UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA

TÍTULO DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
MENCIÓN INGLÉS

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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO CAÑAR

2016

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, in particular to my mother and my son whose love and care supported me during this process and gave me the strength to finish it successfully.

María Sebastiana Aguaiza Lazo

This work is dedicated to my family, especially to my husband Eduardo and our children Edu and Andrew, whose love and care supported me throughout this process and gave me the strength to finish it successfully. I also dedicated this thesis to my parents, for their confidence and support during this time.

Erika Vásquez Andrade

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools. The research was performed with five groups of ninth grade basic education students in a public high school in the city of Cañar. To collect data, three brief questionnaires were given to each participant contributors were instructed to respond by giving their opinion based on how satisfied they were with the different statements presented in relation to academic, social and psychological issues. The results indicated that in the instructional aspect students agreed with the methodology and class activities used, while in the social factor, respondents did not see an appropriate balance of interaction between teachers and students. Finally, when considering the psychological aspect, half of the students surveyed stated that they felt relaxed because they go unnoticed, which shows a lack of engagement in the learning process. Moreover, students did not feel confident with their knowledge; therefore, they felt limited when talking in front of their peers.

Key Words: Ecuadorian high- schools, teaching-learning process, large classes, instructional, psychological and social factors

RESUMEN

Este estudio está relacionado con la influencia de clases grandes en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje en los colegios ecuatorianos. La investigación fue realizada con cinco grados de noveno año de educación básica en un colegio público en la ciudad de Cañar. Para recolectar información los investigadores emplearon tres cuestionarios donde los participantes estaban instruidos para responder dando sus opiniones, las preguntas presentadas tenían relación con el aspecto académico, social y sicológico. Los resultados demostraron que en el aspecto académico los estudiantes estuvieron de acuerdo con la metodología y a las actividades en clase, mientras que en el aspecto social, manifiestan que no se ve un apropiado balance de interacción entre los profesores y estudiantes. Finalmente, considerando el aspecto sicológico la mitad de los estudiantes encuestados aseguran sentirse relajados porque ellos pueden pasar por desapercibidos, lo cual muestra la falta de compromiso en el proceso de aprendizaje. Sin embargo los estudiantes no sienten confianza en sus conocimientos, por lo tanto, ellos se sienten tímidos al momento de hablar en frente de sus compañeros.

Palabras Claves: Colegios ecuatorianos, proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje, clases grandes, factores académicos, sicológicos y sociales.

INTRODUCTION

The public education sector in Ecuador has been dealing with various limitations, a crucial number of high schools have yet to reach an appropriate level of English and as a consequence students are unable to express themselves through writing or oral communication, in spite of having studied English for many consecutive years, school authorities and students feel that curriculum expectations are disappointing and finally, the number of students per class exceeds the space limitations of the physical classroom. In light of these concerns, the Ecuadorian government has made important decisions aimed at improving the English teaching process. In fact, in 2012 the Ministry of Education implemented different policies and strategies to improve the teaching process. Some strategies for improvement are; having English teachers trained in countries where English is spoken, updating methodology, technology and improving the curriculum based on international standards.

Hayes (1997) asserts that there is no quantitative definition of what constitutes a large class, as public's perception of this varies based on context. He classifies the problems associated with teaching in large classes into five categories: discomfort caused by the physical limitations; control problems (discipline aspects); lack of individual attention; difficulty of evaluation; and problems of charging learning effectiveness. These problems can be physical, psychological but to a great extent technical. Ur (1996) states that, what is relevant to a class considered as large is how the teacher perceives the class size in a specific situation, regardless of the exact number of students in it. There is no consensus when it comes to the effects of class size on students' learning achievements; however it is undeniable that students have to face

serious difficulties. Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) agree that it is difficult to control what happens during the class when the number of students exceeds the room capacity.

Locastro (2001) affirms that the difficulties of teaching large classes are considered: pedagogical, management-related and affective. In terms of the four language skills, the most affect in overcrowded classes is associated with speaking. For instances, in some countries like China and Ecuador the only place students have the chance to practice the language is in the classroom. Even though students are willing to participate, there is a very small opportunity for each student to practice speaking.

Taking into account that most public high-schools in Ecuador face the same difficulties such as: instructional, social and psychological implications in large classes, the focus of this current research is aimed at determination how these concerns negatively impact the teaching-learning process. Some limitations encountered in the research were that students found certain questions confusing and this confusion may have skewed their answers The outcomes of this study will mainly benefit students and teachers in the teaching-learning process. The information gathered through this study could also be beneficial for the administrative bodies such as: the Ministry of Education, high-schools and educational institutions, in order to make necessary changes in the future curricula.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in a public high school located in the city of Cañar. The student sample consisted of 5 classes with a total of 216 students - all of them from 9th grade of Basic General Education. The age group of the participants ranged from 12 to 15 years old.

Procedures

The study began by researching previous literature directly related to this study, analyzing different pedagogical resources such as books and articles. The information was obtained through the Internet, and with the use of the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja physical and virtual libraries.

In order to collect data, a questionnaire divided into three sections, provided by the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, was applied to each of the individuals participating in the study. The main purpose of the study is to collect data concerning how large classes impact negatively or positively in the learning-teaching process. For this reason, twenty-one questions were carefully selected and distributed into three distinct categories related to academic implications, social implications and psychological implications. Each of the questions were placed on a Likert scale which included four alternatives: very satisfactory, satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

For this questionnaire to be successfully applied, a specific process needed to be followed. First authorization from the administration of the high school was required. Second, a date for applying the questionnaire had to be arranged. Finally, for students to

clearly understand each of the questions, the instructions were given in Spanish, and an appropriate amount of time was given for completion.

In order to systematically analyze and organize the outcomes, first a quantitative methodology was used. Second, the information was tabulated by hand and processed in an electronic spreadsheet. Later, statistical graphics were applied in order to illustrate the data collected for an easier analysis of the three different sections.

The analysis of the collected data revealed important features related to academic, social and psychological aspects. These findings should be considered in order to make positive crucial changes in the English teaching-learning process.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

Nowadays, English has become a universal language; therefore, people who are bilingual or polylingual automatically have an advantage over monolinguals, as they may be allowed to experience new cultures, learn about technology, among other benefits. This acknowledgement has generated many theories from researchers and teachers about the teaching-learning process. More than 81 methods and approaches have been offered with the idea of helping teachers with the difficult task of teaching English to foreigners.

Teaching Approaches and methods.

Communicative Language Teaching is the first one to be mentioned in this research study (CLT). It stands for more than an interaction of grammatical and functional teaching. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 153-155) state, "One of the most important features of Communicative Language Teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language" this involves the use of different procedures where learners employ available language resources in problem-solving tasks. According to Brown and Yule (1983) communication is connected to two general purposes, the international function: where language is used to keep contact, and the transactional function, where language is applied referentially to exchange information. The objective of CLT is similar to earlier methods such as the audio-lingual or oral-situational method, which also aimed at increasing the skills to use language communicatively.

To continue with English teaching methodology, it is worth mentioning the Natural Approach, which is centered on comprehensive and meaningful communication as well as the provision of the right kind of comprehensible input that offers essential and adequate conditions for successful classroom learning acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Coady and Huckin (1997, p.15-16) state that the Natural Approach is designed primarily to "enable beginning students to reach acceptable levels of oral communicative ability in the language classroom". On the other hand, Krashen, & Terrel (1983) suggested an interesting teaching method for vocabulary, as for all phases of language acquisition, which focuses on the introduction of significant and relevant input one which is reading.

Additionally, Richards and Rodgers (2001) hint that the Cooperative Language Learning method is based on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups. With this method learners are responsible for their own learning procedure that stimulates and increases the learning of other students. The Cooperative Language Learning is an approach designed to obtain cooperation rather than competition, to increase critical thinking skills, and to develop communicative competence through socially planned interaction activities. With this method, group activities are the major learning style and a part of a comprehensive system for the use of group work in teaching. Group activities are cautiously designed to maximize student interaction as well as student contribution to each other's learning. CLL requires social interaction and negotiation of meaning among diverse group members who are engaged in tasks where all group members have something to contribute and are able to learn from the other group members. It takes a short period of time for students to achieve

their learning goals in a cooperative environment; this could range from one class to several weeks. Conversely, informal groups are ad-hoc groups that last from a few minutes to a class period and are used to focus student attention or to facilitate learning during direct teaching. Finally, cooperative based groups are long term, lasting for at least a year and consisting of learning groups with stable membership. All members give each other support, help, encouragement and the assistance they need to succeed academically (Richards, 1999).

In the same context, the Content-Based Instructions approach to second language teaching was studied by Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 204-220) refer "to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllables". Although content is used with a variety of different meaning in language teaching, it most frequently refers to the substance or subject matter being learned or communicated through language, rather than the language used to transmit it. In addition, CBI Stoller (1997) provides a list of activities classified according to their instructional focus. The classification categories she proposes are: language skills improvement, vocabulary building, discourse organization, communicative interaction, study skills, synthesis of content materials and grammar. The subject matter-core states that organization of the curriculum is consequent from the subject matter, more than from forms, functions, situations or skills. Authentic language and texts are used. Central material texts, video tapes, audio recording and visual aids are chosen principally from those produced for native speakers of the language. Learning activities focus on understanding and conveying meaningful messages and accomplishing realistic

tasks using authentic language, appropriate to the needs of the specific students. The

content and learning activities in line with the linguistic cognitive and affective needs of

the students and are suitable to the professional and personal interests (Stryker, &

Leaver 1997).

The Task Based Language Teaching is based on the use of tasks as the core unit

of planning, instruction and language teaching. The main goal of this methodology is to

build blocks of language that allows the correct use of the language in different activities

such as finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map, giving directions, making a

telephone call, writing a letter, reading a set of instructions, or assembling a toy. These

activities are meaningful as their main focus is to succeed in terms of achieving an

outcome. These tasks normally bear some resemblance to real-life language use

(Richards, & Rodgers, 2001).

East (1984, p. 1, 2, 3) states "The phenomenon TBLT has become well

established as a means through which learners of anew language might effectively

develop their communicative proficiency". Also, it is important to mention that the

investigating TBLT from the teachers' point of view helps to discover where teachers

are presently at in their knowledge, understanding and practice. This enables them to go

further in their thinking and practice, thus encouraging an interaction between theory,

research and practice.

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 73-79), Total Physical Response "is

a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action. It

attempts to teach language through physical activity". Asher (1977, p.4) states that

"most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary

items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor". In the

same way, she observes successful adult second language learning as a parallel process

to child first language acquisition, because the speech directed to young children

consists mainly of commands, which children react to physically before they begin to

generate verbal responses. In the same way, the adults should repeat the process by

which children acquire their native language. This method can be associated with "trace

theory" of memory used in psychology which holds that the more often or the more

intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory relationship will be,

and the more likely it will be remembered. The general objectives of TPR are to teach

oral proficiency at the beginning levels, while comprehension is a means to an end.

Class Size

　　　Class size is a very important issue to consider as it has a great effect on the

English language teaching-learning process. In fact, class size reduction has been one of

the central discussions in schools as well as in government institutions. This idea has

been well received by parents and teachers for its possibility to give teachers more

individual instructional time with students. Studies through the years have found that

the students who had been in small classes in their early years had better academic and

personal outcomes throughout their school years and beyond (Krueger, 2001; Sparks,

2011). In this same context, Finn (2003) affirms that the issue related to class size should

not just be a keystone, but the foundation of an educational policy. In many parts of the

world, schools have different number of students, where classes of 20 students can be

considered oversized.

There are many researchers and debaters about class size reductions who are skeptic when demonstrating the evidence for efficiency and educational improvement standards. Blatchford (2003) supports the idea that there is trouble when the number of students goes over 30. One of the best things in education is to have smaller classes which allow for a better quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, (Jerner & Loomis, 2007, p. 1, 2, 3) assert " Smaller class sizes enable teachers to spend the time and energy needed to help each child succeed and enhance safety and discipline in the classroom". Although research tends to support the belief that small classes give optimal effects, not all studies on the subject reflect this affirmation; working in small-class-settings is not necessarily a synonym for increasing learning.

Woodward (2009) invites the reader to reflect on what is considered a large class and the problems that may arise. Perhaps problems related to noise, too many people and fixed objects in a restricted space, not enough materials for everyone, not being able to respond to different needs and lack of target language use if students speak a common language. Contrastingly, there are people who see large classes as challenges and opportunities for the teachers as well as for the learners in terms of managing resources, time and space. In other words, class-size may have different definitions, but a large class has no "exact size" and there is no "best way" to teach large classes. Therefore, teachers need to keep in mind that in order to succeed, they need not rely on one particular teaching method; but, in contrast, they have to inter-change teaching styles.

Managing Learning

Managing Learning may be considered the cornerstone in the teaching learning process, due to the fact that it is the clue to get accomplishments. It is undeniable that

teachers develop their own style of teaching according to their personality. Gower & Walters (1995) give some practical advice to follow when referring to instructions. They suggest to primary create a center of attention in the student to make sure everyone is listening and watching, to employ simple language and short expressions, and to use language at a lower level than the language being taught. Furthermore, teachers should use visual or written clues whenever possible utilizing real objects, pictures, gestures and mime. Making demonstrations if possible, illustrating what to do; break down instructions if the activity requires a series of procedures, provide simple commands in sections and check for understanding, rather than giving out all instructions at the start of the activity. It is also a good idea to target instructions in the sense of explaining the content only to the students who need it, instead of giving complete directions to the class as a whole. In addition, discipline is a very important issue in the classroom. It depends on a number of factors such as: age of students; evidently children require more discipline than adults. Usually young teenagers are considered to be the most complex when it comes to classroom control. Discipline is intimately related to the causes for learning and student motivation whether they are forced to be in class or whether they are there voluntarily. Class size plays an important role, as it is more difficult to keep an orderly atmosphere in a large class than in a smaller one.

According to Gower & Walters (1995, p. 163, 168) "The aim feedback is to bring about self-awareness and improvement". Everyone grows on authentic praise and encouragement. When giving feedback on oral or written work, lookout for positive points to comment upon, for example it could be said, successful communication, accurate use of grammar, use of new vocabulary, good pronunciation, language in the

appropriate style, good use of fluency strategies in conversation, etc. There is still the

Timing technique, which has a number of procedures where the organization of your

lessons can be affected. It is always an excellent idea to think about different

possibilities such as: what to do if students take a longer or shorter time to do the

activities that you had designed if they discover an activity easier or more difficult than

you anticipated if some students finish before others when some students need extra

support some or all of the students have already seen the material you have based your

lesson on, for example they might have already watched the video you were going to

show.

Managing Large classes

Another significant contribution to the management of large classes has been

presented by a board of educators from UNESCO (2006) which gives some practical tips

for teaching. Among them, it is worth mentioning the planning classes ahead of time and

preparing methodically; maximizing classroom space, by removing unnecessary

furniture. Using space outside of the classroom as learning and activity centers; doing

everything possible to get to know students, because a positive relationship with students

builds willingness on their part to actively participating in class. When doing group

work group, have students introduce themselves to everyone in an interactive manner, so

they take advantage of the activity. Teachers have to move around the class when

talking, engaging students more actively; this can also reduce the physical and social

distance between teachers and students.

UNESCO (2006) suggests that educators must be natural and personal in and

outside class. Teachers should also tell students they are available before and after class

to answer any questions they might have. Similarly, it is necessary to keep track of frequently asked questions or common mistakes and use this awareness to develop lessons and help students avoid making the same errors. In addition, teachers should be conscious of the class, if there is something wrong, ask a student what is going on. It is also advisable to invite small groups of students to visit the teacher to discuss important class issues when necessary. Moreover, involving students helps to deal with misbehavior. It is necessary to recognize the attention span of students is limited; fifteen minutes of lecture must be followed by an activity and then additional lecture if needed. Developing a formal lesson plan is an additional useful technique that helps to organize teaching in large class settings.

On the other hand, UNESCO (2006) states that the teachers have a chance to think about what to do next, how to improve their teaching and explain to students the exact reasons for teaching the class or specific lesson. It is just as interesting to develop a visual display of the outline of the day's topics and learning objectives, as it helps the flow of the class. Besides, it is worthwhile to plan for a clear beginning, middle, and ending of the class. Likewise, it is recommended to use prompts to develop students' question and answer skill, and count to 10 after formulating a question, to give time for the student(s) to answer.

With respect to the previous paragraph is important to mention the following techniques: the development of a portfolio system or any other way of keeping track of students' performance is advised with the idea of finding out about areas that need improvement and identifying those students who require extra attention. Above all, it is important to give prompt feedback on assignments and exams, and a good way to save

some time is to involve students in the grading process. To summarize all mentioned aforementioned techniques should make teachers reflect on their teaching, in order to enhance their innovative awareness and capabilities and to encourage them to respond to the challenge of teaching large classes.

Activities for working with large Classes

Working with large classes demands an abundance of creativity. Even though, many techniques and activities have been presented along this research paper others will be examined. UNESCO (2006) refers to some learning strategies that can be used in large classes, those of which are: all students should be given the chance to participate in many activities the challenge here lies in selecting the type of activity to match the purpose or objective in mind for the lesson. Among other recommendations, investigators propose some specific activities that give good results such as brainstorming, by which teachers ask students to individually think about an issue or a problem and to list possible causes. In this way students share their ideas and compile a list of possibilities. Equally, a simulation game is used to work with large classes. Teachers ask students to role-play a situation where they can practice coping with stressful, unfamiliar, or complex situations. In fact, it is a good idea to encourage games that place students in a new role, one that other students may be facing, in order to increase student confidence.

In addition, the Poster Sessions, another activity, consists in forming groups of three to five students. Each group completes a poster display that conveys the groups work. The first group identifies a problem or controversial issue; the second group locates appropriate information and resources concerning their subject and the last group

report the evidence they find. Gower & Walter (2005) go beyond what has been expressed and suggest that discussion in large classes can be organized forming groups that include the whole class. It is often better to divide the class into groups so that a number of parallel discussions can take place. In this way more students get a chance to speak, although it is more difficult for the teacher to monitor. At the end of the discussion phase, there can be a period when the whole class comes together to compare conclusions. Each group can choose a reporter to take notes and report back on the discussion that took place in the group. Another proposed activity is the use of games that are particularly useful with younger learners, but are generally popular with students of all ages, especially if they appreciate how those games can help them improve their learning.

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement

The teaching-learning environment plays an important role, and so classroom space and seating-arrangement are important factors to take into account. Related to this topic the UNESCO (2006) asserts that organizing the physical setting in an ideal manner, maximizing classroom space and facilitating movement will help in the management of large classes. A class should be held in a bright, clean, well-equipped room that accommodates every student comfortably. Such accommodation allows them to move around and work well either individually or in groups, in order to encourage active learning and student involvement. Seats must be arranged so students can see each other as well as the teacher. This ideal it is not possible in some countries where small classrooms are overflowing with students thus offering a poor learning setting for the teacher and students. Maximizing classroom space may be feasible or a challenge,

but the idea is to draw students into the group and to create a physical space that encourages them to enter into a discussion or group situation. In large class settings, space is often a luxury. It is necessary to consider removing unnecessary furniture to reduce the feeling of overcrowding and to facilitate movement. It is advisable for the teacher to plan ahead on how to change the classroom arrangement, depending on what is being taught.

Different levels of proficiency

Not all students have the same level of proficiency which is why they need to be considered separately. Ferrel (2006) states that in ESL classes there will inevitably be mixed-ability groups, in which some ESL students will be more proficient in English than others; therefore, by mixing the groups of students with different proficiency levels can be beneficial as they can help each other with different tasks. According to Woodward (2009), heterogeneous classes have to consider aspects such as language skill levels, age, academic background, mother tongue, learning style, sex, personality, language aptitude and other factors; all these are very interesting because of the sheer richness of their human resources. They give range for peer teaching and are challenging to teach.

Groups of students can be considered as: native speakers who will be engaged and contribute to the proceedings, and less advanced students that will still have plenty of opportunity for profitable language practice. Furthermore, some students may be more skilled at problem solving and thus the group member can help to combine these diverse talents. An example of combining different talents in the group can be seen when doing a group report. Occasionally one may observe that higher-proficiency students

may require to be challenged to generate the language at a higher level than they would deem necessary if they were working with lower-proficiency students, consequently, teachers may wish to consider requiring more challenging linguistic demands from them in each group. This can be reached by having the higher proficiency student act as the group reporter or by getting them to take notes about the group's discussion. Thus, advanced students will not feel they are wasting their time.

As the large-class subject matter is very wide, some further studies have been examined with the idea of establishing some sort of comparison. The first study is related to one investigation done at the An-Najah National University in Nablus, Palestine. The purpose of the research was to discover the effects of large class on EFL students and the instructional, social, and psychological implications large classes have on their attitudes. There were also questions aimed to consider other variables such as gender, level of study, college and placement exam marks. The population of this study consisted of 1.200 students and the random sample was composed of 230 male and female students. The results of the different domains show that the students' responses were moderate, on instructional effects, the percentage was 68.4%, while in the social and the psychological domain aspects were 67.6% and 65.6% respectively. More importantly this study demonstrates no significant difference for students' gender, level of study, college, and placement test marks. Across the study, it was found that classroom interaction in large classes is negatively connected with class size. Students showed negative and positive responses towards large classes. On this aspect, Harmer (1983) argues that no matter how big a class is, teachers must create a good environment, making an effort to set up a good relationship with students, so they do not

feel neglected; but, on the contrary they get involved in class activities. In taking these techniques into account teachers will have better control of the class.

Some teachers' beliefs concerning large-class English teaching at university level reinforce the present research study. The survey setting took place at the Department of Language Studies School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand.

The research conducted by Chowdhury & Shaila, (2013) was aimed to investigate how the English language teachers deal with large classes at the tertiary level, particularly when they evaluated students' speaking skills. Some methods and techniques proved to be productive in teaching, evaluating and improving language skills. In the first place, spontaneous speech is referred to. It is an ice-breaking method, where every student of the class participates individually and is required to deliver short speeches with very little and quick preparation. Likewise, linked story telling can also be an ice breaking method. Usually the instructor takes the initiative by narrating a story or describing a scenario and then the students continue. Each student has two minutes to talk; they keep going until they complete a story. Simulation is mentioned secondly as a group assignment where the entire class is divided into several groups and each group chooses a real life situation to perform. Some simulation examples are: ordering food in a restaurant; counseling, pair activities where the instructor chooses a topic from magazines related to real life troubles, students are then given ten minutes to study and solve the problem, after that elapsed period one student summarizes; job interviews as well require students to be divided into groups; some of them act as employers and other

students as employees, but they also have to have ideas about appropriate attire and good manners.

Moreover, the use of movie clips is considered a beneficial technique, where the activity students complete is divided into pairs or in small groups; each group is shown a movie clip with an inconclusive ending and then the groups try to guess what could happen next. More than eighty one methods for teaching large classes are available and they can be used alternatively to suit every country's needs; a few of which are mentioned here: classroom debates, where teachers present a list of debatable topics related to society, politics, or moral issues; students present arguments for two minutes; after all have spoken, each group prepares to refute. Additionally, researchers use the listening and practice method, because speaking classes remain incomplete without listening tasks. Picture Presentation is another modus operandi where students have to use multimedia, power point or any other visual aid.

In spite of using diverse methods, there is no lack of difficulties. As a matter of fact, a board of seventy five members of the teaching staff of the Department of Language, School of Liberal Arts, KMUTT in Thailand, after observing and evaluating large speaking classes gave very interesting hints with the intention of changing the obstacles into challenges. Their perception was that teachers need to be centered on student needs; they must have an open mind to help students reach success. Regarding speaking, teachers have to make sure that all students participate in the speaking practice, although this is a time consuming skill that requires practice and involves interaction and interchange between each individual student and the teacher. Unfortunately, the biggest challenge to this process in a large classroom is the time

restraint which obliges the teacher to limit the time per student and often have an inadequate interactive practice.

With the idea of enhancing the present research, a new study has been analyzed. This study was performed at the University of Philippines in Diliman. The study was related to language learning strategies of students at different levels of speaking proficiency. The purpose of the study was to examine the use of language learning strategies by high school students when speaking in class, as well as their consciousness in the choice and use of strategies. Another angle to be considered was the establishment of the difference in strategy use between intermediate and novice speakers and to reveal environmental factors that influence their choice of strategies.

Seventy students belonging to a heterogeneous section in a public high school were classified by using the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) proficiency guidelines. Intermediate and Novice students were observed. Metacognitive strategies were used and results showed significant difference between the two groups. Factors such as achievement in school, attitudes towards speaking English, task at hand, subject area, topic of discourse, and teacher's techniques proved to influence strategy use.

The survey used demonstrated that input and output help to the development of language learning. Corder (1983) considered that strategies used for communication lead to learning. When students try to apply different techniques to help themselves understand, they are using compensation strategies. These strategies may include, using words that are similar in meaning to the more appropriate term, making up new words, using descriptions for an idea instead of the appropriate term in the second language,

using words in the native language, asking for the correct word, or using gestures. Likewise, whenever learners try to test and modify knowledge of a language, metacognitive strategies are being used as planning thoughts and behavior, as well as selective attention are necessary.

The findings demonstrated that social-affective strategies, questioning for clarification, with a weighted mean of 3.58, was most frequently employed by the students. When referring to self-talk items with weighted means of 3.53, 3.21, and 3.06 being next in rank is suggestive of the anxiety experienced by the students performing speaking tasks which could be related to them being adolescents. Two compensation strategies were used, such as selecting the topic with a weighted mean of 3.52 and switching to the mother tongue with a weighted mean of 3.47. Results also show that the frequency with which the language learning strategies were used follows this order: metacognitive (highest), social-affective, and compensation (lowest).

Concerning the question about consciousness in strategy choice and use, interviews revealed that the students lack knowledge of the strategy taxonomies that they may use when performing speaking tasks. With regards to the difference in strategy-use based on Proficiency Level outcomes of the test revealed that there was a significant difference in the use of metacognitive strategies between the novice and intermediate level speakers, which reveals a positive relationship between employment of metacognitive strategies and level of speaking proficiency. The observation also demonstrated that the metacognitive strategy of monitoring was noted twelve times for the intermediate speakers and three times for the novice speakers. Littlewood (1992) confirmed this fact when he explained that speakers of limited proficiency lack

automaticity in the planning and articulation of words and sentences, because they either think more of meanings and produce less accurate and or less fluent speech or give attention to grammatical structures and find it difficult to monitor their ideas.

Gu & Johnson's (1996) studies show that successful learners made use of a combination of strategies. Novice speakers on the other hand, never coordinated five strategies in any instance of participation while the intermediate speakers did so eight times. There was a significant difference in the combination of strategies between the two groups of speakers. The study suggested that using strategy combinations promoted the participants' ability to speak and that a more advanced proficiency enabled the use of more strategies. The more learners used strategies the more they could interact and the more they interacted the more they developed their strategies.

The factors that influenced strategy use were achievement, learners' attitudes, task at hand, subject area, topic of discussion, and teacher's techniques. The research evidenced that learners who felt confident were always ready to participate, while students who did not feel skillful, stayed silent and never volunteered to participate in classroom interactions. In consequence these novice students did not take advantage of opportunities that provide knowledge to express their ideas. In so far as teacher's techniques, the opportunities to speak and the time allotted to each student in class were considered to see the benefit gained through group discussions. There are several ways to improve these techniques and one of the most important aspects is related to the affective area of language learning with the idea of which could be presented in the form of games that motivate learners (Oxford, 1990).

Another important aspect is related to the affective area of language learning that being the idea of improving self-efficacy. The key issue is to get students involved and ready to speak in class, starting with partner conversations where students gain confidence and may start producing the language and benefiting from the knowledge of the language, as well as providing them with a sense of achievement.

Jimakorrn & Shinghasiri (2006) carried out a research with the purpose of investigating teachers' beliefs toward teaching English in large classes in terms of the perceptions, opinions and attitudes. For most of these teachers the best possible methods for assessment in large classes were tests and examinations; basically, the participants thought that teaching in a large class tended to be difficult. The five items with the highest concerns were: monitoring, teacher-student relationships, learning development, and the physical environment. The least difficult concerns were related to the use of teaching aids, setting up goals, preparing handouts and reviewing. In conclusion, although there were some aspects that were not difficult per se, there were still many issues to be concerned about.

Besides the mentioned studies, there is one more to be mentioned and it is the research conducted by Adeyemi (2008). The author presented two hypotheses. The first pursued to find out the relationship between class-size and quality of output in secondary schools. The second one intended to detect if there were any significant difference between the quality of output of students in schools having an average small class-size and students having large class-size in the SSC examination in the State. The method applied in this study was an inventory, following the suggestion Good (1973) gave when he described an inventory as a checklist or an open instrument compiled to serve

education needs. This method comprised items on enrolment figures, number of classes

in each school, number of teachers and students' grades in five major subjects in

schools. The results demonstrated that class size is a critical factor in determining the

quality of output for secondary schools. Students in schools with small class-sizes had

better quality of output than students in schools having large class-sizes.

Description, analysis, and interpretation of results

This section focuses on the description, analysis and interpretation of data that was collected for this study through a questionnaire. The analysis will be quantitative and answers three questions made for the present study in order to understand the factors that might affect the teaching-learning process in large classes. Twenty one statements will be described and analyzed which purpose is to obtain usable and useful information to improve the teaching-learning requirements.

Quantitative Analysis

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

A. Academic issues

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory		Satisfactory		Somewhatsatisfactory		Unsatisfactory		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.	142	65,74	60	27,78	11	5,09	3	1,39	216	100,00
2.	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	135	62,5	67	31,02	11	5,09	3	1,39	216	100,00
3.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.	87	40,28	65	30,09	38	17,59	26	12,04	216	100,00
4.	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.	126	58,33	70	32,41	17	7,87	3	1,39	216	100,00
5.	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.	89	41,2	78	36,11	30	13,89	19	8,80	216	100,00
6.	Students can cheat during the test.	13	6,02	18	8,33	31	14,35	154	71,3	216	100,00
7.	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.	10	4,63	20	9,26	28	12,96	168	73,15	226	100,00
8.	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.	96	44,44	76	35,19	23	10,65	21	9,72	216	100,00
9.	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	68	31,48	65	30,09	40	18,52	43	19,91	216	100,00

Graph 1
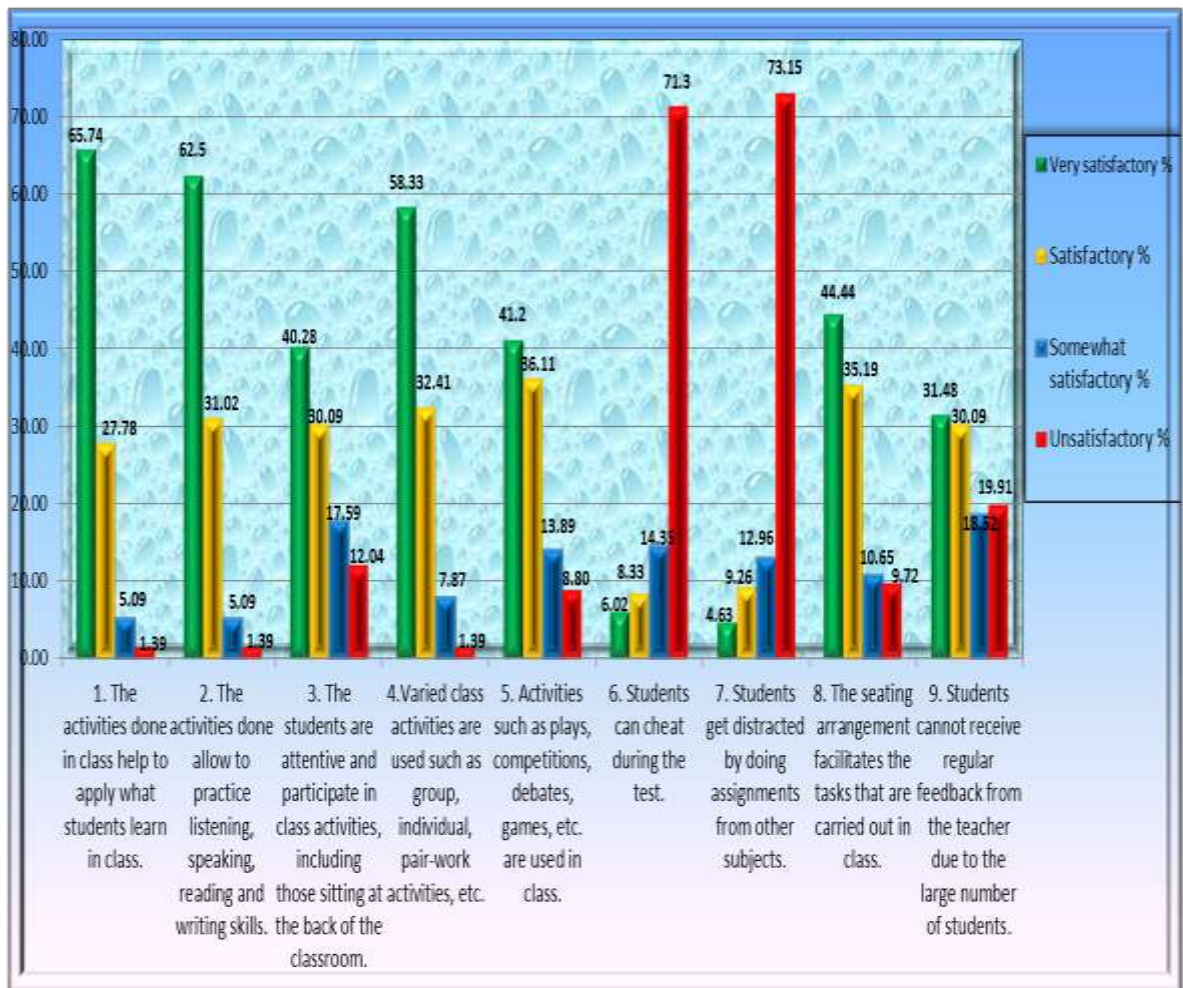
Aguaiza Lazo MariaSebastiana y Vasquez Andrade Erika

Source: Students' questionnaire

To better comprehend the instructional implications, the results gathered from the questionnaire will be analyzed in the following paragraphs.

According to statement 1, a very high percentage of students (93%) agree that the activities performed in class benefit the teaching-learning process. Consequently, this percentage demonstrates that teachers apply the Task- Based Language Teaching Method. Which involves the use of many techniques, such as: planning thoroughly, giving interesting and varied tasks. In contrast, the results show that 6.8% of students do not agree with this statement. This means that a small amount of participants do not think the activities presented to them help to apply what students learn in class. Despite all the perceived negative implications that arise when working with large classes, the results show that teachers successfully apply class activities to benefit the students.

Freeman & Freeman (1998) state that it is the teacher responsibility to present different instructional activities which are no only meaningful to the students; but also these activities should help students to apply what they have learned in previous classes.

 A second consideration is related to the following statement, the activities done allow to put into practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. A really large part of the population (93.5%) considers that the activities done in class allow them to practice the basic English skills, while (6.5%) do not agree. Broughton, et al. (2002) argue that it is necessary to use teaching techniques that combine the used of the four skills rather than the traditionally aspects of the language (grammar, vocabulary).

Taking into account the result gathered through statement 3, 70.4% accept that they participate in class activities, but the remaining 29.6% say that they do not get

involved in the tasks, due to the problem related to large classes. There may be a correlation between a lack of attention and the desire to work on other subject material.

In response to statement 4, 90.7% of the students consider that teachers use varied class activities, which is a positive aspect in teaching-learning. The use of varied class activities is positive for the teaching-learning process because every student has a dominant way of learning (kinesthetic, visual, etc…..), and so varied activities will cater to all student´s needs. On the other hand, 9.3% think that teachers do not apply various activities. One way to motivate students is by giving a variety of interesting topics and activities. If they feel motivated, they are likely to practice and improve more.

Referring to statement 5, 77.5% of participants assert that interactive activities such as: plays, competitions, debates and games, am soon are made in class and believe that they help them to improve their skills. In agreement with this statement Gower, Philips & Walter (2005) suggest that these activities are particularly useful with younger learners, as they appreciate the way the interactive activities can help improve their English. In contrast, 22.5% students answered negatively about having these activities done in class.

According to statement 6, 14.4% of students stated that they can cheat during the test while 85.7% asserted that it is impossible to cheat, which leads to the idea that there is very strict control during testing by the teacher. To support this analysis Gower, Philips & Walter (1995) state that classroom discipline is an important factor for example the atmosphere and ethos in some institutions are much stricter than others in their attitude to student behavior.

Taking into account the results gathered through statement 7, 86.1% reported that they do not get distracted by working on other assignments that do not have to do with English. On the other hand, 13.9% responded that they do get distracted by working on other assignments.

The results obtained through statement 8; in regards to seating arrangement 80% are very satisfied or satisfied. Apparently the seating arrangement pleases the students. However, there are 20% of students who disagree. Gower, Philips, & Walters (2005) the classroom arrangement, the position and the way of organizing the positions of the students in the class is of great importance, because where the students sit in a classroom can determine their attitude to each other, the attitude of the teacher to them, how the students interact and the types of activity they can do.

The results obtained through statement 9, 61.6% assure they receive regular feedback which is a positive factor. According to Gower, Philips & Walters (1995) the aim of feedback is to bring about self-awareness and improvement. However 38.4% of students accept they do not receive regular feedback, citing that it might be because teachers are short on time to give individual attention.

In conclusion, considering the results related to instructional implications, it can be stated that to most students large classes do not affect their performance; however, to a small amount of students a large class is a problem, this could be seen in their responses. The statements that had the highest unsatisfied responses were about student attentiveness and participation, the interactive activities used do not meet their needs, the seating arrangements do not facilitate tasks carried out in class and finally, they are unable to receive regular feedback from teachers due to the large number of students.

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

Table 2

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory		Satisfactory		Somewhat satisfactory		Unsatisfactory		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
10	There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.	115	53,24	64	29,6	25	11,57	12	5,56	216	100,00
11	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.	124	57,41	65	30,1	18	8,33	9	4,17	216	100,00
12	The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.	39	18,06	57	26,39	82	37,96	38	17,6	216	100,00
13	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.	70	32,41	79	36,6	45	20,8	22	10,2	216	100,00
14	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.	18	8,33	11	5,09	25	11,57	162	75	216	100,00

Graph 2
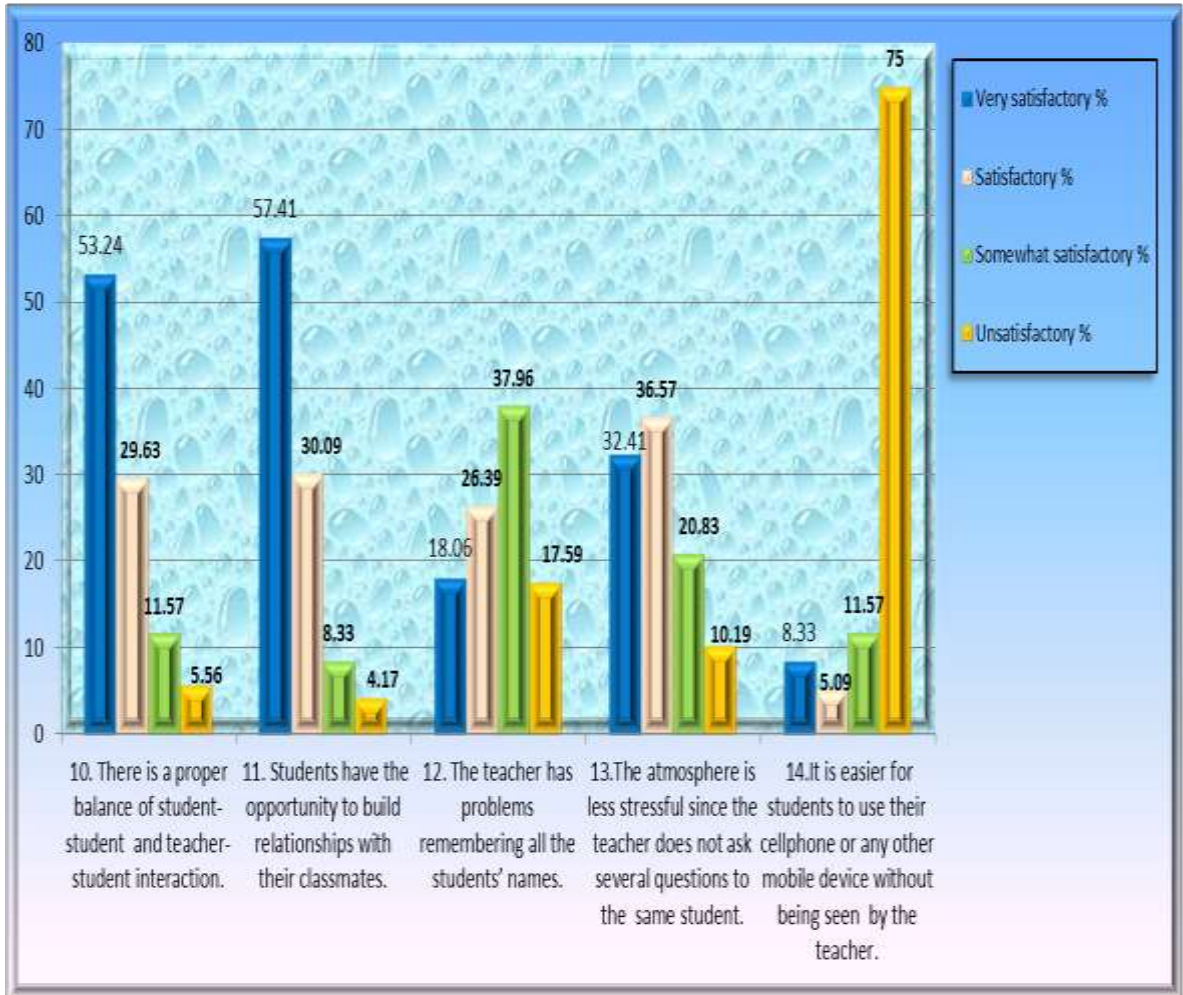
Aguaiza Lazo María Sebastiana y Vásquez Andrade Erika

Source: Students´ questionnaire.

The second question focuses on the social implications that large classes have on students.

According to statement 10, 82.9% of students perceived that the interaction between student-student and teacher- student is satisfactory, which is a positive factor inside of the class. On the other hand, 17.1% considered that there is not an adequate interaction. The overall positive response to this statement reveals that a large group of students is not a limitation when it comes to allow student-student and teacher-student interaction, but rather it implies that the teacher is able to select activities appropriate to the group. Moreover, the teacher is probably using the cooperative language learning approach which aim is to develop communicative competence through socially planned interaction activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The results obtained through statement 11, 87, 5% of respondents (combination of very satisfactory and satisfactory) asserted that they have the opportunity to build relationships with their partners, indicating that the teacher maintains respect and harmony in the class. Harmer (1983) argues that no matter how big a class is, teachers must create a good environment, making an effort to set up a good relationship with students, so they do not feel neglected but on the contrary get involved in class activities and become more competitive.

The result gleaned from statement 12 shows that 55.6% of the students assert that teachers can recall their name, which is a positive factor. In contrast to the 44.4% of the surveyed pupils stated that teachers had problems remembering all the students'

names a result is understandable due to the amount of names, although unfavorable. In addition, it is important for teacher to learn student's names because it shows interest in and respect for the students; moreover, teachers and students are building a relationship which is very important in education.

According to statement thirteen 69% of students reported that the environment is less stressful when the teacher is not able to ask the same student several questions while 31% think the contrary. UNSECO (2006) asserts, not all students need to participate in all the activities, especially those that require individual answers. This is especially true in large classes where there might not be enough time. However, all the students should be given the chance to participate in many of them

In the statement 14, the survey demonstrates that 86.6% of the pupils consider that it is not easy to use their cell phone or any other mobile device while a minority percentage (13,4%) thinks different. This finding implies that there is strict teacher control in the classroom. Philips & Walter (1995) state that discipline is an important factor, for example the atmosphere and ethos in some institutions are much stricter than others in their attitudes to student behavior.

These results suggest that there is a good classroom management on behalf of the teacher. On the other hand, the most relevant social implication that large classes have on the teaching-learning process is that the teachers have problems to remember the students' names.

What psychological implications do large classes have on the teaching learning

process?

Table 3

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory		Satisfactory		Somewhat satisfactory		Unsatisfactory		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
15	The atmosphere is stressful.	76	35,2	49	22,7	34	15,7	57	26,4	216	100
16	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest	42	19,44	73	33,80	57	26,39	44	20,37	216	100
17	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions	50	23,15	65	30,09	57	26,39	44	20,37	216	100
18	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.	51	23,6	58	26,9	53	24,5	54	25	216	100
19	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.	67	31	56	25,9	31	14,4	62	28,7	216	100
20	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.	118	54,63	56	25,93	28	13,0	14	6,48	216	100
21	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.	57	26,39	52	24,07	45	20,83	62	28,70	216	100

Graph 3
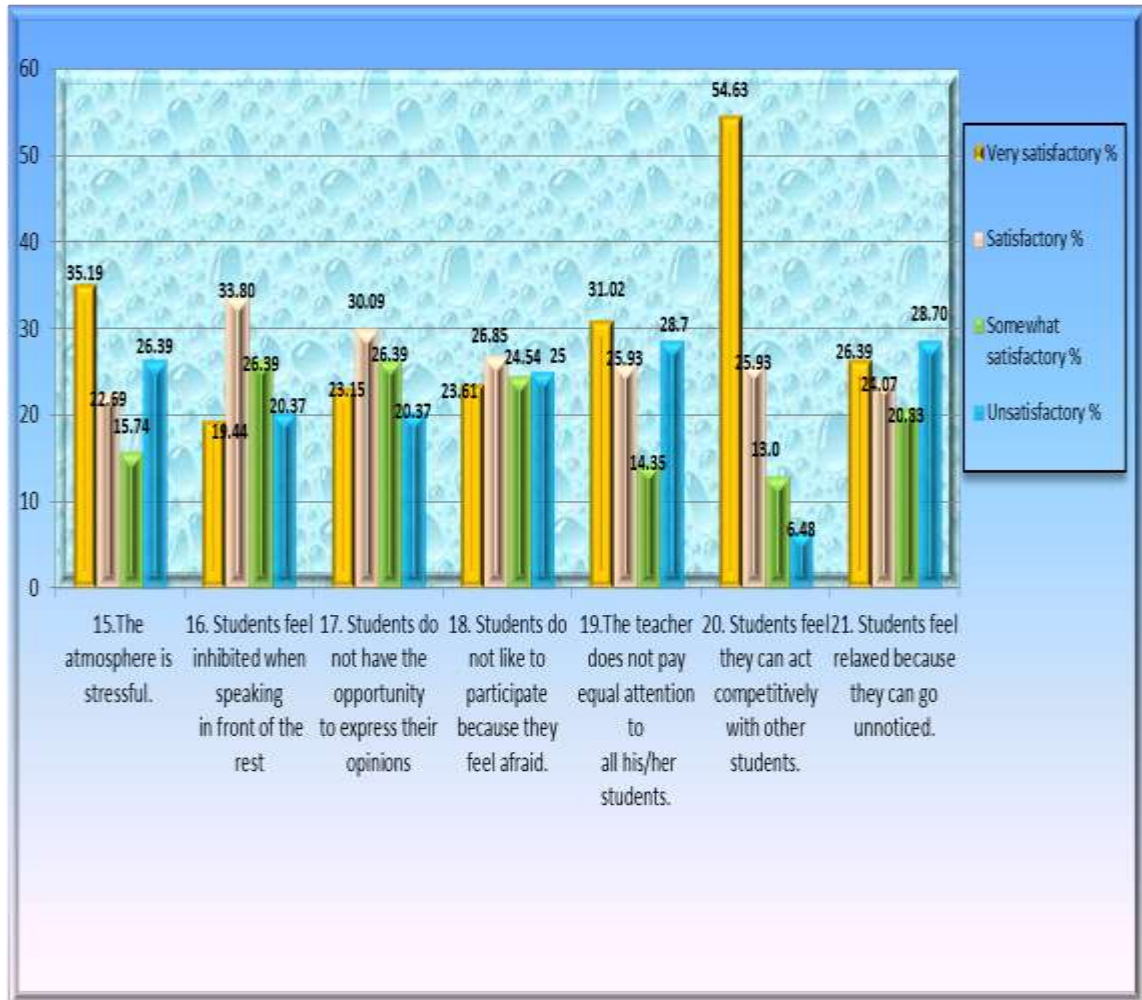
Aguaiza Lazo María Sebastiana y Vásquez Andrade Erika

Source: Students´ questionnaire.

Finally, the psychological aspects that do affect the teaching-learning processes will be analyzed in the following paragraphs.

Taking into account the results gathered in through question 15, 57.9% of the students claimed that the classroom atmosphere is stressful, which has a negative effect on to the teaching-learning process. On the contrary, 42.10% of the population under study believed that the classroom environment is a friendly place to learn. This last statement provides a sense of security for students to experience a safe learning process. These data supports the information presented by Gower, Philip, & Walters (1995) previously analyzed.

According to statement 16, 53.2% affirm that they feel anxious or become panicked when asked to speak in front of large classes, whereas 46.7% do not feel that way when speaking in front of their peers. This result is interesting because it shows that class size increases student anxiety when required to perform a speech; perhaps, this is because students feel that their peers will judge them, whereas in a smaller class, students would feel more comfortable speaking because there would be a greater sense of community among students.

The results obtained through statement 17 shows that 53.2% of students claim that they do not have the opportunity to express themselves or give opinions when working in large classes. In contrast, 46.7% claim that they have the chance to express themselves and participate in class. By observing these results, it can be noticed that half of the population under study has the opportunity to interact, and it happens because of the number of students and the lack of time.

Chowdhury, & Shaila (2013) claim that when teaching speaking in large classes, the less students are able to connect to real life interaction in the target language their anxiety, influence of the L1, adverse social environment, along with other complications tend to impede the smooth ongoing of the class. Therefore, professors have to make sure that every single student takes part in the speaking practice as well as the inter-exchange in the class.

The results obtained through statement 18 shows that 50.5% do not like to participate in class as because they feel afraid, while 49, 5% enjoy taking part in class. The findings suggest that there is a dichotomy of opinion about the issue presented in the statement. According to UNESCO (2006), to improve students' participation in class, every single student should be given the chance to participate in most of the activities. For instance, teachers should ask students to role-play a situation thus coping with stressful, unfamiliar or difficult situations.

Outcomes obtained through statement 19 shows that 43.1% claim that teachers pay the same amount of attention to every single student, while 56,9% of the students state that teachers do not spread their attention individually. According to UNESCO (2006), this happens due to the fact that large classes are associated with noise, too many people, and fixed objects in a cramped space, thus leaving no room for the teacher to move around the class and give students the individual attention they require. In fact, if there is a positive student- teacher relationship the students will be willing to actively participate in class.

The results obtained through statement 20 shows that 80.5% of students absolutely feel that they are able to be competitive with each other in a large classroom,

yet only 19.4% students do not share this feeling. This result demonstrates that there is a

way to build healthy competition among students, and that the class size does not have a

large impact on this aspect, a sure way to motivate students and liven up the classroom.

Thaher (2005) states that students believe that large classes will give way to a sense of

rivalry or jealousy, and a pleasant relationship among the students inside and outside the

classroom.

Finally, the outcome gathered through statement 21 demonstrates that 50. 46 %

of the pupils feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed, while 49.54% felt stressed, this

result is interesting as there is not much difference between the two responses.

Having analyzed the outcomes gathered through the different statements related

to psychological implications in large classes, the negative factors that affect the

learning process are related to students' anxiety the students feel inhibited when

speaking in front of the class, they do not have the opportunity to express their opinion,

students do not like to participate because they fell afraid, and teachers do not pay equal

attention to all their students. In conclusion, all of the different items analyzed during

this study about the psychological aspect affect the learning-teaching process.

CONCLUSIONS

- This research shows that students tend to be more active in classes if they feel attracted or connected to the material at hand, thus the learning of the four Basic English skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking will be satisfactory.

- Regular feedback to each student is not possible given due the large number of students and teacher time constraints.

- Remembering each of the students' names seems to be difficult for teachers due to the large number of students.

- Despite the number of students, there is an appropriate interaction among student-student and teacher-student. Thanks to the good interaction between students, they also have the opportunity to build a pleasant relationship with their partners.

- The classroom environment tends to be less stressful for students if they perceive the space to be safe and are encouraged to speak, and if they are not frequently being called on to participate in class activities.

- The research reveals that the fear some students have in regards to making mistakes does not allow them to feel confident enough to participate in class, because large classes inhibit the professors' ability to provide the same attention to every single student when correcting an error.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should maximize the learning space, (when working with large classes) seats should be arranged so students can see each other as well as the teacher, to encourage active learning and students' participation.

- Teachers should have students use something that identifies them in or out of class, like a name-tag card, which can be placed on their chest, or in front of their desks. Facilitating the interaction between teachers and students.

- Teachers should avoid making students feel as if they are the only ones being asked to participate in class by questioning the same students all the time. In the contrast, teachers should address questions or invitations to students that do not often participate. This will help shy students become more confident when speaking in front of others.

- Teachers should provide a healthy atmosphere, organizing an adequate physical environment that guarantees optimal development of student language.

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OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY

ENGLISH DEGREE

Dear student,

The aim of this brief questionnaire is to obtain information concerning the: *influence of larges classes on teaching and learningEnglish*. The following information will only be used for academic/research purposes. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible based on the following criteria.

Very satisfactory:	Totally agree
Satisfactory:	Agree
Somewhat satisfactory:	Partially agree
Unsatisfactory:	Disagree

Informative data: Please fill in the information below

Name of institution: _____

Type of institution: Public ( )   Private   ( )

Year of study: 8th year. ( )   9th year ( )   10th year.   ( )

    1st senior high school . ( )   2nd senior high school. ( )   3rd. senior high school. ( )

City: _____

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

A. **Academic issues**

	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
1.	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.				
2.	The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.				
3.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.				
4.	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.				
5.	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.				
6.	Students can cheat during the test				
7.	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.				
8.	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.				
9.	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.				

B. Social issues

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
10.	There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.				
11.	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.				
12.	The teacher has problems remembering all the students' names.				
13.	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.				
14.	It is easier for students to use their cellphone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher.				

C. Psychologycalissues:

	In classes with a large number of students:	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
15	The atmosphere is stressful.				
16	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest.				
17	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.				
18	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.				
19	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.				
20	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.				
21	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.				

Thank you for your collaboration.