



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**  
*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

**ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA**

TÍTULO DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN  
MENCION INGLÉS

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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN.

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CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO COCA

2015



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2015

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De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación: The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian highschools realizado por Camargo Enríquez Stalina Curie Marcusiana, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, octubre de 2015.

f) .....

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## **DEDICATION**

To my mother who was always been my support and inspiration. I know that you are taking care of me from the sky. I love and I miss you mom. You and my father will be always in my heart.

To my best friend Sor Clemencia de la Torre, who has always been besides me with her kindness and words of wisdom.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I want to express my sincere thankfulness to “Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja” for giving me the opportunity to become my dream of being a professional of English language teaching true. With my profession I will contribute to make a better country through the valuable mission of education.

Thanks to the authorities and teachers of the institution that let me develop this research work.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine whether or not large classes affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian High schools. This study was conducted at a semi-private high school in the city of "Francisco de Orellana", located in the Amazon region.

The population investigated consisted of 177 students from 8<sup>th</sup> year of basic education to 3<sup>rd</sup> year of bachelor. Data was collected through a questionnaire and an interview with the English teachers of the mentioned institution. The questionnaires applied to the students were quantitatively analyzed and corroborated with the points of view of the teachers regarding the teaching of English in large classes. Taking into account the student's opinion, it was concluded that students have a positive perception about their teaching-learning process. On the other hand, they consider that the activities done in the class let them practice what they have learnt. Additionally, the length of the class does not allow teachers to use complementary activities such as: competitions, debates, games, etc.; which contribute to a better development of the language skills.

**KEY WORDS:** Large classes, teachers, students, class size, learning, teaching, language, activities.



## RESUMEN

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo determinar la influencia de las clases numerosas en el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje de Inglés en los Colegios del Ecuador. Dicho estudio fue realizado en un Colegio fiscomisional de la ciudad de Francisco de Orellana, situada en la región Amazónica.

La población investigada fue de 177 estudiantes desde el 8vo año de Educación Básica hasta el 3er año de bachillerato. La información requerida fue obtenida mediante un cuestionario y una reunión con los profesores del Área de Inglés de la mencionada institución educativa. Los cuestionarios aplicados a los estudiantes fueron analizados de forma cuantitativa y corroborados con el punto de vista de los profesores respecto a la enseñanza del Inglés en clases numerosas. Tomando en cuenta la opinión de los estudiantes puede concluirse que los mismos tienen una percepción positiva acerca de su proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Por otra parte, consideran que las actividades que realizan en clase les permiten poner en práctica lo aprendido. Adicionalmente, el tamaño de la clase no favorece el uso de actividades complementarias tales como: juegos, concursos, debates, etc., los cuales contribuyen a un mejor desarrollo de las destrezas del lenguaje.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Clases numerosas, profesores, estudiantes, tamaño de clases, aprendizaje, enseñanza, lenguaje, actividades.

## INTRODUCTION

A reality that confronts the teaching of English in Ecuador is that the majority of students that conclude secondary education are not able to communicate neither orally, nor writing the language. It constitutes a big deficiency in the English teaching learning process if we take into account that our globalized world demands the development of an English level that helps students to communicate in this language.

On the other hand, the Ecuadorian government through the Ministry of Education has implemented different strategies in order to increase the quality of education such as: teaching training and upgrading of methodologies and technologies that contribute to promote English teaching. However, it is important to consider that there are different aspects that influence the teaching learning process. One of them is large classes, which is a reality of Ecuadorian high schools where there are English classes with more than 30 students; in some cases 40 or more students per class. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the instructional, social and psychological implications that large classes have on the teaching-learning process.

In order to analyze the different implications that large classes have on the teaching-learning process; it was necessary to review scientific information related with different aspects about this topic; therefore, diverse books and previous studies about large classes were analyzed in order to document this research.

In this respect, Molnar (2000, p.33) observed that “the effect of class size on achievement has been studied for more than a century.” Alternatively, Blatchford (2003, p. 8-9) states that there has been a vigorous debate about class size in schools. On one side there are enthusiasts who feel very strongly that smaller classes lead to better teaching and more effective learning. On the other hand, there are sceptics who argue that the evidence for the efficacy of large class size reduction is in doubt and that there are likely to be other more cost effective strategies for improving educational standards. As well as being under-researched in terms of methods, there has been little attempt to conceptualize, or develop theories to account for the effects of class size differences on teachers and pupils.

In addition, authors like Hasan (2012) states that problems with large classes are caused by different factors such as: discomfort, control, individual attention, evaluation and learning effectiveness. On the other hand, authors such as Bryan (2004) consider that working with large classes does not necessarily have a negative impact on the teaching-learning process. Working with large classes offers teachers opportunities to create different

ways to organize materials and find better ways to organize tasks. Consequently, working with large groups, contributes teachers to grow professionally.

Considering that working with large classes involves the understanding and application of different methods to adjust the lessons according to the necessities of the students, the five more recognized language teaching methods have been analysed: the Total Physical Response, the Communicative Language Teaching, the Task-Based Language Teaching, the Grammar Translation Method and the Natural Approach method. The authors who have been consulted, have given us valuable ideas about how large classes affect the English teaching learning process.

The information obtained will allow teachers of the English area to know the perception of the students about their learning process in order to make the necessary changes to improve the teaching learning process.

Previous research about teaching in large classes have been carried out around the world. As a consequence, three important case studies will be explained as follows:

Thaher (2005) conducted a study with EFL students of An-Najah National University in Palestine to determine the effects that large classes have on them. The results showed that classroom interactions in large classes are negatively associated with class size. Additionally, students demonstrated negative and positive responses towards large classes. It is also important to point out that while dealing with the negative instructional effects that large classes have on EFL students, teachers should take into consideration the social and psychological effects since they are interrelated.

Another study related with the topic of this investigation was conducted by Naidu (2012) whose purpose was to share with the readers an attempt created by CIG (Classroom Interaction Group), a group of English Language Teaching Community Balangore. This study shows that ELT (English Language Teaching) in large classes could be handled and improved by creating an interactive model of teaching learning process in which there is dialogue between the teacher and the students as well as among students in groups.

Additionally, Jimakorn and Singhasiri (2006) investigated the teachers' beliefs concerning English teaching in large classes at the university level in order to provide interesting ideas and useful information for any Thai universities which intend to implement the policy of teaching large classes. In conclusion, Thai teachers thought that teaching in large classes was difficult in several aspects such as the relationships of teachers and students, monitoring and giving feedback and assessment. Moreover, teachers suggested ways to deal with large classes. For example, teaching management should be well-planned and well organized by teachers.

These previous studies have shown that working with large classes is not really a problem if teachers look for different strategies to work with these kinds of groups.

Additionally, the different activities proposed by the authors mentioned before constitute a valuable resource that should be taken into account by teachers.

The main limitation of this study was that the answers of the students did not necessarily reflect the reality that involves teaching English in large classes because they simply receive and respond to the input given by the teachers. According to their responses, they do not have much difficulty in learning English in large groups. In contrast, the results of the interview to the English teachers reflect that they prefer teaching in small classes, which offers better opportunities to learn in large classes because of different factors such as: the better possibilities to promote the interaction between students, the possibilities to offer a personalized attention to them in their learning process and so on. However, this study will be focused on the students' perception about the impact of large classes in the teaching learning process and how it affects them.

## **METHOD**

### **Setting and Participants**

This study was conducted at a semi-private high school in the city of “Francisco de Orellana”, during the first bimester of the school year 2013-2014. The population researched consisted of 177 students from eight year of basic education to third year of bachelor, with the exception of students of the second year of basic education. In addition, it is necessary to mention that when the questionnaire was going to be applied to students from the third year, 19 of them were absent because they were in a sports competition. Consequently, 30 students from a group of 49 answered it.

### **Procedures**

Different previous studies related with the topic of this investigation were analyzed before collecting information about the main methods used to learn English and how large classes influence the English teaching-learning process.

The methodology used in this study was Quantitative and Qualitative. The qualitative method was applied to process the data obtained and to tabulate the frequencies. On the other hand, the qualitative method was applied to analyze, interpret, and describe the results.

The main instrument used for this study was a questionnaire. Apart from that, an interview with the English teachers of the institution mentioned before was organized. The student’s questionnaire included 21 questions to determine the instructional, social and psychological implications that large classes have on the teaching-learning process.

After explaining the objective of this research to the high school principal and vice principal, there was a meeting with the teachers of the English area in order to know their point of view about their experience of working with large classes and to elaborate a schedule to apply the students’ questionnaires. These questionnaires were tabulated manually and were used to analyze and interpret their results.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The English language is essential in our globalized world. It is used in the different areas of knowledge and human development, especially because it has become a universal language that facilitates communication between people of different countries and cultures. On the other hand, a good knowledge of English increases academic and job possibilities. Unquestionably, there are different valuable reasons that make the teaching and learning of English a necessity. Consequently, it is important for teachers to make efforts in order to improve the quality of the English teaching-learning process so that students are able to communicate in this language when they finish their secondary instruction.

Moreover, it is important to analyse different aspects that influence in the English-teaching learning process. One of them is the number of students per class, but what can be considered a large class?

#### **Class size**

Class size is divided into two categories: small and large classes.

According to The National Council of Teachers of English of the United States (1990), a small class is a class where there is increase in teacher-students contact. On the other hand, Bryan (2004, p.345) asserts that “the notion of large class is relative. In different countries the average number of students in a language class can vary enormously. For example, in Britain a class of 30 to 40 students is considered large, while in China average numbers can be 50 to 60. Attitudes to class size have become smaller and teachers want this to continue, yet funding arrangements may encourage larger classes.”

Some authors have given different definitions about the concept of large class. For Hoffman (1980, pg.52), class size is the number of students per teacher in the class. According to some authors and studies such as the research done by Chuku, Ch., Demewoz, N., Negash, N., and Shamin, F. (2007), demonstrate that class size differs from country to country and at different levels and educational contexts with the same country. On the other hand, Coleman (1989) concludes that there is no a universal conception of the size of the ideal, large and small classes.

Some teachers find difficult to teach English in numerous groups owing to different aspects such as: the physical space and the difficulty to control the discipline between another factors that constitute a challenge in the educational process.

Moreover, it is important to take into account the teachers' perception about the problems related with large classes. Hasan (2012) considers that the problems associated with large classes can be physical, psychological and technical.

Physically, teachers in large classes can feel weary because they have to speak louder and move to longer distances than when they work with small classes. In the psychological aspect, teachers may feel without confidence being face to face with a large group. Other problems that worry teachers that work with large classes is how to get students' attention and how to check assignments.

Hasan (2012) also states that some problems with large classes consist on aspects such as: discomfort, because it is difficult to promote students' interaction and there is not enough space in the classroom to move them; discipline owing to in large classes teachers are not able to control what is happening and classes become so noisy. With respect to evaluation, teachers feel difficult to check all the students' work.

In contrast with this position of working with large classes, some authors consider that large classes have positive points. For example, Bryam (2004, p.345) believes that "class size does not necessarily have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning." He remarks that the matters are the perception and assumptions about large classes, the methods that the teacher adopts and the ways in which they organize the interaction in class, how they attend to learners individually and the adequate assessing to the students' progress. Hess (2001) states that teaching with large classes has certain advantages; for example, in large classes there are enough students for more communication and interaction in the classroom, increasing the interest, energy level and the linguistic output of the entire group. She also considers that in large classes, there is a rich variety of human resources owing to the existence of different opinions, points of reference, different world-views and values, many different experiences and styles of learning. It constitutes a chance so that students learn by finding out about one another.

Another positive point about working with large classes is the one mentioned by Hess (2001, p.3) since in this kind of classes "students can learn as much from one another as they learn from the teacher." According to this point of view, the teacher should establish a climate that let students help one another increasing cooperation between them. Cooperation in large classes increases the improvement of language skills.

Teachers of large classes should constantly be aware of different activities and processes as well as a variety of incoming stimuli. Consequently, working with this kind of classes constitutes a challenge and the best and most effective aspect of our intellectual and emotional nature.

Working with large classes makes teachers create and develop different ways of organizing materials and better ways to develop tasks. All these aspects make teachers think, create and grow professionally (Hess, 2001).

Additionally, according to the Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education of UNESCO (2006, p.2) “teaching large classes is a challenge, but it can also offer many opportunities to improve your teaching and to make it more enjoyable and rewarding for you and your students.”

The study mentioned before points some positive aspects of working with large classes such as: the opportunity to organize the classroom into a comfortable, welcoming learning environment and to manage the students within it.

In addition, large classes give the opportunity to improve the interpersonal skills of students, trying different ways to get to know each other as an individual through their participation in the class activities.

Furthermore, in numerous groups there is a diversity of students and learning styles. As a consequence, teachers should be able to use different ways of teaching according to the situation of the group. Besides, the cumulative knowledge, experiences, skills, and interests of the students in large classes can be an important starting point for planning lessons and develop activities so that learning becomes meaningful for them. Students benefit from being in this kind of classes because they have the opportunity to share different ideas and interests. As a result, they learn from each other.

## **Teaching Approaches and Methods**

Some of the ways to confront the challenges that involve working with large classes is the understanding and the application of some teaching methods which help teachers to adjust their lessons according to the needs of the classroom. The 5 most recognized methods are:

First, the Total Physical Response is a language teaching method that coordinates speech and action. Its inventor, James Asher created this method based on the way children acquire their first language. He considers that “speech directed to young children consists primarily of commands, which children respond physically before they begin to produce verbal responses” (Richards & Rodgers, 2007, p.73). According to Asher, adults should recapitulate the processes by which children acquire their native language. “The goal of this method is to teach oral proficiency at a beginning level” (Richards and Rodgers, 2007, p. 75). This method is centered in teaching speaking skills and Grammar is taught inductively.

In total physical response, the teacher gradually introduces commands acting them out as she says them. The students



initially respond by performing the actions as the teacher demonstrates them. Gradually the teacher's demonstrations are removed and the students respond to the verbal commands only. (Herrell and Jordan, 2008, p. 65)

In this method, learners have the role of listeners and performers. They listen attentively and respond physically to commands given by the teacher. They monitor and evaluate their own progress and are encouraged to speak when they feel ready to do that. On the other hand, the teacher decides what to teach, models and presents the new materials and selects supporting material for classroom use. Richards and Rogers (2007, p.65), also assert that "The teacher should also allow speaking abilities to develop in learners at the learner's own natural space."

Second, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has at its goal "the teaching of communicative competence" (Richards, 2006, p.2.). CLT includes the knowledge of how to use the language for different purposes and functions, how to vary our use of the language according to the setting and participants, how to produce and understand the different kind of texts such as: narratives, reports, interviews, conversations and how to maintain communication by using different kinds of communication strategies.

The classroom activities used in Communicative Language teaching give new roles in the classroom for teachers and learners. Learners have to participate in classroom activities based on a cooperative approach. In addition, teachers have the role of facilitators and monitors (Richards and Rodgers, 2007).

Third, the Task-Based Language Teaching uses tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. Moreover, Willis presents this method as a "logic development of Communicative Language Teaching" (Richards and Rodgers, 2007, p. 223). Task Based Language Teaching is based on several principles of the language teaching movement from the 1980s which proposes activities that involve real communication because they are essential for language learning and activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks to promote learning.

The central unit of planning and teaching of this method is a task. Richards (2007, p. 224) defines it as "an activity or goal carried out using language." These activities could be: solving a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, making a telephone call, writing a letter or reading a set of instructions and assembling a toy and so on.

Pollard (2008) mentions that in this method the task set by the teacher to students uses a language that has not been studied in the class yet or a language that has been studied before the teacher wishes to revise. "The task could be an activity from the course book as practice of a language point or an activity from a supplementary source" (Pollard, 2008,

p.22). Additionally, the teacher pays attention on how the students get on in the target language.

Fourth, the Grammar Translation Method involves the explanation of the rules of formal grammar, vocabulary items, the application of grammatical rules to the explanation given and the analysis of the paradigm text and translation. Its medium of instruction is the students' native language which is used to explain new items and to enable comparisons to be made between the foreign language and the student's native language (Richards and Rodgers, 2007).

Finally, according to the Natural Approach, communication is the main function of the language. It is also a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages (Krashen and Terrel, 1995).

The creators of this method are Tracy Terrel and Hence Krahen. They assert that "acquisition can take place only when people understand messages in the target language and the learning of grammar structures does not need an explicit analysis by the teacher and the students" (Richards and Rodgers p. 180). This method emphasizes the development of two basic skills of oral communication: oral and written (Krashen and Terrel, 1995).

Basic personal oral communication goals may be expressed in terms of situations, functions and topics. The teacher should define situations in which the students must use the target language; for example, in a hotel, the function of interaction is a request for information, and the topic of communication.

The Natural Approach expects that students will be able to understand speakers of the target language and that they will be able to express their ideas. At the same time, this method does not emphasize details of grammar.

### **Managing large classes**

Byram (2004, p. 345) states that "The problems experienced in large classes include issues about management and classroom control, how to ensure student involvement in interaction for effective language learning, how to assess all individual learners, and affective consequences of classes of large numbers for teachers and students."

On the other hand, working with large classes adds issues about management classroom control and the way to ensure the interaction of students for an effective language learning.

Baker and Westrup (2003, p.2) affirm that "it is not just the number of students which makes teaching difficult", but rather one of the main challenges of a large class is that in

every class, students have different levels of language, different learning skills, different learning speeds, different interests and different levels of confidence. Teachers can use these differences in advantage of everyone by working in groups according to the different abilities of the students.

### **Activities for working with large classes**

According to the Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education of UNESCO (2006, p. 28) “students in large classes will be more attentive and their potential for learning will be increased when they are exposed to a wide variety of teaching methods and learning experiences.” Besides, there are activities that teachers can use in class:

*Round:* Each student has a 2- or 3- minute opportunity to express his or her point of view on a given topic, or passes, while others listen.

*Brainstorm:* Ask students to individually think about an issue or a problem and to list possible issues. Assign individuals into groups, and ask them to share their ideas and complete a list of possibilities.

*Simulations and games:* Ask students to role-play a situation. By creating situations that are momentarily real your students can practice coping with stressful, unfamiliar, or complex situations.

*Peer Teaching or Learning Calls:* Randomly select students to read about a specific topic and then teach the essence of the material to an assigned partner or group or the entire class.

*Poster Sessions:* Groups of three to five students each complete a poster display that conveys the group’s work in (a) identifying and clarifying a problem or controversial issue, (b) locating appropriate information and resources concerning their issue, and (c) reporting on the evidence they find.”

The researchers of The Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education of UNESCO (2006, p. 39) additionally assert that “not all the students need to participate in all of these activities, especially those that require individual answers in large classes... The challenge lies in selecting the type of activity to match the purpose or objective you have in mind for your lesson.”

According to Onasanya (1988, p. 53) “the effective teacher is one that uses instructional strategies in communicating with the learners and guiding him or her to the desired performances of understanding and specified in the lesson objectives.”

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

Fisher, Hoover and McLeod (2003) mention that the classroom space directly affects the instructional program of the teacher. The organization of space in the classroom affects the way students behave and move around it. Consequently, it is necessary an efficient use of time and space in order to get an instructional program with high quality. Additionally, they state that “Deciding what type of seating arrangement you want depends upon the type of furniture you have, the space in your classroom and your style of teaching” (Hoover and McLeod, p. 6).

On the other hand, the instructional program mentioned before needs an accessible classroom where the material will be well organized in order that students work alone and in groups. In addition, an efficient use of time and space promotes a good atmosphere for working in class which is an important factor to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process.

## **Instructions**

Frei and Walters (2007, p.11) assert that “the success of various stages of your lesson will depend upon your ability to give clear instructions.” As a result, if students understand the instructions given by the teacher, they will perform the tasks as the teacher has planned. On the contrary, if students misunderstood the instructions, they will not be able to do the tasks correctly. It is important that the teacher is sure that everybody listens to him/her in order to explain what they have to do precisely.

Alternatively, Gower, Philips and Walters (2005) mention that in order to make more effective instructions; first of all, it is necessary to attract the student’s attention by making sure that everyone is listening; second, the language use for giving instructions should be simple, with short expressions. Finally, they also recommend that if possible, teachers should give a demonstration or an example about what they have to do.

## **Feedback**

Frei and Walters (2007, p. 41) claim that “a major difficulty in teaching large classes is finding ways to provide feedback to, and receive it from students. Feedback helps students to see how well they are doing and whether they understand the material you are teaching them.” As it can be seen, in the process of teaching-learning, feedback is an essential element to develop an effective tool for students in order to be conscious about how they are

doing their learning. Along this line, they will have a clear guidance on how to improve it and help them to upgrade their confidence, self-awareness and enthusiasm for learning.

Furthermore, there are different aspects that make effective feedback difficult in large classes such as: in this kind of classes, teachers are not able to monitor students' work effectively because of the short time that the class takes. In addition, teachers cannot have a personalized pursuit of the students' learning process. Besides, in numerous groups it is also more difficult to pay enough attention to students because in a big group it is easier that they get distracted while the teacher is explaining the class. Consequently, it is important for teachers to find different ways to provide feedback in the classroom, taking into account the difficulties that in this aspect involve working with large classes.

From the point of view of Brookhart (2008, p.1) "feedback is an important component of the formative assessment process". He also believes that a good feedback provides students the information they need in order to understand their learning conditions and what to do next (the cognitive factor).

On the other hand, Hattie and Timperley (2007) distinguish four levels of feedback: feedback about the task, feedback about the processing of the task, feedback about self-regulation and feedback about the student as a person. "Feedback that draws student's attention to their self-regulation strategies or their abilities as learners can be effective if students hear it in a way that makes them realize they will get the results they want if they expend effort and attention" (Hattie and Timperley, p.90).

## **Discipline**

According to Frei and Walters (2007, p.14) "a controlled classroom environment is essential for effective learning, good teacher-pupil relationships, and peer collaboration." They also assert that discipline is the "specific management of student behavior."

Grower, Philips and Walters (2005) consider that maintaining discipline depends on a number of factors such as: the age of the students, the motivation of the students and the size of the class. They also state that it is more difficult to keep an orderly atmosphere in a large class than in a small one. Furthermore, the same authors mention that discipline is reinforced by gaining the respect of the students which can be increased by being on time, returning homework promptly, not ignoring problems and self-control.

In large classes, it is more difficult for the teacher to control the discipline. In a group with many students they lose their attention easily, become noisy and lose interest in the class. Therefore, it is important to look for strategies that help them to be more attentive to

the class. A good idea could be the organization of group work, class work, games and other kind of activities such as debates and forums.

### **Different levels of proficiency**

Levels of proficiency in class refer to different degrees of fluctuation ranging from beginners to advanced students. Authors such as Leaver and Shekhtman (2002, p. 11) mention that “the original intent in proposing language proficiency levels was to provide means to identify, assess, and label foreign language skills with the goal of matching job requirements and employee capability”.

Hammer (1998) indicates that students are generally described in three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. These categories are furthermore qualified by talking about real beginners and false beginners. Beginners and intermediate students are often called elementary. On the other hand, the intermediate level itself is often divided into lower intermediate and upper intermediate and even mid-intermediate.

In regard to the course books; they are published according to each level. Leaver and Shekhtman (2002, p.20) assert that there is a difference between teaching and needs of students at lower levels of proficiency and superior level students. At the lower levels, students need to acquire the basic linguistic system and some understanding of culture. At the higher levels, they need to acquire the uncommon, as well as the common, and the infrequent as well as the frequent, in linguistic, discourse and sociolinguistic expression. Further, the emphasis on cultural appropriateness in the definition of the higher proficiency levels presumes substantial interaction with native speakers, which is not a typical experience of basic and intermediate students. These needs lead us to suggest two characteristics that distinguish students at the superior level of foreign language proficiency: linguistic experience and communicative focus.

Pollard (2008, p.12) states that it is important to create balance and plan activities according to different needs. It can be concluded that levels of proficiency are an important factor in the English- learning process because it let students have a sequential organization of the essential aspects of the language that they need to learn. On the other hand, through levels of proficiency students are conscious about the progress of their educational process.

The influence of large classes in the teaching-learning process has been object of different research around the world. Thus, it is important to review them to have a wider point of view about the topic of the present study. Five important case studies will be explained as follows:

Thaher (2005) conducted a research in order to determine the instructional, psychological and social effects large classes have on students by investigating and

analyzing EFL students' attitudes toward large classes at An-Najah National University in Palestine.

The sample of this study consisted of 230 non-English major EFL students. The method used to collect data was an open-ended questionnaire of 47 items in Arabic and English versions using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5. The mentioned questionnaire showed the instructional, psychological and social effects of large classes on non-English major students. The findings revealed that the instructional effects have the highest mean over the social and the psychological effects. It appeared that despite the negative aspects of learning English in large classes, there can be some positive aspects that teachers could make use of. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that despite the disadvantages of teaching English in large classes; not all students are against learning in this kind of classes. Therefore, teachers should know the characteristics of teaching English in large classes and vary their teaching techniques accordingly, in order to ease the problems of teaching, and assess large classes which result from the lack of teaching staff, facilities and space. The author of this study did not mention the limitations found in this research.

Another study related with the topic of the current investigation was done by Naidu (2012) whose purpose was to share with the readers an attempt created by CIG (Classroom Interaction Group), a group of English Language Teaching Community in Bangalore. The participants of this study were a group of English teachers. The research design emerged at subsequently meetings through dialogues which are summarized as the following: they applied qualitative and ethnographic approach through which learners and the learning process became central and emphasized the normal recurring patterns of learning strategies adopted by learners in their classrooms.

At the beginning of the project, the CIG examined the needs of its members by identifying problem areas of teaching in large classes. Exhaustive discussion of these problems helps them discern certain possible areas for action research. After that, the teacher who was observed gave a descriptive and detailed report of the learners, the text that the teacher used and her own estimation of the performance of the class. The classes observed offered various tasks. In order to observe the response of the students clearly, the CIG members were seated in strategic places in the classroom, they took detailed note and tape-recorded the preceding of the class.

The summary of the study report shows that ELT (English Language Teaching) in large classes could be handled and improved by creating an interactive model of teaching learning process in which there is dialogue between the teacher and the students as well as among students in the form of pair group work. Therefore, ELT in large classes can be successful if it uses an appropriate and correct methodology followed by patient, serious, careful and correct management.

Jimakorn and Singhasiri (2006) investigated the teachers' beliefs concerning English teaching in large classes at the university level. This study aimed to investigate the teachers' beliefs in terms of perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards teaching English in large classes. The participants of this study were 75 lecturers from major state universities in Thailand. They were all instructors of English language.

In order to access the opinions and perceptions of the teachers, it was necessary to apply a questionnaire which was piloted with the teaching staff of the Department of Language, School of Liberal Arts, KMUTT. The questionnaire was then amended. It was composed of three parts with open-ended questions, closed-ended questions and rating scales.

Participants' responses were analyzed descriptively by calculating percentages and average scores in order to determine the teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards learning and teaching in large classes.

The majority of the participants (62.5%) found teaching in large classes possible with different conditions and teaching approaches. Additionally, the teacher participants thought that when the classroom is large, teaching and learning inevitably become more difficult, thus less effective. They consider that in large classes students do not receive the same level of attention. As a consequence, they would not be able to notice if a student or two lose interest throughout the lesson because the classroom is too crowded. Additionally, the teachers think that the institution benefits more from having large classes than other agents (teachers and students), particularly in terms of the budget spent for facilities. They did not agree that with teaching in large classes, their teaching or working load would be less than usual.

In conclusion, Thai teachers thought that teaching in large classes was difficult in several aspects such as the relationships of the teachers and students, monitoring, giving feedback and assessment. However, teachers also suggested ways to deal with large classes. For example, teaching management should be well planned and well organized by teachers. With reference to the results of this study, it is quite essential for the executive administrators to understand teachers' attitudes and their beliefs as well as the nature of language learning and teaching. Also, teachers themselves may need to be trained on how to teach and manage large classes. The researchers did not mention any limitation in this study.

In another study from the English Language Institute of King Abdulaziz University of Saudi Arabia, Bahanshal (2013) undertook a research in order to explore the Saudi secondary teachers' perception towards teaching English in large classes and to determine the practical methodology to teach English in such context. This study was conducted in two public secondary schools in the city of Jeddah. Six Saudi of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade English teachers at two secondary schools in Jeddah joined this study. The participants of this



investigation had fifteen or more years of experience teaching English to large classes. The aim of the study was explained to the participants to gain some understanding of their attitudes and beliefs towards teaching in large classes. In addition, all the participants were interviewed once and the questions were concentrated on their experience in teaching large classes in secondary level, the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ to work with large classes. The transcripts were coded and analyzed according to teachers' responses to the research questions.

Through an analysis of the interviews, the researcher could list a number of reasons that all the participants believe to hinder the effectiveness of learning and teaching process such as: students in large classes receive less individual attention than their peers in small classes; on the other hand, big number of students with limited space in large class does not allow teachers to move around freely to monitor, observe and assess students during activities. Additionally, with the growth of class size, students have less chance to participate effectively and use the target language in class. As a result, "loss of language interest will be class dominant" (Bahanshal, 2013, p.55).

Even though all the participants believe that teaching large classes is a huge burden as they end up feeling exhausted; they also find opportunities and challenges while teaching big number of students. One of the participants considers that teaching large classes provides many ways to improve teaching. Another participant admitted that large classes provide her with many chances to develop her organizational talent and use all the proficiency she acquired during her teaching. Finally, another participant thinks that large classes are interesting and stimulating because they challenge teachers to try different methods and always come up with applicable solutions to make the class conducive to learning.

As a conclusion, Bahanshal (2013) asserts that large classes are not firmly a pedagogical dilemma as the complications found in large classes raise more demands and actions from language teachers in large classes compared with their counterparts teaching smaller ones. On the other hand, class size has a significant role in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it is important to explore various methods and apply effective strategies that minimize the effects of large classes and elevate the teaching and learning level to its highest standard. Hence, the effectiveness of any techniques may vary from one context to another as it relies heavily on different aspects such as students, teachers and facilities available in a certain school. The main limitation that the author found in this study was the small number of participants because the data generated from their interviews may not be enough to generalize the result to other contexts either inside or outside Saudi Arabia.

The last study is the one done by Nargis Chowdhury and Sabrina Shaila (2011) which tries to focus on how English language teachers deal with large classes at the tertiary level; especially when they conducted classes to practice and evaluate speaking skills of students.

A survey was conducted on 52 English language teachers working at different private universities to find out the problems teachers face when they carry on and observed speaking classes. Additionally, a questionnaire that contained some fixed alternatives and some open ended questions was administered. The multiple choice and the fixed alternative questions were kept to verify and justify some of the presumptions of the authors. The open ended questions were kept to allow the participants to provide and share feedback. After collecting the survey results; the responses were counted into percentages. Opinions and feedback of the respondents were given priority.

The survey shows that among 76.9 % of teachers have to take 3 to 6 language courses per trimester/bimester, 23% of them take 1 to 3 courses, 71.15% said that the number of students in the class is more than 30 and an approximate number of students mentioned by them varies from 30 to 50. All the respondents agree that theirs is definitely a large class. In some universities, the number of students increases and becomes more than 50 in the language courses because some senior students choose to do these elementary courses at a very late phase of their graduation. Consequently, facing large language classes is a common phenomenon for the teachers.

In the questionnaire, it was also possible to determine in which skill the students are mostly weak. The results show that 25% of teachers think that students are not weak in writing and 19.25% think they are weak in reading, whereas 32.6% think listening is a difficult task for students and 42.3% of teachers agree speaking is the Achilles' heel for students.

On the other hand, teachers attempted to identify the reasons why students are weak in particular skills. The following ideas mirror the reasons for weakness in speaking skill: less exposure to the real life interaction; less familiar with the features of spoken text, especially in terms of the cultural context of the language; in many of the schools and colleges in Bangladesh situated outside Dhaka, English is not practiced much because of the lack of trained and experienced teachers. As a result, students lack fluency and have tendency to code switch a lot while speaking. One of the common problems in the large speaking classes is that when students are speaking before the audience the classmates do not remain encouraging or friendly. This unfavorable environment created by the peers impacts the speaker deeply.

In conclusion, the authors consider that the difficulties and problems faced by language teachers in observing and evaluating a large speaking class are undoubtedly painstaking. In order to convert the difficulties into challenges; teachers need to be focused on student's needs. The teacher needs to have an open mind to be innovative to help the students to attain success regarding speaking. More and more modern approaches and methods should be introduced. Ultimately, the experiences gathered from these classes become an invaluable asset for a language teacher. There were not limitations in this study.

## **DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

This section presents a quantitative analysis of the instructional, social and psychological implications that large classes have on the teaching-learning process.

For this study, a semi-private highschool was selected. This institution is located in Francisco de Orellana province (commonly called Coca) in the Amazonian region. The courses selected to carry out the research were: 8<sup>th</sup> year of Basic Education with 38 students, 10<sup>th</sup> year with 37 students, 1<sup>st</sup> year of bachelor with 36 students, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of bachelor with 37 students and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of bachelor with 49 students.

The population of the classes investigated consisted of 177 students that were given a questionnaire that was quantitatively tabulated. The findings obtained are described below in a chart with the analysis and interpretation of results.

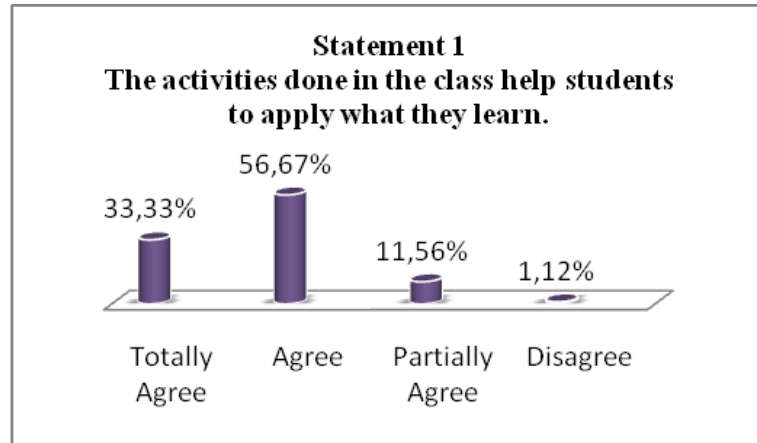
## Quantitative Analysis

### Instructional implications

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

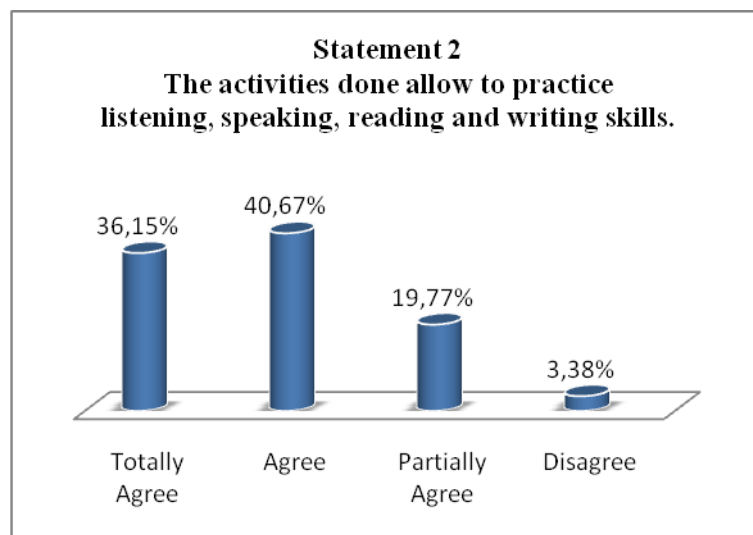
| N° |   | Totally Agree |       | Agree |       | Partially Agree |       | Disagree |       | TOTAL |     |
|----|---|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
|    |   | f             | %     | f     | %     | f               | %     | f        | %     | f     | %   |
| 1. | The activities done in the class help to apply what students learn in class.  | 59            | 33.33 | 95    | 53.67 | 21              | 11.86 | 2        | 1.12  | 77    | 100 |
| 2. | The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.                                | 64            | 36.15 | 72    | 40.67 | 35              | 19.77 | 6        | 3.38  | 177   | 100 |
| 3. | The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom. | 24            | 13.55 | 49    | 27.68 | 84              | 47.45 | 20       | 11.29 | 177   | 100 |
| 4. | Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.                                | 110           | 62.14 | 53    | 29.94 | 6               | 3.38  | 8        | 4.51  | 177   | 100 |
| 5. | Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.                                       | 29            | 16.38 | 34    | 19.20 | 71              | 40.11 | 43       | 24.29 | 177   | 100 |
| 6. | Students can cheat during the test.   | 37            | 20.90 | 36    | 20.33 | 36              | 20.33 | 68       | 38.41 | 177   | 100 |
| 7. | Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.   | 15            | 8.47  | 24    | 13.55 | 54              | 30.50 | 84       | 47.45 | 177   | 100 |
| 8. | The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.  | 50            | 28.24 | 70    | 39.54 | 47              | 26.55 | 10       | 5.64  | 177   | 100 |
| 9. | Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.                        | 26            | 14.68 | 58    | 32.76 | 55              | 31.07 | 38       | 21.46 | 177   | 100 |

Table No. 1  
 Source: Students'questionnaire  
 Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students'questionnaire

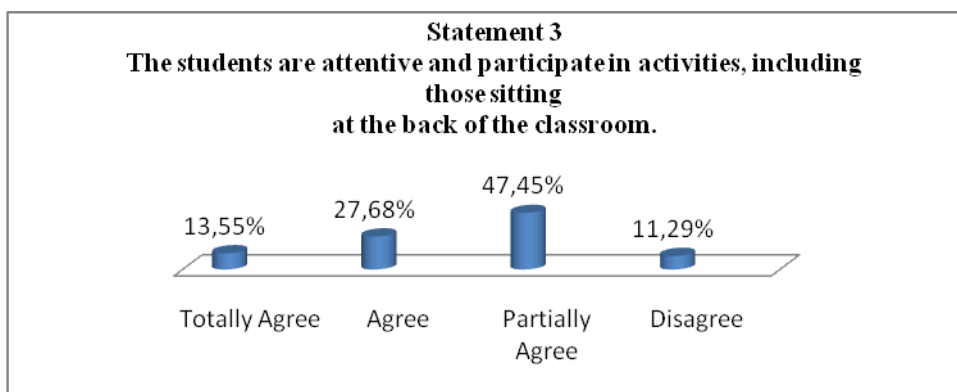
This chart indicates that more than a half of students, which correspond to 56.67%, consider that the activities that they do in the class allow them to practice what they have learnt; contrary to a reduced 1.12% who do not believe it.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students'questionnaire

The results obtained demonstrate that 36.15% of students totally agree, while 40.67% think that the activities done in class help them to practice the main skills of the language in contrast with a 19.77% of students who partially agree, and a small percent (3.38%) who believes that the activities are not helpful. According to the results, it can be assumed that students have a positive perception about the activities they do in the class. These results support what The Asia and Pacific Bureau for Education of UNESCO study asserts: “Students in large classes will be more attentive and their potential for learning will be increased when they are exposed to a wide variety of teaching methods and learning experiences” (UNESCO 2006, p.28).

On the other hand, according to the personal opinion of the English teachers and students, the textbook used in the classroom contains interesting activities that contribute to apply what students have learnt, and to develop the main skills of the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students' questionnaire

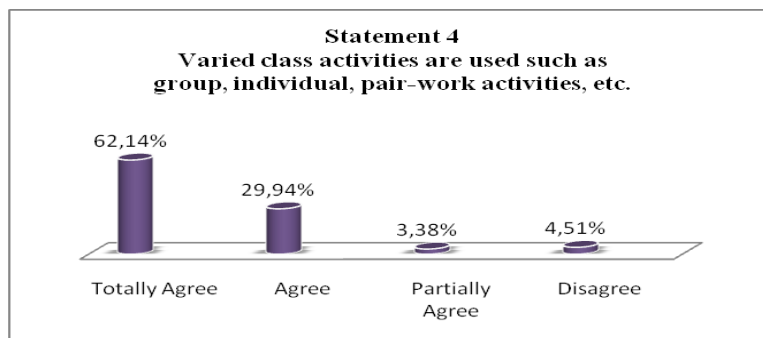
This graphic shows that 47.45% of students partially agreed while 11.29% of them disagreed when they were asked if they are attentive and participate in activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.

These results reflect that students' participation and attention in class is not as positive as it could be. On the other hand, it is important to consider that class participation is an important element in the teaching learning process, especially because it facilitates learning. Patrick and Turner (2004) mention that participation in learning activities provides students opportunities to learn and practice new knowledge. It also allows them to diagnose or evaluate student progress, and give teachers an opportunity to provide cognitive and affective supports for students' understanding. They also state that "participation varies among students. Important factors regarding whether students participate including students' motivation to learn and the kinds of environments and supports for participation offered through classroom instruction" (p.1761).

Additionally, it is important to mention that in large classes it is difficult to encourage students' participation due to the big quantity of students per class. According to the English teachers' area, in a large group it is more difficult to accomplish class participation because it is not possible to take all of them into account. Another factor that restricts students' participation is that many of them are afraid to practice pronunciation and make grammar mistakes even though the investigation shows that there is a healthy competition in the class.

Finally, regarding students' participation in large classes, the teaching and learning bulletin of the Center for Instructional Development and Research (2009) indicates that active engagement can be a challenge in large classes, but many instructors have

successfully designed large classes to include significant students' interaction through the application of some strategies such as: developing rapport, creating opportunities for engagement and managing class interaction.



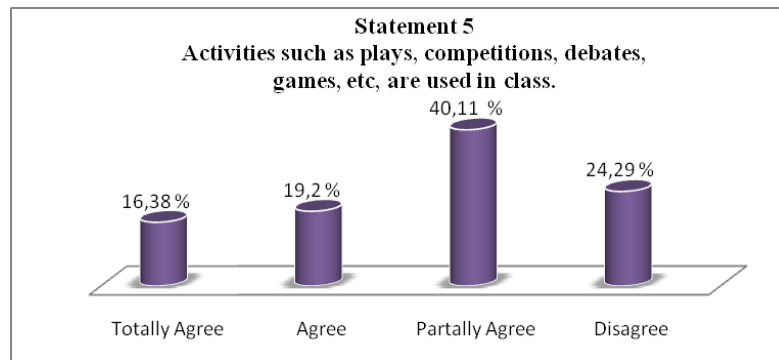
Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

With respect to the activities used in the class, 62.14% of students answered that they do different activities such as: group, individual and pair work activities. Contrary to this perception, 29.94% of them agree, 4.51% disagree and 3.38% partially agree with this item.

Byram (2004) proposes different activities to develop the different skills of the language; for example: oral skills can be facilitated by working in pairs or groups. This can be managed, despite the frequently encountered difficulties of lack of space and crowded fixed seating, by using short, purposeful activities with pre-organized pairs. He also expresses that assessment problems can be reduced by making notes on brief individual oral presentations to the class and by keeping written tasks. In assessing writing, the teacher's marking load can be reduced by giving clear guidelines or models of writing, by limiting word length of assignments, encouraging student editing and redrafting, and using some peer marking or adopting a policy of selective marking.

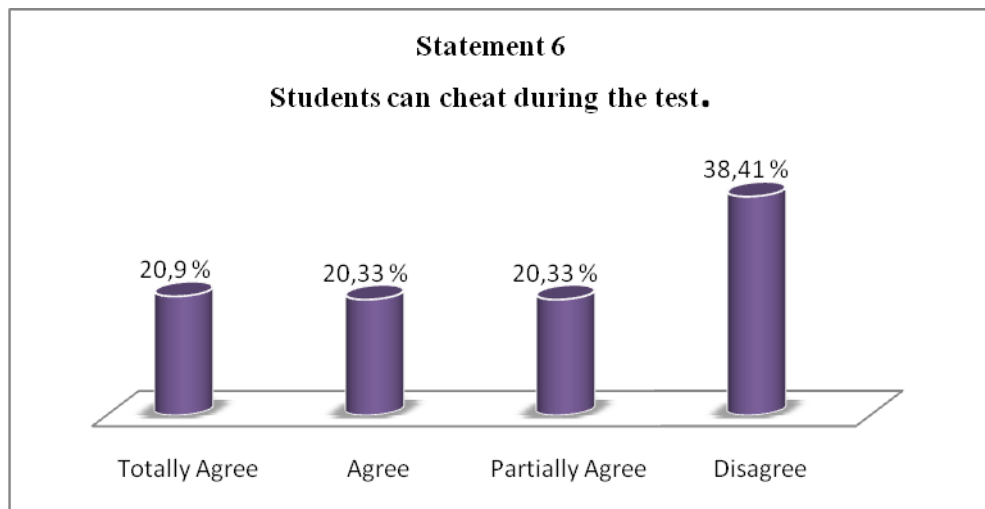
As it was observed in the analysis of questions one and two that the textbook used in the class promotes the implementation of diverse class activities such as: group work, individual work, pair work and so on.

In summary, the textbook used to teach English in the high school investigated is a positive instrument in the English-teaching learning process.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

The students' answers reflect that complementary activities are not frequently used in the class. Only 16.38% answered this question positively, while, 24.9% mentioned that these kinds of activities are not used in the classroom.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Resource: Students' questionnaire

This graphic reflects that 38.48% of students disagree with this item, while the rest of the input has nearly the same percentage with a minimum difference: totally agree (20.90%), agree (20.33%) and partially agree (20.33%) respectively.

Although the similar values in the items correspond to agree (20.33%), and partially agree (20.33%); the answers show that 38.41% of students cannot cheat during the test. It reflects that in spite of working with large classes; teachers are able to control students during the tests. According to the teachers' point of view, one aspect that helps them to avoid students' cheating during the test is that they made two questionnaires per course, dividing the group in two lines. They also walk constantly around the class. On the other hand, it could be said that despite the big number of students expressing that they cannot cheat, they have tendency to do it.

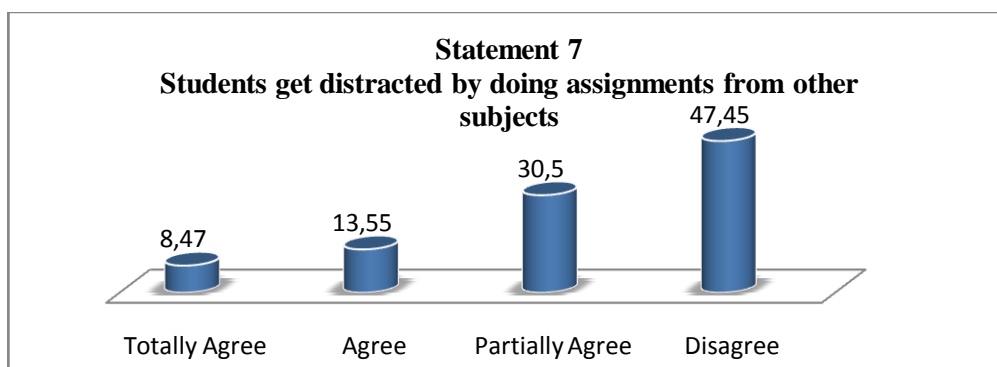


With respect to students' cheating, Cizek (2003, pg. 4) defines it as "Any action that violates the established rules governing the administration of a test or the completion of an assignment; any behavior that gives one student an unfair advantage over other students on a test or assignment; or any action that decreases the accuracy of the intended inferences arising from a student's performance on a test or assignment."

Additionally, Danielsen, Simon and Pavlick (2006) argue two types of cheating: low-tech cheating and high-tech. These authors explain that low-teaching occurs when students write answers on rubber bands, the inside of water bottles, on hands, arms, thighs, and other body parts, on the desk, or even on a cheat sheet they sit on. Students have been known to cheat by putting notes on the floor or on their bag, looking at another student's exam directly or indirectly, by wearing sunglasses or by a brimmed hat worn low to hide the student's roaming eyes. On the other hand, high-tech cheating has enhanced the technology of cheating by using some common devices that may contribute to cheating such as: handheld scanners and pens, handheld computers and watches, programmable calculators and other electronic devices.

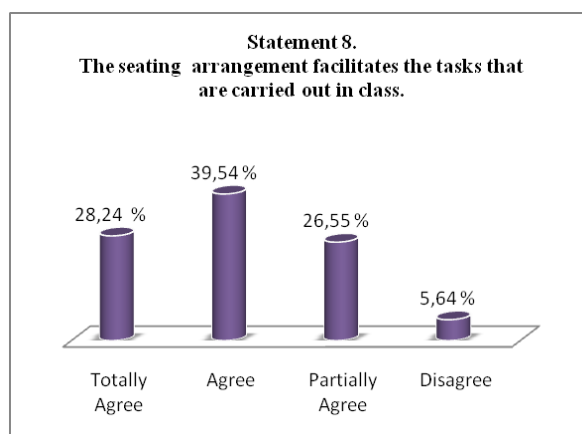
Danielsen, Simon and Pavlick (2006 p. 29) also state that "To create a positive culture as it relates to discouragement of cheating, the educator should discuss the official policy against cheating during orientation each year, ensure that each student has a copy of the policy, and ensure that infractions are dealt with swiftly and fairly."

In addition, Stephens and Wangard (n.d.) propose the following specific strategies to reduce test cheating: 1) Offer multiple grading opportunities 2) Space students if possible move about the room during exams with all desk and floor area clear student resources 3) Do not reuse the same exam every year or randomize order of questions and answers 4) Do not allow students to use cell phones, etc. during quizzes, tests and exams.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Resource: Students questionnaire

Statement 7 shows that students do not get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects during the English class with 47,45% .The rest of the group surveyed, answered in the following way: 8,47% totally agree, 13,55% agree and a 30,50% partially agree. If we take into account the percentage of students whose answers vary among the other parameters in the survey, it could be said that the majority of them develop activities of other subjects. It reflects that in large groups it is difficult to get an optimum control of the activities that students can do in the class, especially those sitting at the back of the classroom.

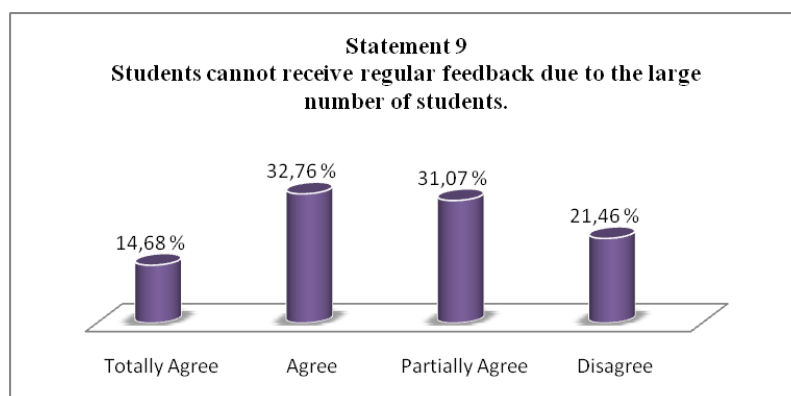


Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

With respect to seating arrangement, 28.24% of students totally agreed when they were asked if it facilitates the tasks that are carried out in the class, while 39.54% agreed with this aspect. It shows that the classroom space they use facilitates the development of the tasks that are carried out in the class. Contrary to the students' point of view about seating arrangement and according to the observation done in the high school investigated; there is not enough space in the classrooms. Consequently, the students' answers to this item could be because they have been accustomed to take classes in reduced spaces; so, the little spaces in the classroom do not represent a problem for them.

Additionally, Hoover, Fisher, and McLeod, (2003, p.6) mention that “the organization of space also affects the way students behave and move around the classroom.” As a result, it is important to make an efficient use of space where the materials used will be well organized so that students can work individually, in groups and with the teacher.

Alternatively, Lindber, Evans and Swick (2005) propose some recommendations with respect to seating arrangement problem such as: observe students who talk too much and students who seem helpful to others during the first day of classes. Additionally, they consider important to change seating arrangement in the classroom several times during the year because students can become weary of each other if they are together too long.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students' questionnaire

Another important aspect of this research is feedback, mostly punctuated by students between agree and partially agree (32.76% and 31.07% respectively). If we join the results of these mentioned items, it can be seen that more than half of the class consider that the large number of students do not let them have regular feedback activities.

Furthermore, according to the Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education of UNESCO (2006, p.41), "the major difficulty in teaching large classes is finding ways to provide feedback to and receive it from students." On the other hand, provide a positive feedback is important in the teaching learning process because it helps students to realize if they understand the material that the teacher is using with them.

In addition, Shamin, Negash, Chuku and Demewoz (2007) point that feedback also allows learners to monitor their own progress and achievement and helps teachers to identify students that could need remedial work. Feedback helps teachers to examine their own performance and to look for ways in order to make a review of their units of instruction.

According to the teachers of the high school investigated; the main difficulty to provide an effective feedback to students in large classes is that there is not enough time to give them individual attention in the class. On the other hand, in the institution investigated, students with low grades receive reinforcement classes once a week. Unfortunately, since these classes are optional, the majority of students that need to reinforce their knowledge do not attend them. It reflects that some students do not have interest to improve their knowledge and their grades.

The results obtained from this research indicate that students have a positive perception about the activities they do in the class. It is demonstrated because in statement 1, nearly a sixty percent of students answered positively. In addition, in statement 2, more than sixty percent of them answered in the same way. The answers that correspond to statement 4 have a similar tendency. It supports what UNESCO study (2006, p.28) asserts: "Students in

large classes will be more attentive and their potential for learning will be increased when they are exposed to a wide variety of teaching methods and learning experiences.”

Byram (2004) proposes different activities to develop the different language skills, for example: oral skills can be facilitated by working in pairs or groups. This can be managed, despite the frequently encountered difficulties of lack of space and crowded fixed seating, by using short, purposeful activities with pre-organized pairs. Alternatively, he also expresses that assessment problems can be reduced by making notes on brief individual oral presentations to the class and by keeping writing tasks focused. In assessing writing, the teacher’s marking load can be reduced by giving clear guidelines or models of writing, by limiting word length of assignments, encouraging student editing and redrafting, and using some peer marking or adopting a policy of selective marking.

Contrary to the positive perception of the students about the activities done in the class, they do not have the same point of view with respect to the use of complementary activities such as plays, competitions, debates and games, where the 16.38% of students answered positively.

Regarding the students’ attention and participation in the different classroom activities, item 3 shows that the majority of students (47,45%) consider it as somewhat satisfactory; meanwhile, the 11,29% of the population surveyed describe their attention and participation as unsatisfactory.

As for question 6 about cheating during the test, 39% of students answered with an unsatisfactory mark. On the other hand, the rest of the input has nearly the same percentage with a minimum difference: very satisfactory (20.90%), satisfactory (20.33%) and somewhat satisfactory (20.33%) respectively. Despite the big number of students expressing that they cannot cheat; if we look at the rest of the above mentioned responses, it could be said that they have tendency to cheat during the test.

Byram (2004) proposes some activities to develop the different language skills for instance: oral skills can be facilitated by working in pairs or groups. This can be managed, despite the frequently encountered difficulties of lack of space and crowded fixed seating, by using short, purposeful activities with pre-organized pairs.” (p. 245)

Assessment problems can be reduced through making notes on brief individual oral presentations to the class by keeping focused on writing tasks. In assessing writing, the teacher’s making load can be reduced by giving word length of assignments, encouraging student editing and redrafting, and using some peer marking or adopting a policy of selective marking.

Students understand that effective learning includes listening with close attention and giving their mind both to the teacher and to each other. There are further key factors in this successful teaching: first, teachers train the students in the ways of learning which are

encouraged; second, lessons are taught with a wide variety of activities (some routine ones, some more innovatory), a smart pace and rapid transitions between tasks. Additionally, teachers are given adequate time for detail preparation, marking on written work and involvement in out-of-class language practice activities such as language clubs or giving individual attention during breaks.

In reference to student's cheating during the tests, the results show a balance between the percentage of those who cheat and those who do not do it (38%). It shows that there is a need for teachers to make an effective control of students during examinations.

The majority of students (39.54%) consider that the seating arrangement facilitates to carry out the activities in the class. Additionally, 4.68% of them believe that they cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.

According to the Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education of UNESCO (2006, p. 41), "the major difficulty in teaching large classes is finding ways to provide feedback to and receive it from students." Providing a positive feedback is important in the teaching learning process because through it students realize that they understand the material that the teacher is using with them.

Alternatively, Brookhart (2008, p.1) asserts that "good feedback should be part of a classroom assessment environment in which students see constructive criticism as a good think and understand that learning cannot occur without practice."

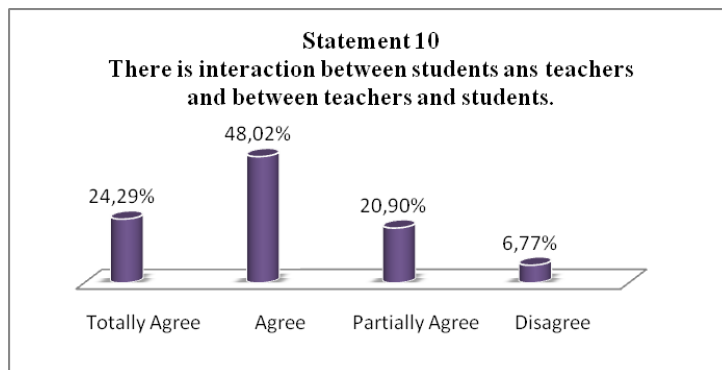
## Social implications

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

This part of the survey will be centered on the social influence that large classes have in the English teaching-learning process. The questionnaire applied to students consists of five questions.

| N°  | In classes with a large number of students:   | Totally Agree |       | Agree |       | Partially Agree |       | Disagree |       | TOTAL |     |
|-----|---|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
|     |   | f             | %     | f     | %     | f               | %     | f        | %     | f     | %   |
| 10. | There is interaction between students and teachers and between teachers and students.   | 43            | 24.29 | 85    | 48.02 | 37              | 20.90 | 12       | 6.77  | 177   | 100 |
| 11. | I have more opportunities to be in touch with more people.  | 69            | 38.98 | 67    | 37.85 | 33              | 18.64 | 8        | 4.51  | 177   | 100 |
| 12. | Teacher doesn't remember the name of all students.  | 30            | 16.94 | 61    | 34.46 | 42              | 23.72 | 44       | 24.85 | 177   | 100 |
| 13. | The environment is less stressful because there is less probability that the teacher makes constantly questions to the same students. | 33            | 18.64 | 65    | 36.72 | 58              | 32.76 | 21       | 11.86 | 177   | 100 |
| 14. | I can use my cellular phone or any electronic tool without being discovered by the teacher.   | 27            | 12.5  | 22    | 12.42 | 43              | 14.29 | 85       | 48.02 | 177   | 100 |

Table No. 2  
Source: Students'questionnaire  
Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina

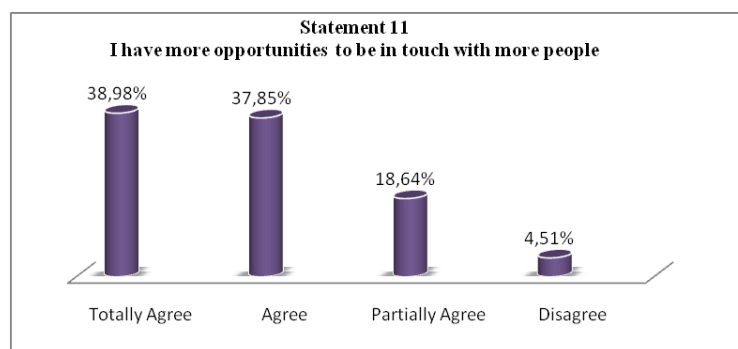


Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students' questionnaire

This chart shows that 48.02 % of students consider the interaction between them and the teachers positive. On the contrary, a minority of the population (6.77%) disagree with this statement. These results report a positive balance of their relationships; which constitute an important factor to develop a positive process of teaching-learning. As Kelly and Waksh (2002) assert, classroom interaction is a medium that helps teachers and students understand their roles and relationship as well as their expectations about their involvement in the classroom.

Additionally, a study of The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning of Charlottes (2009) mentions that an effective teacher-student interaction creates positive relationships among teachers and peers, and provides students with frequent, engaging learning activities, ongoing feedback, supporting and facilitating language and vocabulary.

On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that in spite of the little chance that teachers have to personalize their classes due to the big quantity of students; they perceive their interaction with their teacher in a positive way which creates a healthy learning environment.

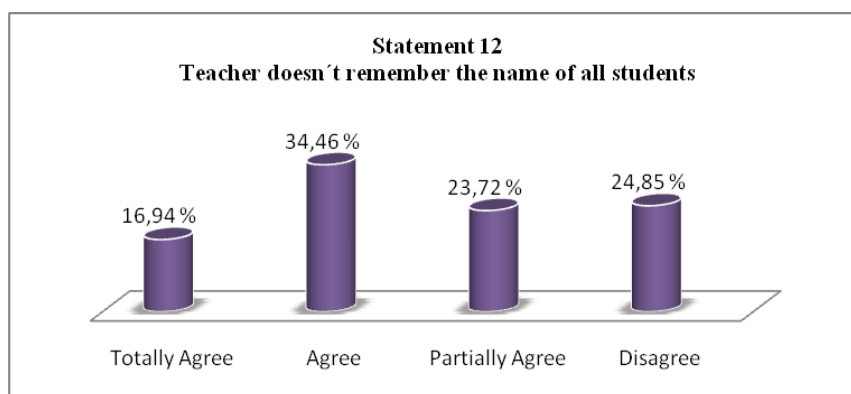


Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students' questionnaire

The great majority of students (38.98% who totally agree and 37.85% who agree) feel that they have more opportunities to create relationships in the classroom. This is a logical answer because in large groups there are more opportunities to be in touch with more

people. According to the answers exposed above, it can be assumed that a positive aspect of working with large classes is that these kinds of groups promote relationships between students and with their teachers.

Regarding relationships in the classroom, Buka (2013) claims that “positive relationships encourage students’ motivation and engagement in learning” (p. 323). Additionally, it could be said that the opportunities that students of large classes have of being in touch with more people help them to get confidence at the moment of speaking which helps them to develop oral skills.



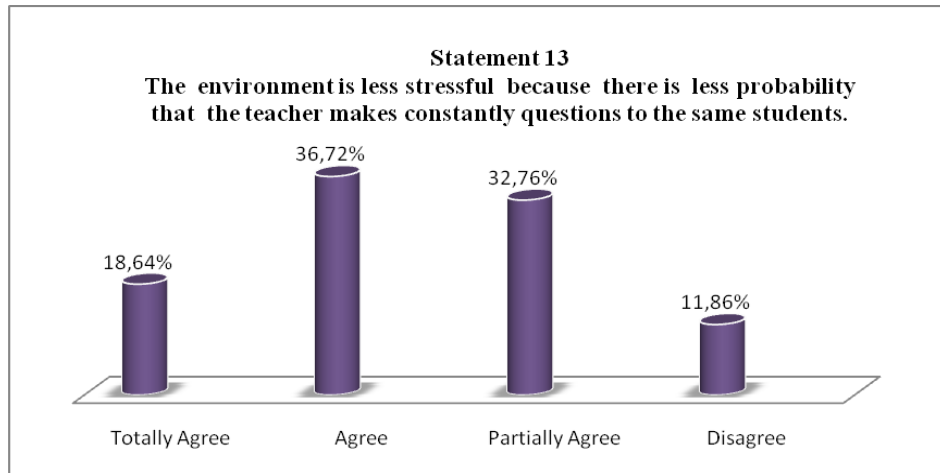
Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students’ questionnaire

This graphic shows that the 34.46% of the population investigated feel that their names are not remembered by the teacher; while the 24.85% answered that they disagree with this item.

One of the limitations of working with large classes is the difficulty to memorize the names of all the students as soon as quickly as the teacher wanted. Additionally, Grower, Philips and Walters (1995, p.19) report that it is necessary to know the names of students because it contributes to create a “friendly-cooperative atmosphere.”

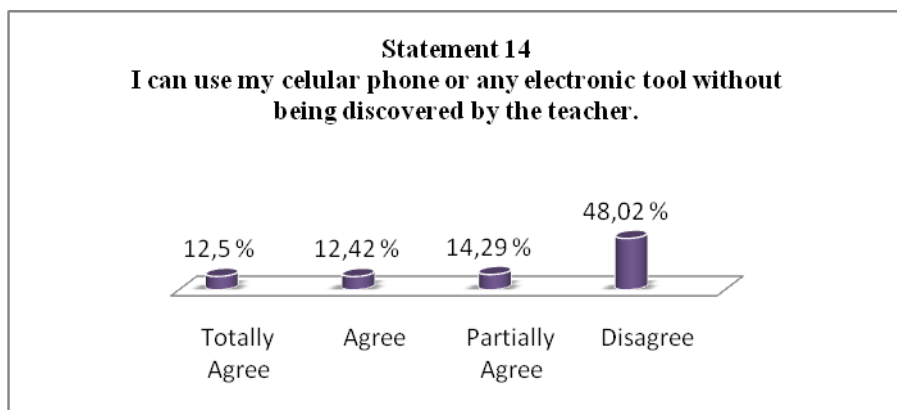
The authors Grower, Philips and Walters also assert that “without knowing names it is difficult to manage a class effectively” (p.19). They also suggest some steps in order to facilitate learning the names of the students such as: keeping a register for checking it at a beginning of a class, associating the names with physical features, especially with the students whose names are difficult to remember and so on. Besides, it could be said that teachers make effort in order to learn the names of their students. It demonstrates the fact that the 23.72% of students partially agree with this item and the 24.85% disagree with it.





Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students' questionnaire

The results of this statement show that the majority of students consider the environment of the class less stressful because there is less probability that the teacher makes several questions to the same students. It indicates that students prefer not to answer the questions about the class.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
 Source: Students' questionnaire

The results of this question reported that it is not easy for the majority of students (48.02%) the use of cellular phones or any electronic tool without being discovered by the teacher. It means that the teachers are in control of the discipline of the students

In addition, it is necessary to take into account that students have grown around a world dominated by technological advances which are attractive for them. As a result, the teaching of languages has to promote the use of new technologies such as the media and social networks as important instruments in the teaching-learning process. Besides, it is necessary to mention that when the surveys were taken it could be observed that the majority of students carried their cellular phones or tablets. The great majority of them use these

electronic tools to be in touch with their friends by facebook, to take pictures, to make videos about the parties where they go and so on but not necessarily with educational aims. Consequently, it is important to use technology in the class in order to promote students to use them as instruments to improve their educational process.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, through the ministerial agreement 70-14 of April 17<sup>th</sup> 2014 regulated the use cellular phones in the classroom. According to this edict, students could use it with instructional aims. Cellular phones could be used as an audible resource to the creation of multimedia collections, photographs of excursions and tours and for the creation of nets of specific knowledge between students. Obviously, the teacher is the responsible of authorizing the use of this tool in the classroom.

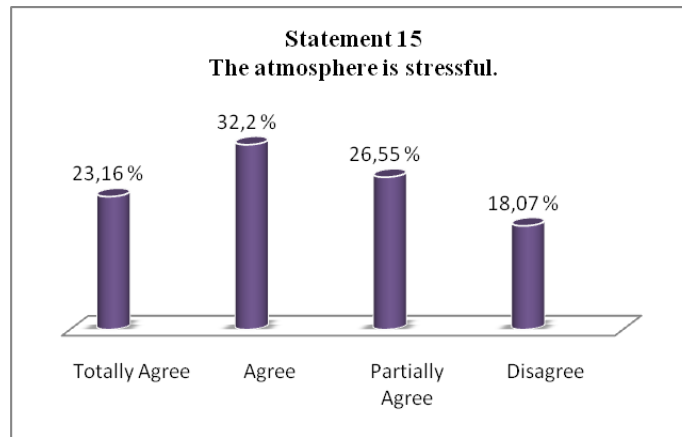
In brief, the survey that was applied has shown some of the strengths and weakness that working with large classes have on the social aspect. One of the strengths that reflect the present study is the best possibility that students of numerous groups have to be in touch with more people and the positive interaction between students and teachers. Contrary to the strengths presented, working with these kinds of groups have its weaknesses. For example, aspects such as the need to receive regular feedback from the teacher as well as the fact teachers remember students' names are some aspects that need to be improved.

## Psychological implications

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

| N°  | In classes with a large number of students:                        | Agree |       | Partially Agree |       | Disagree |       | TOTAL |     |
|-----|--|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
|     |  | F     | %     | f               | %     | f        | %     | f     | %   |
| 15. | The atmosphere is stressful.                                       | 57    | 32.20 | 47              | 26.55 | 32       | 18.07 | 177   | 100 |
| 16. | I feel uneasy when I have to talk in front of my classmates.       | 56    | 31.63 | 47              | 26.55 | 30       | 16.94 | 177   | 100 |
| 17. | I have less chance to express myself.                              | 56    | 31.63 | 58              | 32.76 | 35       | 19.77 | 177   | 100 |
| 18. | I don't like to participate because I feel shyness.                | 37    | 20.90 | 44              | 24.85 | 60       | 33.89 | 177   | 100 |
| 19. | The teacher doesn't pay the same attention to all the students.    | 45    | 25.42 | 38              | 21.46 | 48       | 27.11 | 177   | 100 |
| 20. | I feel that I can have a positive competition with other students. | 65    | 36.72 | 35              | 19.77 | 19       | 10.73 | 177   | 100 |
| 21. | I feel relaxed because I am unnoticed.                             | 46    | 25.98 | 66              | 37.28 | 36       | 20.33 | 177   | 100 |

Table No. 3  
 Source: Students'questionnaire  
 Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina

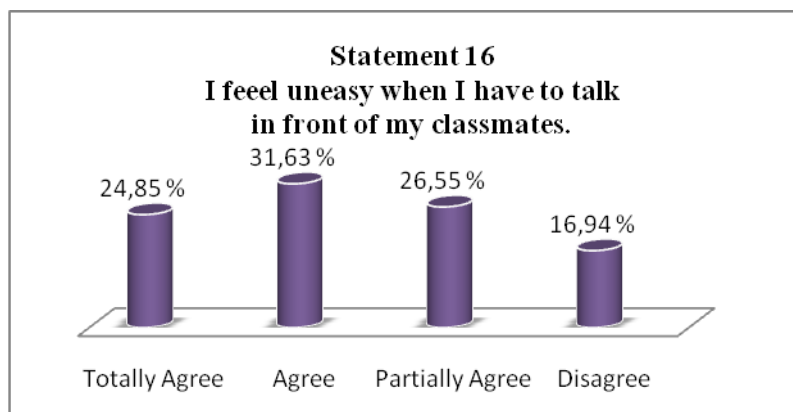


Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

This chart shows that the majority of students (32.2%) partially agree when they were asked if the atmosphere of the class is stressful; meanwhile, 18.07% of them disagree with this item. Additionally, 23.16% totally agree and 26.55% partially agree. It indicates that students feel different levels of stress. From the point of view of Blazer (2010), students are under the pressure from their teachers, their parents, admissions counselors to maintain high grade point average. Besides, they participate in a variety of extracurricular activities and so on. This author also asserts that “studies have recently called attention to high levels of student stress in our schools. Surveys have found that most students identify academic pressure as the main reason for their stress. Consequently, researchers have chronicled increases in cheating, sleepless nights, depression, drug use, and self-mutilation. While it has long been assumed that struggling students are most prone to academic stress, recent studies indicate that high achievers are especially vulnerable to school-related stress” (Blazer 2010, p.13).

Additionally, Blazer (2010) reports some students' strategies to alleviate stress. Some of them are exposed below:

- Students need to eat well because the body needs balanced nutrition, especially under stressful conditions.
- Exercising 30 minutes a day can help alleviate stress and boost confidence.
- Students should arrange their schedules so they get enough sleep at night or have time to take power naps during the day.
- Students should set realistic goals for themselves.
- Children and teens should regularly find time to enjoy a hobby or favorite activity.
- Students feel less stressed when they are organized. Consequently, experts suggest them use a system of note taking and keeping track of all projects and assignments.
- Finally, students should tell their parents or another trusted adult if they are having problems managing stress or believe they are in need of counseling.

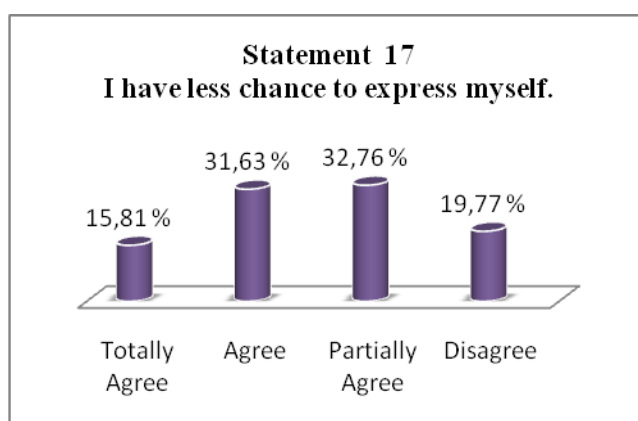


Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

Speaking in public is something that generally causes nervousness mostly when someone has to speak in another language. This affirmation is corroborated by students surveyed whose answers show that they feel uneasy when they have to express in front of their classmates. However, there is a 16.94% of them that do not have problems to do it.

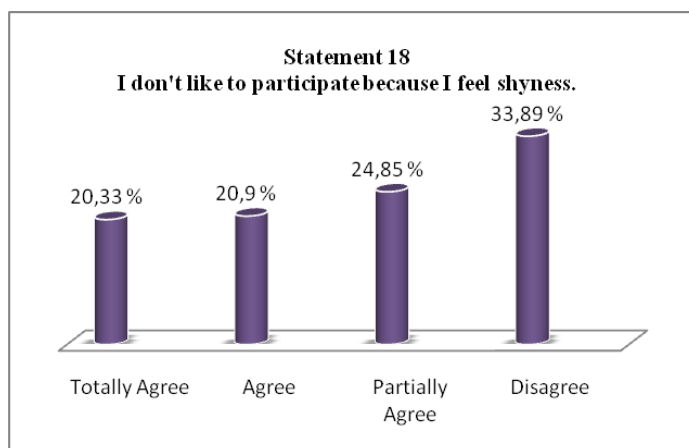
The main factor that causes insecurity when students have to express in front of their classmates is the fear they have of making mistakes in grammar or pronunciation because when they make mistakes their classmates laugh. As consequence, some students feel uneasy to express in front of their classmates. It contradicts the positive interaction between teachers and students which is shown in question 10 about the social implication of large classes on the teaching-learning process, because when there is a healthy interaction there are not problems to speak in public.

According to Brown (2001, p. 269) "one of the major obstacles learners have to overcome in learning to speak is the anxiety generated over the risks of blurting things out that wrong, stupid or incomprehensible." He also asserts that "our job as teachers is to provide the kind of warm, embracing climate that encourages students to speak, however halting or broken their attempts may be" (Brown 2001, pg. 269).



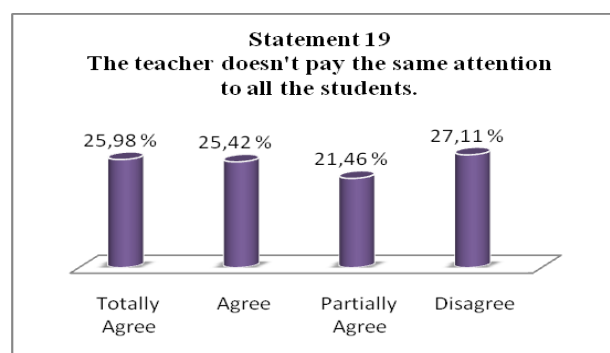
Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

This graphic reports that 15.81% of students consider that they are not able to express their opinion in class. In contrast to this view, there is a 31.63% who agrees with this item and a close 32.76% that marked it as partially agree. Finally, the 19.77% believe that they can express themselves. Through these results it can be interpreted that large classes do not let students express themselves in the class.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

If the first and second parameters are joined together (20.33% totally agree and 20.9% agree), the majority of them consider themselves shy. However, a considerable number of 33.89% does not have any problem with shyness. This result demonstrates that students in large classes get accustomed to speak in front of numerous groups; which helps them to improve their social skills. This constitutes a positive aspect of being part of large groups.

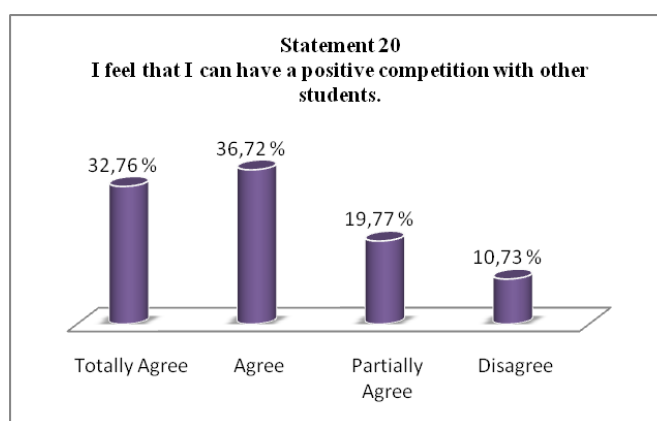


Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Source: Students' questionnaire

The answers with respect to the attention that students receive from the teachers are nearly the same range of distribution between totally agree (25.98%) and agree (25.42%). On the other hand, the percentages belonging to partially agree and disagree correspond to

27.46% and 27,11% respectively. These results indicate that it is so difficult for the teacher to give the same attention to each student in large classes.

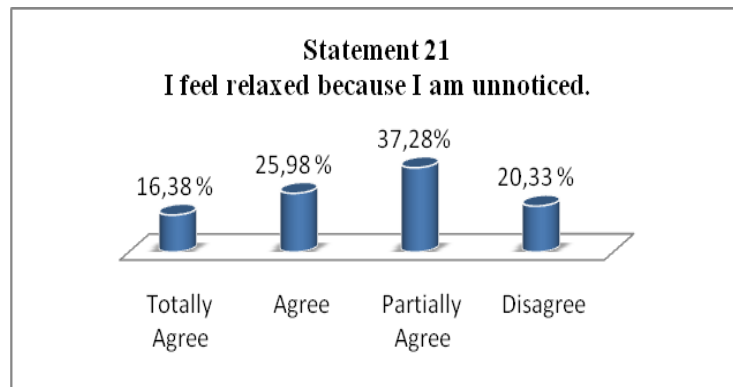
Wosick (2006, p.5) asseverates that “many instructors try to make a large class small by treating it as such.” According to this author, methods such as: walking around the classroom, moving toward the students asking a question, helps teachers to be closer to the students.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Resource: Students' questionnaire

Regarding the competition between students in the class, 32.76% of them totally agree that they have a positive competition with other students; meanwhile, 36.72% marked this item as agree. In contrast, 19.77% of the population investigated partially agree and 10.73% disagree. It means that there is a positive competition with their classmates. On the other hand, according to the teacher's opinion and the observation done; students do not have a healthy competition. It is demonstrated because the majority of times they complain about their grades when a classmate that is not a good student has gotten a higher grade.

Something that is not easy to understand is the fact that in spite of having a positive competition between the students in the classroom, surveys also reflect that the majority of them consider that the classroom atmosphere is stressful if we take into account the percentages corresponding to agree and partially agree (58.78%). In summary, there are different points of view about the psychological aspects of the teaching-learning process which reflect a positive predominance of large classes in this aspect.



Author: Camargo Enríquez Stalina  
Resource: Students' questionnaire

The 16.38% of students feel relaxed because they get unnoticed by the teacher in contrast with a 20.33% that has the opposite point of view. In addition, 5.98% of the population investigated agree and 37.28% partially agree with this item. These answers demonstrate that in large groups, teachers are not able to be attentive in the same way with all the students. With this regard, McKeachie and Svinicki (2006) asseverate that the major problem of teaching in a large class is that students usually feel and are anonymous. Consequently, the sense of distance from the instructor and the loss of interpersonal bonds with the instructor and with their classmates decrease the motivation for learning. Furthermore, the same authors mention that "The fact that with increasing class size it becomes less and less possible to know students as individuals is likely to make us feel that it is not worth trying o do anything" (McKeachie, W., and Svinicki M., (2006, p. 232).

Finally, McKeachie and Svinicki (2006) suggest organizing study groups outside of class in order to reduce students' anonymity.

Psychologically, it could be said that according to this study, the students surveyed have reported that they are able to have a healthy competition between them. Moreover, a healthy competition contributes to create a positive environment in the classroom.



## CONCLUSIONS

Teachers consider that one of the limitations of working with large classes is that students do not have the opportunity to receive a regular feedback because of three factors: the large number of students, the length of the class (40 minutes) and the lack of interest of the students who have low grades.

Complementary activities such as plays, competitions, debates and games are not frequently used by teachers because the large number of students does not allow a good control of the students' learning process in a good way.

Regarding the social influence of large classes in the teaching – learning process, there is a positive environment between teachers and students and vice versa. Additionally, students consider that they have more opportunities to be in touch with other people.

Concerning the psychological implications that large classes have in the teaching-learning process, it could be said that the majority of students feel uneasy when they have to speak in front of their classmates.

Teachers consider that the huge number of students per class does not allow them to provide the same attention to each student. On the other side, the majority of students consider that there is a healthy competition between them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Regular feedback activities should be given in large classes to help students evaluate their progress while learning English as a foreign language. Additionally, the attendance to reinforcement classes of students with low grades should be mandatory, not optional.

Teachers that work with large classes should look for methods that help them to be closer to the students such as walking around the classroom, moving around the students, asking questions and so on. In addition, they should be creative enough to learn the names of their students by using techniques such as: taking list at the beginning of the class, asking students to label their names and so on.

English teachers should do a deep study about the psychological implications that affect students learning English as a foreign language in large classes, and take advantage of the positive interaction that exists between students and teachers in order to improve oral skills in these kinds of groups.

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## **ANNEXES**

## INSTRUMENTS



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

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.

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

|                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Muy Satisfactorio  | Totalmente de acuerdo   |
| Satisfactorio      | De acuerdo              |
| Poco Satisfactorio | Parcialmente de acuerdo |
| Nada Satisfactorio | En desacuerdo           |

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 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

|    | En clases con bastantes estudiantes:  | Muy Satisfactorio | Satisfactorio | Poco Satisfactorio | Nada Satisfactorio |
|----|---|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 10 | Existe interacción entre los estudiantes y entre el profesor y los alumnos.   |                   |               |                    |                    |
| 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 menos probabilidad de que el profesor realice preguntas constantes al mismo estudiante. |                   |               |                    |                    |
| 14 | Puedo utilizar 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 los estudiantes.          |                   |               |                    |                    |
| 21 | Me siento relajado porque puedo pasar por desapercibido.          |                   |               |                    |                    |

¡Gracias por su colaboración!