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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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*Febrero, del 2016*

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De mis consideraciones:

El presente trabajo de titulación “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools” realizado por Godoy Rodríguez Nelly Gisella, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, febrero de 2016

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## DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo, Godoy Rodríguez Nelly Gisella, declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de titulación “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools”, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo la Mgs. Alexandra Zúniga Ojeda director (a) del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

Adicionalmente, declaro conocer y aceptar la disposición del Art. 88 del Estatuto Orgánico de la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja que en su parte pertinente textualmente dice: “Formar parte del patrimonio de la Universidad la propiedad intelectual de investigaciones, trabajos científicos o técnicos y tesis de grado que se realicen a través, o con el apoyo financiero, académico o institucional (operativo) de la Universidad”.

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Godoy Rodríguez Nelly Gisella

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## DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this thesis to special people, my husband David, and my children Alexis and Vianca. To my husband thanks a million, he taught me that all in life is possible. He told me “many things are difficult but they are not impossible when we really want to reach our goals, it is only a matter of time and patience”.

Nelly

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The results of this research are dedicated to those people who are part of my life. To my family, who believed in me all the time, the teachers of the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, who supported me during the execution of this project; and specially God for all his blessings.

Nelly

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to corroborate if large classes influence in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools. For this reason, five secondary schools were selected. They are located in different parts of Quito. The sample consisted of students from several courses; from 8<sup>th</sup> level to 3<sup>rd</sup> senior level.

One instrument was used in order to conduct this research. A questionnaire, which focused on three aspects, academic, social and psychological, was applied to 183 students. The questions were aimed at gathering the interviewees' perceptions when they are learning English in large groups.

The data collected show as a result that class size does not affect the teaching learning process; however, it was found that there are shortcomings in academic and psychological aspects because some students report that even though they do not go unnoticed by the teacher; there is not an appropriate environment where they feel relaxed and receive individual attention to know about their improvement or mistakes when they learn a new language.

Key words: class size, large classes, schools, problems.



## RESUMEN

El propósito de esta investigación es determinar si las clases grandes influyen en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en colegios ecuatorianos. Para ello, cinco colegios fueron seleccionados. Ellos están ubicados en diferentes partes de la ciudad de Quito. La muestra consistió en estudiantes de varios cursos; de 8vo a 3er año de bachillerato.

Un instrumento fue utilizado para llevar a cabo la investigación. Un cuestionario, el cual se enfocó en tres aspectos; académico, social y psicológico, fue aplicado en 183 estudiantes. Las preguntas estuvieron destinadas a recopilar los sentimientos de los encuestados cuando ellos están aprendiendo Inglés en grandes grupos.

Los datos recogidos muestran como resultado que el tamaño de la clase no afecta el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje; sin embargo, se encontró que aún existen falencias en los aspectos académico y psicológicos debido a que algunos estudiantes manifiestan que, a pesar de no pasar desapercibidos por el profesor, no se puede propiciar un ambiente adecuado donde ellos se sientan relajados y reciban atención en forma individual para conocer sobre su progreso o errores cuando aprenden una nueva lengua.

Palabras claves: tamaño de la clase, clases grandes, escuelas, problemas.

## INTRODUCTION

For many decades the English language has been considered a difficult language to learn inside the Ecuadorian classrooms. It became in the villain of many students, because of its difficulty in pronunciation, grammar and the great fear of speaking in front of others. This is evident from primary levels to secondary and university levels.

The Ecuadorian government has realized of this big problem, thus it has felt the necessity to improve the quality in the teaching and learning English language, especially in high schools, where there are even many shortcomings. For this reason the Ministry of Education (2012) has disposed various actions and procedures in order to achieve this objective such as enhance the curriculum based on international standards, prepare the teachers, and catch up with modern techniques and innovative technologies, in order to improve students' knowledge and their skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

However, these actions tackle just some of the aspects of the teaching-learning process. Teachers in our country also deal with a great number of students to teach the language which worsen the problem. According to Scrivener (2005) teachers consider that one of the principal difficulties in teaching English language is the class size. In large classes it is very complicated to preserve the discipline, to make eye contact teacher-students, and students-students, learners cannot move readily, the majority of the teachers cannot give the same attention to all the students, and only some of them can receive the benefit.

Contrary to Scrivener's point of view, Shaeffer (2006) points out that in large classes, teachers have the opportunity to make progress in their teaching and presentation skills, because large classes contain different kinds of students who have different learning styles. The students share different points of view and attractive life experiences.

These positions about the number of students in an English class bring to the light the need to identify the students' feelings about this problem.

Similar studies have been conducted around the world such is the case of the study performed by Jimarkorn and Singhasiri (2006) which says that many teachers see large classes as less effective, extra working and with a great deal of difficulties in the teaching-learning process. Some teachers do not see advisable to maintain large classes only for the institution's benefit. They consider that duties and ongoing assessments are not appropriate, because they generate harder work for them. The authors conclude that all of the aspects cited have a degree of difficulty, above all in large classes. However, they mention that, it is possible to improve them with a well-planned and organized teaching management.

In the same way, Harfitt (2012) thinks that teachers do not teach in the same way when they are in large classes than in small ones. Large classes demonstrate a distant relationship between teacher and students; the environment is less pleasant, there are more disciplinary problems, much noise, and more. So, teachers and the students lose interest in the process of learning and teaching.

On the other hand, in the research made by Galton and Pell (2011), they explain that teachers admit that useful practice is alike for all classes whatever their

size is, however; they say that there are some teaching strategies easier to handle when the classes are diminished. In fact, class size reductions do not make a difference to classroom practice. It is only a matter to identify some changes in the teaching methods in both large and small classes.

Finally, this research revealed some limitations. One of them is the same questionnaire, because this was only applied to the students. The questionnaire only reflects the students' points of view, but not the teachers' criteria. Another limitation was that the researcher could not observe the classes, which had served to sustain the answers collected from the interviewees.

Despite the above limitations mentioned, this study benefited the students because the teachers can implement enhancements in the academic, social and psychological aspects with the guidance of the new standards given by the Ministry of Education.

In addition, the authorities of the scholar campus, the English teachers, the researcher and all the educational institutions would be many of the beneficiaries in the English language teaching-learning process.

## METHOD

### *Setting and participants*

The study was conducted in five different secondary schools at the South of Quito city. One hundred eighty three students from public, municipal and private secondary schools were selected. They were from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> levels; and from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> senior levels. The ages of the participants were from 12 to 18 years old.

### *Procedures*

In order to perform this research, the first step consisted in a wide and deep reading of bibliographic information, from several sources such as books, journals, and the internet, in order to obtain the most relevant information to write the Literature Review.

The researcher collected the data by using questionnaires directed to all students in the class. They are composed of twenty one questions and they were divided in three areas: academic, social and psychological, with them the researcher wanted to know what are the student's points of view when they work in large classes. The academic area had nine questions; second, the social area contained five questions and finally the psychological area had seven questions.

The data was tabulated qualitatively. Then it was analyzed. The analysis of these three areas was quantitative and it will serve to determine what implications have the large classes in the English language teaching-learning process.

## DISCUSSION

### Literature Review

Large classes are often seen as one of the major barriers in order to guarantee quality education. In fact, there are many investigations that show the disadvantages of large classes and defend small classes as a factor to certify quality education. However, large classes are a reality in many schools and many countries, probably for mismanagement or political issues which do not permit to have enough number of teachers and classrooms that would ensure a quality education. It is important to contribute with instruments in order to deal with the difficulties of large classes to improve the quality of education to many students in the scholar field (Shaeffer, 2006).

In the next paragraphs we will see different and important aspects about the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process. We will begin with the first aspect.

#### *Teaching Approaches and Methods*

According to Brown (2001) the Audiolingual method is an ancient method created by the U.S Military. The main properties are: extensive oral activity pronunciation, pattern drills and conversation practice. Also, it is based on the aural/oral skills.

It was known as Army Method until 1950 where it had many years of acceptance and fame. Today it is even used, however; people realized that English language is not really obtained using habits production and over-learning.

Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that drills and patterns practices are distinguishing properties of Audiolingual method, for example: repetition, inflection, replacement, completion, restoration among many others. The teacher, tape recorders and audiovisual equipment are fundamental parts in the development of this method. They provide to the students situations to practice structures, active verbal interaction and drills.

The next method is not commonly used in these days, however; it served many generations when it was created. This is called Community Language Learning method.

Brown (2001) and Richard and Rodgers (2001) mention that Community Language Learning is a method designed by Charles Curran and his allies. The teacher and students play an important part; they affiliate together in order to learn as community. In this context, teacher helps to the students to understand the information about English linguistic rules. The teacher's intention is to core his or her attention on the students and their concerns.

The next method is Total Physical Response (TPR). This is considered one of the oldest method and it is rarely used in educational institutions today.

Brown (2001) says that TPR is a method in which students do a great deal of listening and acting, too. The teacher is the producer and students are the performers. However, it has its drawbacks because it is effective in the beginning levels, but not for advanced levels in its capabilities.

Richard and Rodgers (2001) also mention that TPR as a method which dwell on to teach language through corporal actions. The students act as performers and

respond with corporal movements to commands disposed by the teacher. The teacher occupies an active and direct participation, he/she is the person who has the responsibility to provide the best kind of exhibition to the language.

As old as TPR is Suggestopedia. We will see opinions about Suggestopedia method from the authors Brown, Richards and Rodgers.

Brown (2001) says that Suggestopedia was other educational newness inside the methods, this assures to the students the best results in the learning process only with the use of their brain power. The following items are the main features of this method: baroque music and adequate seats. While the teacher presents vocabulary, readings, dialogues, role plays and many other activities; the students listen to music in a complete calm.

On the other hand, Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that Suggestopedia is promoted by Georgi Lozanov. Its peculiarities are: the decoration, movables, the arrangement of the seats into the classroom, the use of music and the dominant manner of the teacher. The baroque music and musical rhythm are important, too.

Finally we will see the purpose and characteristics of Silent way. This is other important method inside the educational field.

Silent Way, is other method mentioned by Brown (2001). He claims that Gattegno believed that this method encouraged learners to develop self-determination, autonomy and liability, only doing silence all the time. The materials used in this method are set of Cuisenaire rods, small colored rods and colorful wall charts. The teacher generally uses them to introduce vocabulary, verbs, syntax, pronunciation, models and grammatical paradigms.



Similar to the other methods, Silent way can generate a distant atmosphere between the teacher and the students, because they are in silence. In addition, Silent way is based on the hypothesis that teacher must be in silent as much as possible, instead of; the learners must be animated to create as much as language as possible. The materials used are: color charts and the colored Cuisenaire rods. The method is related to the word that Benjamin Franklin said: “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn” (Richard and Rodgers, 2001).

In the following content we will analyze the point of view of different authors about the class size. Some of them mention that large classes are a true problem, however; other authors have positive opinions about this aspect.

#### *Class Size*

Teachers consider that one of the principal difficulties in the English language teaching-learning process is the class size because; it is very complicated to preserve the discipline, to make eye contact teacher-students, and students-students, learners cannot move readily, the majority of the teachers cannot give the same attention to the students, and only a certain group of them pay more attention than others (Scrivener, 2005).

In contrast Shaeffer (2006) mentions that in large classes teachers have the chance to make progress presenting and teaching skills, because; large classes contain different kind of students and learning styles, vigorous and enjoyment activities. The students share different kind of ideas and attractive life experiences.

On the other hand, he mentions that in small classes the teachers can achieve that the majority of students participate in active exercises, such as: asking and answering questions, discussing topics and laughing about funny significant stories.

In fact Harmer (2007) says that teaching one-to-one classes have benefits over classes with more students, for example: teacher's attention is center entirely in one person, teaching process is more flexible and the way in which the students respond to the learning process is different, however; this method presents disadvantages, too, because; both teacher and the students can often become tired with the activities.

In contrast Jones (2007) explains that in small classes, the students are more teacher-dependent, because they wait for compliments or stimulus while they are talking. The only difference between large and small classes is the quantity of the time that the teacher uses to observe the groups.

Up to this point, we had seen some drawbacks and benefits about class size; now we will focus in other important aspect in the English language teaching-learning process which is managing learning. It focus in the management of students in the classrooms and how we can obtain a greater participation of them.

### *Managing Learning*

When teachers give instructions to the students, it is very important to maintain and follow several of the following aspects: to keep visual contact with the students in order to avoid whatever kind of distractions. Use short comprehensible and elementary instructions, in this way they will understand what they have to do. The students learn better with illustrations rather than explanations. For examples: with visual or written elements, mime, gestures, cues, and with authoritative tone. After

the teacher has given the instructions, it is necessary to know if the whole class comprehend them, then the teacher will solicit to two or four students replay the instructions back (Scrivener, 2005; Gower, Phillips and Walters, 2005; Harmer, 1998).

In order to obtain a positive feedback in both oral and written, it is advisable that the students feel flattered and motivated by the teacher. This occurs when the teacher expresses words of congratulations, when he gives a special prize or simply when he publishes agreeable works of the students (Gower, Phillips and Walters, 2005).

Shamim, Negash, Chuku, and Demewoz, (2007) mention that there are procedures to maintain the problems caused by superabundance noise. They are creating norms from the start of the course and providing clear recommendations to the students

Relating to feedback the authors say that it permits to check the advance of the students in the learning process. It serves to identify what actions to take in order to develop comprehension and confidence in the students.

We will debate other important aspect about class size. The topic is managing large classes. Inside of it, we will see examples in order to handle large groups of students, what activities to do and some tips to control the discipline.

### *Managing Large Classes*

It is based on some important and interesting practical assumptions. First, to maintain eye contact with the students, second, to use different types of systems, next, to make regular and flexible procedures and finally to keep students occupied

from the start of the lesson, as a consequence; the teachers will obtain the student's attention. On the other hand, the students can be grouped in pairs and groups to use and practice basic chores and natural oral/aural target language (Woodward, 2001).

Harmer (2007) gives other point of view about managing large classes. He says that the teachers will help the students with their concerns, for example: arranging the students in groups, establishing daily routines and maximizing individual work, before, during and after the lessons

The teacher will maximize the students' participation, working with the students as individual, in pair-work, group-work and in chorus reaction, in this way; they can take advantage from the diversity of each student.

Other important aspect in the English language teaching learning process is the activities that the teachers carry out in the classrooms. In the following paragraphs we will observe how the activities help to the students in their educational development.

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

Scrivener (2005) mentions that the activities play a meaningful role in the development of the students, because; they develop their competences in writing, reading, listening and speaking. For this reason is very important to practice doing grammar exercise, listening to a recorder conversation, reading a newspaper articles, repeating sentences, and preparing role plays, dialogues, or many other activities.

Otherwise Hess (2001) points that the activities such as: introducing games to expressing different ideas and emotions, making dictations or writing about different

will help to the students to acquire abilities as self-expression and interaction inside the classroom.

The activities are very important as classroom space and seating arrangement are, because; they play an important part in the English language teaching-learning process. For this reason, we will see different points of view about this aspects as follows.

### *Classroom Space*

The space available influences in the English language teaching-learning process, since it becomes in a decisive element between the teacher and the group, mainly in large classes. For instance, the students are usually distant in massive spaces and this condition reflects an air of unease, intimacy, loneliness and emptiness.

Otherwise, in small spaces the students feel overcrowded, repressed and elusive. In many occasions, they can hurt among themselves, because they want more space (Dörnyei and Murhey, 2003).

On the other hand, Scrivener (2012) thinks that limited and extensive spaces have problems because they influence in the students' development and in their teaching process, because; it is not possible to work with the students in pairs or groups.

It is contradictory, but sometimes there are teachers who cannot work in big spaces and many of them assume that the space is not completely extensive, however; many teachers work in absolutely small spaces with a considerable number

of activities, changing places and reorganizing the classroom. Then, the attitude and the vision of the teacher makes the difference between both small and large classes.

#### *Seating Arrangement*

Not only Scrivener (1994) but also Harmer (1998) point that the organization of the seats in the classroom can modify for different aspects. For example: the type of activities that the teacher executes, the interaction among the students and the class size.

One type of arrangement is orderly rows, this allows higher interaction and visual connection between teacher and the whole class. The horseshoe arrangement shows an equal opportunity, because the teacher's location is less powerful and the students can interact in a natural way.

On the other hand, horseshoe and circle arrangement teacher maintains visual connection with the learners, at the same time; the students with other students. Other arrangement is separated tables which is preferable for small groups, one of its difficulties is the interaction inside the classroom, because the students are so scattered.

Finally, the authors mention different levels of proficiency. In many occasions it has been considered a problem inside the learning process however the authors have different opinions about this aspect.

#### *Different levels of proficiency*

Being ignored, uninterested, pessimistic and abandoned are some of the characteristics of the high-level-students who are part of mixed-ability classroom,

since the teacher pays more attention to the lower-level students. These types of symptoms generate in advanced learners lack of interest in the class.

On the other hand, in weaker students cause a feeling of intimidation. In both cases these attitudes bring many complications when the teachers work with large groups.

On the contrary, when both weaker and stronger students are grouped, the process of learning is easier, because advanced learners can help to weaker students to gain much more confidence (Harmer and Jones, 2007).

So far, we have discussed important and interesting issues for the development of this research, below we will see the most significant topics of five studies done by different researchers.

The first study performed by Jimarkorn and Singhasiri (2006) emphasize to investigate what are the teacher's perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards teaching English in large classes. The study was done in Thailand with 75 tertiary-level lecturers. They were 17 males and 58 females. The majority of these participants had master's degree, the others have doctorate and bachelor's ones. A questionnaire was applied to all the participants. Questions about participant's personal details, participant's knowledge about university's policy on class size, others about the facts and opinions about large classes, besides questions for different conditions teaching in large classes, such as: general, physical conditions, teaching and learning conditions, difficulties and opinions and ideal classes.

As a consequence of the teacher's answers, the authors found that many of them see large classes as less effective, extra working and with a great deal of

difficulties in the teaching-learning process, for instance: First, students do not develop the most correct approach of learning. Second, there is a deficiency of attention and feedback, and lack of technological resources, too. Some teachers do not see advisable to maintain large classes only for the institution's benefit. They consider that duties and ongoing assessments are not appropriate, because they generate harder work for them.

The authors conclude that all of the aspects cited have a degree of difficulty, above all in large classes. However, they mention that it is possible to improve them with a well-planned and organized teaching management.

In the second study, Harfitt (2012) talks about an examination of teacher's perceptions and practice when teaching large and reduced-sized classes. He says, do teachers really teach them in the same way? In order to develop the study, the author examines three experience English language teachers. They were female with more than 6 years of experience, with Master Degree in education, from the Hong Kong secondary schools. The data was collected in 22 semi-structured interviews, as well as 48 lesson observations. A baseline interview was done with each teacher before the observation began. With this information, the researcher obtained teacher's personal ways of thinking and experiences of teaching.

In addition, the analysis was done in three segments: teacher-class, class-teacher and student-student, with this information, the researcher will be able to check if teachers take other type of attitude when they move from large to reduced-size classes. The author used observation sheets with field notes and video transcriptions to mark communication designs in this research, too.



To analyze the results, the interviews were divided in some segments such as: lesson planning, adopting different teaching approaches, improving classroom management and knowing students. Classroom observations were divided in organization of learning and classroom discourse analysis. The mixture of classroom observations and teacher's interviews show the following findings. Teachers prefer to work in small classes than in large classes. They argue that in large classes the time is limited and it is difficult to follow different teaching approaches. Large classes are more problematic and it is too hard obtain better comprehension about students' personality and their points of view.

On the other hand, they think that small classes offer them the opportunity to work in an environment more relaxed with an air of liberty. The students manifest more interest to work in groups and many of them answer and participate because there is more time to make questions.

For these reasons the author concludes that, the teachers do not teach in the same way when they are in large classes, because; they demonstrate a distant relationship with the students, the environment is less pleasant, there are disciplinary problems and much noise. Finally, the teachers and the students lose interest in the learning-teaching process.

On the contrary, the following research made by Galton and Pell (2011) explain how class size reductions can or cannot alter the practice in the classroom. In order to develop it, 37 primary schools were monitored in Hong Kong during 2004 and 2007.

Researchers applied two types of instruments to carry out the study. First systematic observations in both small and normal classes, from primary 1 through primary 3. One hundred one English teachers were observed in small classes, and thirty eight in normal classes. One hundred thirty nine English teachers were observed and around 720 students were checked between Chinese, English and Mathematics areas. The second instrument was the student's record. These observations were categorized into different groups to evaluate the teacher and the students.

They revealed that in small classes the students do not achieve the teacher's attention than in normal classes. This situation happens because teachers emphasize the work in groups and pair-work. Teachers pay more attention one student inside the group rather than in individual form. On the other hand, in normal classes the students are a part of the class. In large classes, the teachers can interact with the majority of the students, the contrary happens in small classes, because; teachers work with one student during a long period of time.

As result, the teachers admitted that useful practice was alike for all classes whatever their size is, however; they said that there are some teaching strategies easier to handle when the classes are diminished. In fact, class size reductions did not make any difference. It was only a matter to identify some changes in teaching methods in both large and small classes.

The following study is made by Kathi (2011). It pretends to detect the very common expectations of students in large multilevel secondary English classes. The purpose of this research is to analyze six different ambits: classroom management,

establish collaboration, range of tasks, give feedback, classroom English and home assignment.

The researcher selected the sample, sixty students of tenth grade. Thirty students were from Ramechhap district and thirty from Kathmandu valley of rural and urban regions of Nepal. The method applied by the author was one structured questionnaire which contained nineteen closed ended questions.

Four questions are dedicated to classroom management. They demonstrate that the students have high and good expectations over them. For example: the students are interested to follow the rules established by the teacher inside the classroom. They incline to arrange the seats in rows, but; in circles, too. Besides, they wish that the teacher learns their first names and that he/she moves around the classroom. One of the manners to construct respectfulness between both teachers and the students is to learn names as soon as possible, in this way the students gain confidence and more involvement in the activities inside the classroom; they construct an environment of attraction and liability.

Relating to enhancing collaboration, “teacher can multiply the opportunities for practice and for creative language use by introducing pair and group work”(Cross, 1992). The students manifest their interest for group and pair work, like group and pair activities. The result shows that the cooperative work and the reduced use of mother language improve the collaboration between students in the classroom. For range tasks, the results demonstrate that the teacher must create varied types of activities, because; the students have different ways of thinking, diverse learning

styles and their own concerns. The teacher must remember that not all exercises are convenient for all.

About English classroom, the students want that their English classes are submitted day by day, with short expressions instead complicated and long sentences. Concerning feedback, the students expect to maintain interaction with their teachers, while they are receiving feedback. The students prefer that the teacher notify their advances.

Finally, the students consider that home assignments are overwhelming when they are in large groups, however; they prefer that the teacher review them every day. They expect more home assignments than only forced ones.

In conclusion, the study makes numerous pronouncements about the expectations of the students. Although the students show high expectations relating to the English language learning. It is not possible to promote a collaborative working environment, because; multilevel large groups contain students with different ways of learning and needs. The situation requires of a great effort and determination by the teacher, especially when the resources are limited in Nepal.

The next study shows similarities with other research above mentioned. Blatchford, Basset and Brown (2011) pretend to examine the effect of class size on classroom engagement and teacher – student interaction, if the consequences in the learning process are the same or change between the students from primary and secondary levels.

The research took place in England and Wales. Forty nine systematic observations were made in 2005/2006 in 27 primary schools and 22 secondary

schools. The observations were organized in 88 classes. There were 335 female and 351 male students observed, in total 686 students. They were distributed into three attainment groups: low, medium and high based on the teacher's notes.

The observations show in detail the students' conduct, when they share with the teacher and with other learners. They were carried out when the classroom-based activities began. The observations were made in Mathematics, English and Welsh lessons.

The result of the observations demonstrate that the students are more engaged with the teacher when they receive more personal attention and when the classes are reduced into smaller ones.

The contrary happens in large classes, because the students do not receive the same attention from the teacher, however; this situation was more evident in students of low attainment in secondary levels than in the students from primary levels.

## Description Analysis and Interpretation of Result

Once the data was collected about the influence of large classes in the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high-schools; it was analyzed, described and interpreted. In these circumstances, three aspects will be considered: academic, social and psychological area.

The first variable that will be analyzed is the academic aspect.

### *Quantitative analysis*

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

**Table 1**

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn in class.	56	31%	93	51%	26	14%	8	4%	183	100%
2.	The activities done allow practicing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.	57	31%	89	49%	28	15%	9	5%	183	100%
3.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom.	21	14%	68	37%	68	37%	26	12%	183	100%
4.	Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc.	116	64%	48	26%	15	8%	4	2%	183	100%
5.	Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class.	34	18%	67	37%	55	30%	27	15%	183	100%

6.	Students can cheat during the test.	25	14%	32	17%	62	34%	64	35%	183	100%
7.	Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects.	25	14%	31	16%	60	33%	67	37%	183	100%
8.	The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class.	75	41%	75	41%	26	14%	7	4%	183	100%
9.	Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students.	31	17%	67	37%	44	24%	41	22%	183	100%

Author: Nelly Gisella Godoy Rodríguez

Source: Student's questionnaire

It was found that 51% of the students agree and 31% of them totally agree with the statement about the activities done in class help to apply what they learn in the class. The contrary happens with 14% of the students who partially agree and 4% of them disagree.

The findings show that 82% of the students feel that the activities applied by teachers inside the classroom are of great interest, since they allow them to apply what they learn in the class. However, 18% of the students think that the activities are not appropriate to learn.

To sum up, the activities organized by the teacher in the class help the students to reflect a positive attitude towards the English language. This is supported by Scrivener (2005), who points out that activities for working with large classes play a meaningful function because all of them help the students in the development of their competences.

With reference to the activities done in class allow practicing, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Not only 49% of the students believe that these

activities allow practicing, listening, speaking, reading and writing 31% of them totally agree, too. In contrast, only 15% of the students partially agree and 5% of them disagree.

The data of this statement shows similarities with statement No. 1, because most of the students (80%) are really motivated when they do activities which allow them to practice the four skills of English language. The students have a great interest in the activities because they allow them to achieve their goals along their learning. They feel motivated especially in activities that gives them the opportunity to communicate in the target language.

However, the total percentage of students who think different is 20%. This amount of students consider that the teacher should apply other kind of activities to develop the abilities of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

It was found that 37% of the students agree and 14% of them totally agree with the following statement: students are attentive and participate in class activities, including who are seated at the back of the classroom. On the contrary, the students who partially agree are 37% and the others disagree are 12%.

The total of students who agree and totally agree is 51%. These students think that they can be attentive and participate in class activities, including the ones who are seated at the back of the classroom. A similar percentage (49%) think that students who are seated at the back do not pay attention as the ones seated in front of the classroom.

In fact, Scrivener (2005) mentions that the teachers see as one of the principal difficulties in the English language teaching-learning process, the class size. In large



classes it is very complicated to maintain the discipline, to make eye contact teacher-students and students-students; learners cannot move readily, the teacher cannot give the same attention to all of the students, and only some of them receive the benefit.

With the next statement: varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work; we can see that 64% of the students totally agree and 26% of them agree; On the other hand, the students who partially agree are 8% and only 2% of them disagree.

Adding the percentages of agreement and total agreement, there is a 90% of students who affirm that the teacher works in groups, individual and in pairs in class. The varied class activities are carried out even though there are many students. This is affirmed by Kathi (2011) who says that the teacher must create varied types of activities, because the learners have different ways of thinking, diverse styles of learning and their own concerns. The teacher must remember that not all exercises are convenient for all. On the contrary, there is only 10% of students who state that the teacher does not use varied class activities.

Taking into consideration that 37% of the students totally agree and that 18% agree, this makes a total of 55% who confirm the use of these specific activities to learn the language. On the contrary, 45% of the students affirm that some of these activities are used.

The results show that the students are involved and enjoy of activities such as plays, competitions, debates and games, because they allow them to learn the language.

About statement No. 6, related to students can cheat during the test, the table reflects that students who disagree are 35% and partially agree are 34%. In contrast, the students totally agree are 14% and 17% of them agree.

We can see that 69% of the students think that it is difficult to cheat during the test, even though there is a great number of students. They state that the teacher's supervision contributes to avoid this situation. But, the contrary happens with the 31% of the students who think that the large number of students in the class allows them to cheat during the test.

It was found that 37% of the students disagree and 34% of them partially agree with the question about the students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects. On the other hand, 16% of the students totally agree and 14% of them agree.

The findings show that 70% of students do not keep busy doing other activities, because they state that the large number of students does not allow them to concentrate in tasks of other subjects. On the contrary, there is only 30% of the students who are doing assignments of other subjects while they are learning English.

It can be seen from statement No. 8 that the students who totally agree are 41% and the students who agree are 41%, too. On the other hand, the students who partially agree are 14% and 4% of them disagree.

The results show that the majority of students 82% think that the seating arrangement helps them to develop the tasks in the class, because it allows higher interaction and eye contact between teacher-student and student-student. In fact,

Harmer (1998) points out that seating arrangement allows higher interaction and visual contact between the teacher and the whole class. The contrary happens with 18% of the students who think that the tasks are not being carried out in class, because the teacher is not making changes in the organization of the seats; since they cannot interact with their classmates and with the teacher for the great amount of students in the class.

About statement No. 9 related to students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students. The item shows that the students who agree are 37% and 17% of them totally agree. In contrast, not only 24% of the students partially agree but also 22% of them disagree.

Adding the percentages of agree and totally agree, there is a 54% of students who are not receiving regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students. They feel that they are not learning in the same way like others, because they do not have the opportunity to know about their progress or mistakes. The contrary happens with 46% of the students who are satisfied, because they have the chance to receive regular feedback from the teacher. This is supported by Shamim, Negash, Chuku and Demewoz, (2007) who state that feedback permits to check the advance of the students in the learning process. It serves to identify what actions to take in order to develop comprehension and confidence in the students, because they need regular feedback to achieve their goals.

The first table related to Instructional implications has been described, analyzed and interpreted question by question. The findings show that teachers have the ability to handle overcrowded classes, because they can develop, organize and

work in different activities with the students, in this way they feel motivated and show a great interest to learn English.

Despite the teacher's efforts for teaching and the enthusiasm of the students for learning; the class size reflects a problem too, because many of the students are not receiving regular feedback from the teacher. They are feeling unpleasant because they do not know about their growth or errors.

After we have described, analyzed and interpreted the first table related to instructional area, we will continue analyzing, in the same way, the social implications.

The second table is about Social area, this is composed of five questions as follows:

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

**Table 2**

Nº	In classes with a large number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
10.	There is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction.	83	45%	66	36%	19	11%	15	8%	183	100%
11.	Students have the opportunity to build relationships with their classmates.	79	43%	65	36%	27	15%	12	7%	183	100%
12.	The teacher has problems remembering all the student's names.	39	21%	46	25%	27	26%	51	28%	183	100%
13.	The atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student.	39	21%	72	39%	52	29%	20	11%	183	100%
14.	It is easier for students to use their cell-phone or any other mobile device without being seen by the teacher	38	21%	33	18%	47	26%	65	35%	183	100%

Author: Nelly Gisella Godoy Rodríguez

Source: Student's Questionnaire

It was found that 45% of the students totally agree and 36% of them agree with the statement which mentions that there is a proper balance of student-student and teacher-student interaction. On the other hand, the students who partially agree are 11% and the others who disagree are 8%.

Totally agree and agree are the higher percentages, they reflect that 81% of the students feel that teachers maintain an appropriate balance of interaction in the classroom. In fact, the students show more interest for learning because they feel motivated by the teacher. The students who think the contrary are 18%. They say that the large amount of students does not allow them to establish a proper balance of interaction with their classmates and the teacher.

The question reflects that 43% of the students totally agree and 36% of them agree with the statement that mentions: the students have the opportunity to build relationship with their classmates. The opposite happens with the students who partially agree, this percentage is 15%, and disagree is only 7% of the students.

The findings show that 79% of the students feel that large classes give them the opportunity to build relationship with their classmates, because they can be supported by others since there are more people to exchange different ideas or different points of view. It is beneficial because the collaboration inside the classroom improves not only the social area but academic one as well.

However, the negative answers reflect that 21% of the students do not believe that they can build relationships in the classroom, because there are more people with different criterions.

About statement No.12 which mentions that the teacher has problems remembering all the student's names, the item shows that not only 28% of the students disagree but also 26% of them partially agree. Moreover, the students who totally agree are 21%; and 25% of them agree.

Adding the percentages of disagree and partially agree; there is a 54% of students who affirm that the teacher remembers all the student's names. Indeed, they feel that remembering their names, the teacher shows interest to get involved with them in the daily activities. This is supported by Kathi (2011) who claims that one of the manners to construct respect between both teachers and students is learning the students' names as soon as possible, in this way the students gain confidence and a major involvement inside the classroom.

However, 46% of the students say that the teacher presents difficulties remembering their names because there is a large number of students in the class.

It was found in the questionnaire that totally agree and agree have the higher percentages related to the statement No. 13 that says: the atmosphere is less stressful since the teacher does not ask several questions to the same student. The students who totally agree are 21% and 39% of them agree. In contrast, not only 29% of the students partially agree but also 11% of them disagree.

To sum up, the results show that 60% of the students agree that the atmosphere is not stressful since the teacher works with the whole class asking several questions.

The large number of students allows the teachers to focus on several students; in this way, they create a harmonious environment to learn. On the other hand, 40% of the interviewees state that the atmosphere becomes more stressful to work since there are many students in the class.

The next statement that says; it is easier for students to use their cell-phones or any mobile device without being seen by the teacher, shows that 35% of the students

disagree, and 26% of them partially agree; in contrast, the students who agree are 18% and 21% of them totally agree.

The findings show that 61% of the students think that it is difficult to use the electronic media without being seen by the teacher. They prefer to avoid the use of technology while they are learning English because, they know the institution's rules and they do not want to receive any kind of disciplinary action. The contrary happens with 39% of the students who think that class size helps them to use their cell-phones, because; they can hide among their classmates.

The second table about social area has been described, analyzed and interpreted, too. We can see that this area does not show any problem when the students learn English in large classes. It happens the contrary, because all the statements reflect a positive attitude of the students towards teaching-learning process.

To sum up, it was found that teachers and students maintain a proper balance of interaction, they establish good relationships student-student, student-teacher and finally the environment is good for learning.

Now we will present the last table. This is about psychological implications. This is composed by seven statements as follows:



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

**Table 3**

N°	In classes with a large number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
15.	The atmosphere is stressful.	43	24%	63	34%	34	19%	43	23%	183	100%
16.	Students feel inhibited when speaking in front of the rest.	38	21%	51	28%	57	31%	37	20%	183	100%
17.	Students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.	26	14%	50	27%	65	36%	42	23%	183	100%
18.	Students do not like to participate because they feel afraid.	19	10%	51	28%	54	30%	59	32%	183	100%
19.	The teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students.	45	25%	34	18%	56	31%	48	26%	183	100%
20.	Students feel they can act competitively with other students.	67	37%	78	43%	25	13%	13	7%	183	100
21.	Students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.	31	17%	58	32%	58	31%	36	20%	183	100

Author: Nelly Gisella Godoy Rodríguez

Source: Student's Questionnaire

The table indicates that 34% of the students agree and 24 % of them totally agree with the statement about the atmosphere is stressful. On the other hand, 23% of the students disagree and 19% of them partially agree. The data of this statement

shows that 58% of the students think that the atmosphere is stressful due to the great amount of students; this is affirmed by Jimarkorn and Singhasiri (2006) who state that large classes are less effective, they represent extra work, and; a great number of them have many difficulties in the teaching-learning process. However 42% of the students do not think in the same way, because they feel that the atmosphere is good for learning when there are many students.

The questionnaire shows that 31% of the students partially agree and 20% of them disagree. On the other hand, it was found that 28% of the students agree and 21% of them totally agree with the statement No. 16 which mentions that the students feel inhibited when they speak in front of the rest.

The findings show that partially agree and disagree make a total of 51% which confirms that the students do not feel inhibited when they speak in front of other students. On the contrary, they feel motivated because they have the opportunity to communicate in the target language. However, an important number of students 49% think the opposite because they do not feel comfortable when they speak in front of many people.

Item No. 17 shows that 36% of the students partially agree, similarly 23% of them totally agree. On the other hand, we can see that only 14% of the students totally agree and 27% of them agree with the statement that says the students do not have the opportunity to express their opinions.

The findings show that the majority of the students 59% can express their points of view. They think that the great number of students in the classroom is not an obstacle in order to express their opinions. The contrary happens with 41% of the

students, because they feel that the great amount of students is a barrier in the English language teaching-learning process, since they cannot express what they think.

About statement No. 18, related to students do not like to participate because they feel afraid, the item shows that not only 32% of the students disagree but also 30% of them partially agree. Moreover, the students who agree are 28%; and only 10% of them totally agree.

Adding the percentages of disagreement and partially agreement, there is a 62% of the students who like to participate because they feel comfortable and pleasant with the activities in the classroom. However, an important number of students, 38% think the opposite; because they feel intimidated and uncomfortable to participate when the class is overcrowded.

The question No. 19 shows that 31% of the students partially agree and 26% of the students disagree with the question that confirms: the teacher does not pay equal attention to all his/her students. On the other hand, we can see that 25% of the students totally agree likewise 18% of them agree.

The findings show that the majority of the students 57% affirm that the teacher pay equal attention to all students. Teachers need to attract student's attention to carry out the activities in the classroom, especially when this group is numerous, although it implies to dedicate more time. However, 43% of the students say the opposite. They think the attention is not equal for everybody mainly when there are many people; this is affirmed by Blatchford, Basset and Brown (2011) who say that when the classes are reduced into smaller ones, the students have the opportunity to

receive more personal attention, in consequence, the students will be more engaged with the teacher.

The next statement about students feel they can act competitively with other students, we can see that 43% of the students agree and 37% of them totally agree. On the other hand, the students who partially agree are 13% and only 7% of them disagree.

The data of this statement reflect that 80% of the students enjoy when they act competitively with others. They think is better for their learning development, especially in classrooms with many students. However the students who affirm the opposite are 20%; they feel that many people in the classroom is a big problem to develop their skills competitively.

The last statement is number 21. The data indicates that 32% of the students agree, and 17% of them totally agree. On the contrary, we can see that 31% of the students partially agree and 20% of them disagree with the statement that mentions that the students feel relaxed because they can go unnoticed.

Adding the percentages of agree and totally agree, there is a 49% of students who feel comfortable because the teacher does not notice them. Differently 51% of the students are stressed because they think that, despite of being an overpopulated class; the teacher takes notice to them all the time.

This analysis concludes with the third table about psychological implications, which shows as result that, the large number of students influence in the environment of the classroom. It becomes stressful and the students do not feel comfortable when the teacher supervises them all the time. However, it reflects some advantages

because the students are satisfied when they speak to the rest of the class, they feel free to express their points of view. Finally, they like to participate competitively with others.

## Conclusions

- This research demonstrates that in the academic aspect, the teachers have the ability to handle overcrowded classes because they can plan, organize and develop different activities with the students.
- Despite the teacher's efforts for teaching and the enthusiasm of the students for learning; the size of the class also reflects a problem in the instructional area because many of the students are not receiving individual attention.
- The large number of students do not affect the social aspect. The students show a positive attitude toward English language teaching-learning process.
- In the psychological aspect, the great amount of students make the environment stressful and little comfortable to work.
- The teachers cannot give appropriate feedback to all the students, and only some of them receive this benefit.
- Despite the number of students, students cannot do activities of other subjects because teachers are always monitoring the activities done by the students.
- The seating arrangement allows students higher interaction between teacher-student and student-student.

### Recommendations

- Teachers should use more grouping techniques, in this way they can interact with all students.
- Teachers should apply new methodologies which draw the attention of the students in order to avoid having a stressful and noisy environment.
- It is often convenient that teachers express words of congratulations thus students will feel important and they will gain confidence as well.
- The teachers should continuously update their knowledge with modern techniques, new methodologies of teaching and strategies which generate student`s interest and the desire to continue learning.

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## ANNEXES

### INSTRUMENTS



## UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

### 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 learning English*. 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.

<b>Very satisfactory:</b>	<b>Totally agree</b>
<b>Satisfactory:</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Somewhat satisfactory:</b>	<b>Partially agree</b>
<b>Unsatisfactory:</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

**Informative data:** Please fill in the information below

**Name of institution** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of institution:** Public ( ) Private ( )

**Year of study:** 8<sup>th</sup> year. ( ) 9<sup>th</sup> year ( ) 10<sup>th</sup> year. ( )

1<sup>st</sup> senior high school. ( ) 2<sup>nd</sup> senior high school. ( ) 3<sup>rd</sup>. senior high school. ( )

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**A. Academic issues**

	<b>In classes with a large number of students:</b>	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 practicing, 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**

Nº	<b>In classes with a large number of students:</b>	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.				
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**C. Psychological issues:**

	<b>In classes with a large number of students:</b>	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.				