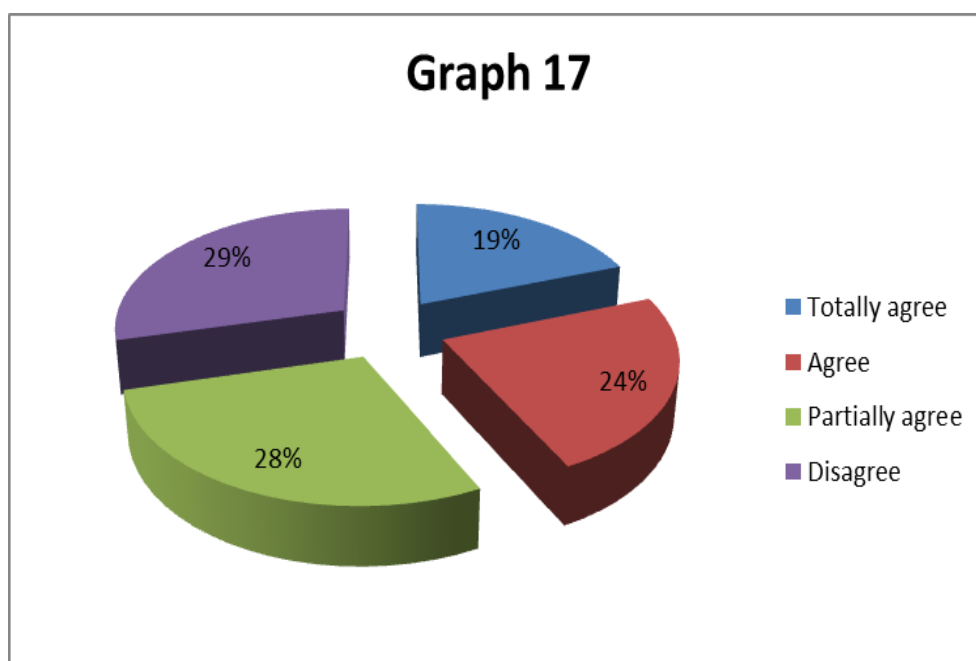
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

Graph N° 17 shows the responses related to the opportunities students have to express their opinions. It can be seen that 19% of the participants totally agree; 24% of them agree, 28% partially agree, and 29% do not agree.

Students' perceptions tend to be negative about the question, and it seems to indicate that they do not consider large classes as an obstacle for expressing their opinions. These results contradict the information provided by Brown (2002) who explains that students in large classes have difficulties to express their ideas due to

the variety of abilities and level of proficiency; therefore, there are few opportunities to practice speaking.

In contrast, Brown (2002) argues that teachers in small classes are able to manage the class effectively and it is easy to give students individual attention and motivate them to participate actively in the class.

Therefore, it could be inferred from the results in graph 17 that teachers find ways to provide students the opportunity to express their opinions and class size is not a constraint for students to have an active participation.

18. Students don´t like to participate because they feel afraid.
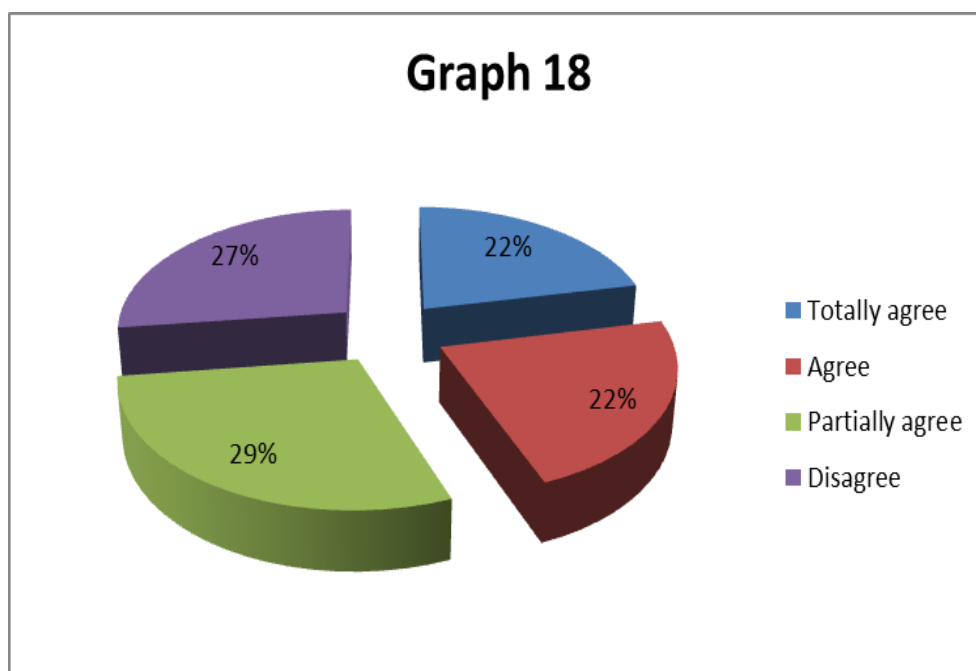
Author: Tania Macías Parrales
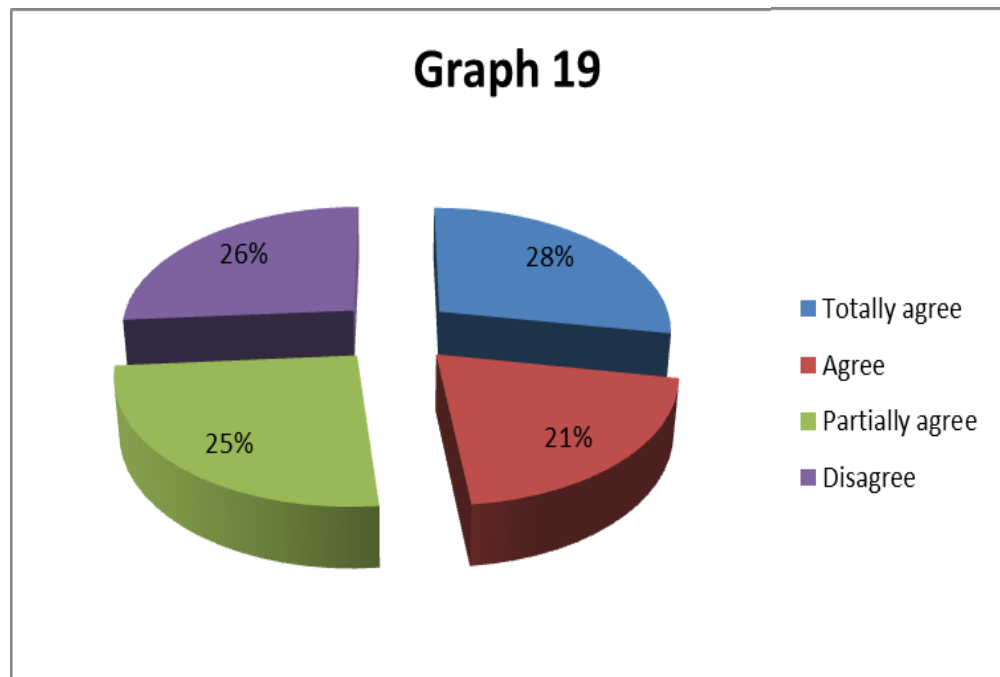Source: Student´s Questionnaire

According to the results obtained in graph N° 18, 29% of students partially agree with this question. They say that they do not like to participate in the classroom because they feel shy, while 22% of students agree. On the other hand, 27% of students disagree, and 22% totally agree. Students do not participate in class due to the lack of security and the shyness of students which is not only because of

students' personality, otherwise the other factors as the level of proficiency of each student, the behavior and relations among students.

According to Harmer (2007) some teachers adopt a strategy of peer help and teaching so that better students can help the weaker ones. However, this has to be done with great sensitivity so that students do not feel alienated by their over-knowledgeable peers or oppressed by their role as students.

There is an important approach which serves as an instrument for teachers to give security to students which is called Whole Language Approach. This approach emphasizes the learning process in reading and writing skills. Richards and Rodgers (2011) express that the learning theory is based on the humanistic and constructivist schools, where authors trace the development of the humanistic movement in education; as a result of this approach, the constructivist learners "create meaning," "learn by doing" and work collaboratively "in mixed groups on common project." At the same time the teacher is a facilitator, who creates a climate that will create a collaborative learning process; another characteristic of this approach is that teachers use realia than commercial texts as newspapers, storybooks etc, encourage to work in cooperative learning process in small groups of reading and writing activities, where the students are also evaluators, evaluating themselves and others' learning, with the help of their teacher.

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

Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

From chart N° 19, it can be observed that 28% of students totally agree, 21% of learners agree, 25% of participants partially agree, and 26% of respondents do not agree. These results show that percentages of responses are distributed on all the criteria; however, over half of the responses (51%) tend to be negative.

The negative trend shown in graph 19 allows seeing that some students recognize they receive attention from their teachers despite of the high number of students in the classroom. In contrast, an important percentage of participants (49%) consider that they cannot receive appropriate attention from their teachers. These differences in students' opinions might be related to teachers' ability in managing learning, specifically, in dealing with behavior.

According to UNESCO (2006), controlling behavior means to establish reasonable rules that will help teachers and students to develop activities in a

peaceful environment. Moreover, the author considers that students need to know the limits, as well as how to behave with others and respect their rights.

In conclusion, there are different activities that teachers may develop in order to provide students the required attention.

20. Students feel that they can compete harmonically with others students.
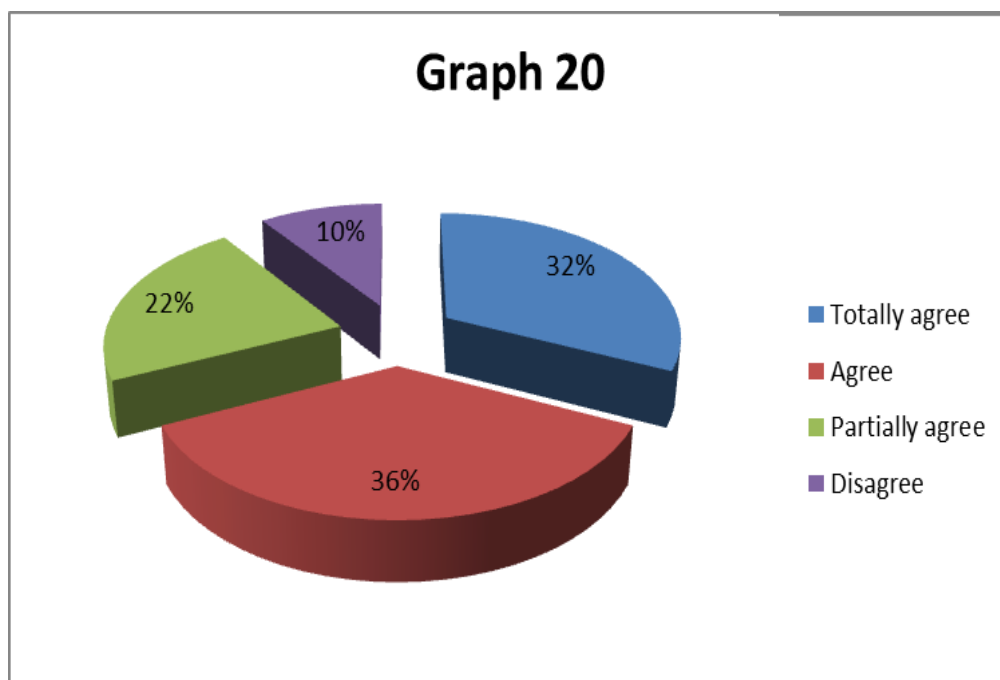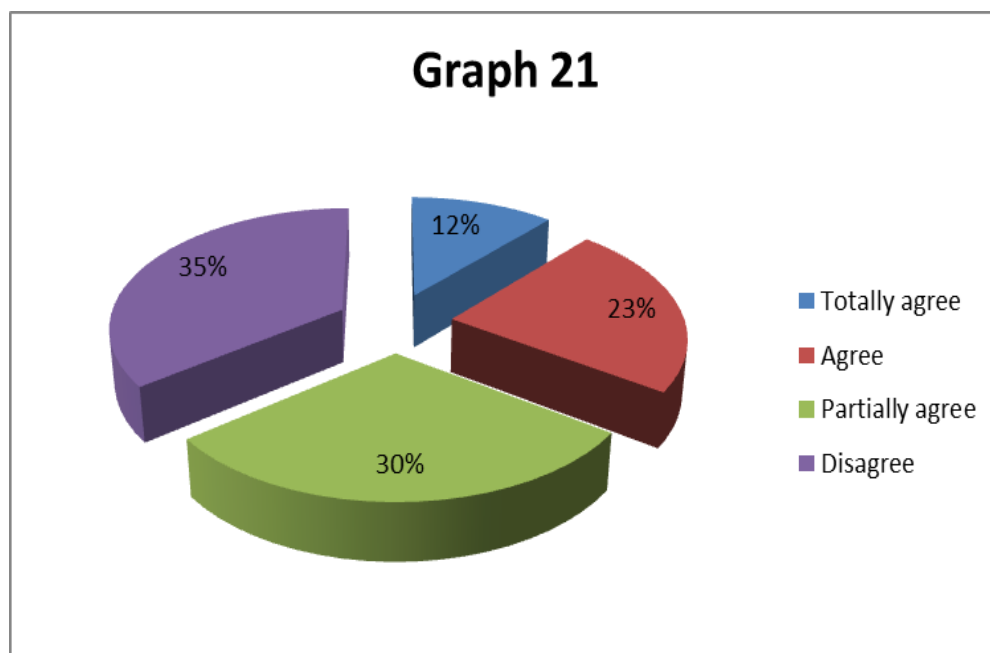

Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

When students were asked whether they can act competitively with other students, the greatest responses were positive. Graph N° 20 shows that 36% of the students agree, and 32% totally agree. On the other hand, 22% of the students partially agree, and 10% disagree with the statement.

The results in graph N° 20 suggest that students in large classes may be forced to participate in the class in order to compete with the high number of classmates they confront daily. In fact, Harmer (2007) explains that large classes are characterized by an energetic environment where students interact dynamically.

According to Woodward (2001), it is important to maintain the students' level of

energy in large classes by using plenaries, debates, and group work.

21. *Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.*

Author: Tania Macías Parrales
Source: Student´s Questionnaire

From graph Nº 21 it can be seen that 35% of students do not agree with the

statement; 30% of the participants partially agree, 23% agree, and 12% totally agree.

The results above demonstrate that students do not feel relaxed in large

classes and they cannot go unnoticed. These perceptions contradict the theory

provided by Scrivener (2005) who mentions that students in large classes tend to sit

at the back of the room to hide away from teachers. In order to avoid this situation,

the same author suggests teachers to rearrange the seats, if possible, to have a better

view of all the pupils. Also, Woodward (2001) recommends teachers to keep

students engaged in the topic of lessons from the beginning in order to avoid

distractions.

This discrepancy between students' responses and the theory provided by Scrivener (2005) could be attributed to teachers' effective managing learning strategies. In this sense, the same author remarks that good amount of authority, used properly, may guide students toward an appropriate behavior.

In general, there is a psychological influence of large classes in the students' learning process. Specifically, pupils indicated that the classroom environment is stressful and teachers do not pay attention to their needs. This is an indication that students perceive that interaction is not controlled by teachers and probably the noise generated by the whole class affects their level of concentration. Even more, when many students are talking and demanding teachers' attention at the same time, it may result frustrating for both teachers and students.

In addition, students indicated that they feel uncomfortable and shy when they speak in front of their peers. This situation could be attributed to the variety of language proficiency mentioned by (Brown, 2002). Commonly, English learners feel intimidated when they have to produce language in front of others, and speaking in a crowded place is not the exception.

Finally, learners stated that they can compete and express their opinion in large classes, but get unnoticed at the same time. These opinions show some contradiction because competition in classroom means to participate actively in classes according to the requirements set by teachers. On the other hand, being unnoticed means to feel isolated, anonymous, and voiceless; taking a passive role without assuming responsibility for learning. Certainly, large classes might increase the number of distraction and behavior issues and it could lead students to perceive that sometimes it is not possible to take part of the activities in the classes.

Conclusions

Students perceive that class size does not affect the activities done in the class because they are able to apply what they learn. It seems that teachers know how to take advantage of the physical space in order to assign different activities that allow learners to practice the language.

Teaches perceive that class size has a negative influence on the students' level of attention and participation. The high number of students in the classroom does not allow teachers to ensure that all students, especially those who sit in the last rows, are engaged in the lessons.

Regarding the use of activities such as role plays, debates, or competitions, there is a slight difference in student's answers; however, the majority of participants tend to indicate that those types of activities are not used in the English class. It seems that it takes a lot of time to involve students in debates or competitions due to class size.

Teachers can manage learning appropriately since students expressed that they cannot cheat during tests and they do not do tasks of other subjects in the class. This means that students are aware of their limits and know how to behave in the English class.

Seating arrangement in large classes difficult students to actively participate in class activities the development of activities. The physical spaces allow teachers to arrange seats in order to involve students in the lessons.

Regarding the social implications of large classes, it seems that class size promotes interaction and builds good relationships in the classroom. Moreover, students feel relaxed because they are not frequently selected to answer questions since their teachers appear to have problems to remember their names.

There is a psychological implication of large classes in the teaching-learning process since students indicate that the environment is stressful and they feel inhibited when speaking in front of others. In addition, students perceive their teachers do not pay attention to their needs equally.

Recommendations

Teachers should find creative ways to engage all students in the lessons such as warming up activities and ice breakers which objective is to provide interesting, individual or group activities in order to give all students the same opportunity to participate.

It is advisable to carefully plan the type of seating arrangements to provide students a comfortable environment when they participate in debates or sessions, and other types of activities that promote the use of the target language for exchanging ideas.

Teachers need to find effective ways to develop students' speaking skills in large classes. The Internet offers varied activities and ideas for engaging students in meaningful and fun activities in large classes.

It is important for teachers to ensure that students' needs are appropriately met. In this sense, teachers might choose a peer-tutoring strategy to provide learners some kind of individual attention.

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ANNEXES

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLES

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

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

¡Gracias por su colaboración!