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MENCION EN 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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Dedication

I want to dedicate this work to my Lord God for guiding me at every moment of my life, to my parents, to my three sons: Jean Paul, Rolando and Carlos and to my five granddaughters, who with their wishes and sweetness prompted me to continue studying and make my dreams come true. Likewise, I express my gratitude to my whole family, and especially, to my loving husband Rolando for his patience and love.

Morayma

This work is dedicated, first to my father GOD because He has been my guide during all my life, then to my family especially to my husband Mario, to my son Ismael and my daughter Abigail, because they have been my unconditional support and have given me the force and the value that I have needed during my life as a student and also as a person.

Ruth

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Morayma - Ruth

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Abstract

The topic of this research study addressed “The influence of large classes in the English language teaching – learning process in Ecuadorian high schools”. Whose purpose is to analyze the instructional, social and psychological implications that teachers and students face in large classes. The research sample was taken from two Ecuadorian high schools, located in Azogues city. The respondents belonged to the eighth year of basic education to the first year of senior high school. The students were surveyed using a questionnaire containing 21 statements (9 focusing on academic issues, 5 on social and 7 on psychological).

The purpose of using the quantitative method in this research was to measure the level of incidence of the implications previously cited. Main findings reveal us that students in large classes do benefit with activities related to instructional implications as interaction and practice with the language skills. While, in social implications teachers do not remember all students’ names. Finally, in psychological implications large classes affect the quality of classroom atmosphere, students’ confidence to speak in class, and the teachers’ level of attention towards them.

Key words: EFL language learning – large classes – instructional, social and psychological implications – Ecuadorian high schools

Resumen

EL tema del presente trabajo de fin de titulación es: “the influence of large classes in the English language teaching – learning process in Ecuadorian high schools”. El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar las implicaciones, académicas, sociales y psicológicas que tanto profesores como alumnos enfrentan al trabajar con clases sobrepobladas. Las muestras tomadas en este estudio fueron de estudiantes de dos colegios ecuatorianos localizados en la ciudad de Azogues. La población estudiantil encuestada fue desde el octavo año de educación básica al primero de bachillerato. Los estudiantes encuestados contestaron 21 interrogantes (9 enfocados a aspectos académicos, 5 a sociales y 7 a psicológicos).

El propósito de utilizar el método cuantitativo en este estudio fue medir el nivel de incidencia de los problemas previamente citados. Los resultados más importantes nos llevan a la conclusión de que los estudiantes de clases sobrepobladas se benefician del uso de actividades académicas como la interacción entre ellos y la práctica de las destrezas del lenguaje. Mientras que en el aspecto social para los maestros es muy difícil recordar todos los nombres de los estudiantes. Finalmente, en lo referente a los aspectos psicológicos estamos conscientes de que las clases numerosas afectan la calidad y el ambiente de la clase, la seguridad del estudiante para hablar en público y; la falta de atención de los maestros para con todos los estudiantes.

Palabras claves: Enseñanza del Inglés como lengua extranjera - clases numerosas- aspectos académicos, sociales y psicológicos – colegios del Ecuador.

Introduction

Concerned with the low level of English in the Ecuadorian high schools, the Ministry of Education has implemented an English teaching training policy since 2012, in order to benefit English teachers, with the use of new methodologies, techniques and strategies dealing with teaching English as a foreign language, so that students, who will be the final beneficiaries to use the language as a practical tool in their real life.

For such a purpose, the government of Ecuador has been acting proactively in order to improve teachers' curriculum based on international standards in the mandatory B2 level. Therefore, English teachers are being trained with new methodologies and techniques that will help them to improve the teaching quality. Additionally, a program called "Go Teacher" has also been implemented to give teachers the opportunity to take intensive English courses abroad through scholarships in order to get the educational commitment.

However, there are other aspects that affect the teaching –learning process of English that do not allow teachers and students to obtain their goal, such is the case of large classes, that are part of our reality, which stands for a challenge that students and teachers have to face and overcome in order to find a solution to this educational problem.

Previous related studies had proved that large classes affect the normal performance of language teaching. A study carried out by Ahmadin (2009), whose main objective lies in identifying the inconveniences and problems faced in large classes that deal with teacher, learner and curriculum-based problems. According to this, Ahmadin's aim consists in identifying the problems of learning English from the learners' perspective to conduct the study by focusing on programs of general English.

Another study carried out in Iraq by Flaieh (1997) deals with our social nature and how social interaction can enhance academic learning. The author frames a set of questions related to the two major educational challenges: What are the challenges of teaching a large class? And, how can teachers respond to these challenges? The focus of this issue is on developing a community learning, resolving conflicts, negotiating meanings and cooperating to complete set tasks.

According to Goretti (2006), there is not a unique way to teaching large classes, but three things have to be considered: teaching style, characteristics of the students, and the goals and objectives of the course through the assistance of the institutions and policy support. In this sense, the author emphasizes his research on the three main aspects: instructional, social and psychological, which help to improve the language teaching-learning process.

The obtained results from the study tend to detect the long-standing problem of large classes of the education system in Ecuador in order to benefit teachers and students with new methodologies. Furthermore, this information will also be beneficial to the whole administrative board such as the Ministry of Education, schools and other educational institutions.

The limitation of this study shows that the data obtained only reflects the students' perception, and there was not any teachers' intervention. It would have been better to give a questionnaire to both, teachers and students in order to have balanced information. However, the research provide useful insights in the field of language teaching in large classes, which may be achieved through the implementation of further strategies and techniques in Ecuadorian schools.

Literature Review

This section reviews the current literature of large class size and the use of new techniques and strategies that can be used as a potential solution to reduce its impact by making several changes that encompass the three aspects, instructional, social and psychological, which are the central concern of this study.

Teaching Approach Methods

Richards (2006) conceptualizes communicative language teaching as a group of principles and a philosophy on the language teaching objectives. These principles center their essence on how learners learn the language, through a wisely complemented variety of classroom activities, which prove to be effective in the learning aim. The procedure to perform the process in the due way must be based on decisions about the content, the grammar, the vocabulary, sub-skills level to be used as a focus on the syllabus content, considering context grasping instead of mattering non-communicative structures.

Relating to Natural Approach, Richards (2001) asserts that this approach has emphasized on formal style which is focused on communication skills for beginners, and has slightly emphasized on the teaching learning of traditional grammar. He complements his statement by arguing that in the Natural Approach students are quite limited to work and act under stereotyped patterns of sentences, phrases, stories, which have been experienced by someone else. This means that students normally have little opportunities to use the language communicative skills, or to express their real life experiences.

The above stated matches with what Krashen and Terrell (2001) define as three stages, the Preproduction stage, the early production stage and the last stage.

The preproduction stage dealing with the ability to understand oral language, allows students to reply responses and assimilate the sounds of the language. The early production consists in a hard learning process in which students try to mold their mind to the sounds, structure and pragmatics of the language, disregarding the mistakes caused during the learning entering process. And the last stage goes beyond stereotypes patterns of language. Thus, this approach is directly oriented to motivation by means of more complex games, role-plays, open- ended dialogues, discussions, and extended small - group work.

Similarly, Asher (1977) asserts that the Total Physical Response method conducts students to aggressive and intensive practice of listening to respond with physical movements by the use of the right brain prior to starting to speak through coordinated and sequential speech practice. The author also adds that large language classes were often a cause of uncertainty, therefore he intended to create an anti-stress method consisting of a wide set of insights in its rationale because it combines the brain learning process with movement. In so doing, students relieve their stress and become motivated and willing to work according to teachers' expectations.

Richards and Rogers (2001) roughly converge with Krashen and Terrell on claiming that the term wholeness might be understood as an opposite of the word formation process, in which we use pieces of language such as morphemes, graphemes, phonemes as well as onsets and rimes. On the other side, the sense of wholeness lies in understanding it as the use of integrated skills, which deals with the managing of language in real life situations. As a matter of fact, the nature of this approach is basically characterized for giving learners' independence and self-directedness either in the selection of materials or in the execution of classroom activities. Additionally, this approach is primarily focused on

literature through a wide range of sources that enrich the syllabus being taught.

Consequently, it is prone to using complementary materials such as story-telling, body language, handouts etc.

Differently from the previous assertion, Richards and Rogers (2001) conceptualize the grammar translation method as one of the oldest methods. It has also been known as a classic method because it was originated in the classic languages Latin and Greek and rather focusing on the learning of the target language itself, so its emphasis was centered in helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature. The characteristics of this method have been founded on the non-communicative premises of language being listed as follows.

Words were taught in an isolated way. Rules were taught on inappropriate settings. This means that students had little or no chance to speak resulting in an absolute absence of pronunciation teaching. Similarly, sentence word order, neither words structure do not produce communicative pieces of language, followed by the teacher's explanation given in the mother language. Consequently, the drawback of this method lies in that it did not provide learners with communicative skills and interaction. Freeman (2000) defines this method as one of the most classical ones that intended to get a double purpose. First, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language through the structure of the target language; second, it was recognized that the students would never use the target language, but the mental exercise of the learner. Finally, it was thought that the foreign language learning would help students grow intellectually by enhancing their cultural background.

Class Size

Clegg (2006) conceptualizes large-sized classes according to the place and the environment where they are being held. Thus, internationally speaking, a large class is that surpassing 100 students; in other places for instance in Latin America, a class comprising 50 or so students is regarded as a large class.

The author defines large classes as an advance blocking, which is inappropriate because it results in lack of space, too short time and no opportunities to be spontaneous, to prove to be diligent with respect to the learning process.

In this sense, Clegg adds that layout has been and keeps being a relevant aspect to be taken into account when working with large classes. Pedagogical research has come to the conclusion that the students placement within the room influences on their learning performance. In this sense, the level of responsiveness depends on where they are sitting and even who are around them. It is said that the closer teachers are from students, the better they respond.

Robert and Mester (2007) affirm that normally, teaching large classes imply a lot of problems; because it has been proved that there is no teacher's methodology or method that could satisfactorily deal with large classes. The writers claim that the factor playing an important role in large-sized class solution is the position of the students' seats which determine the level of attention and responsiveness towards the task performance.

Additionally, Robert and Mester (2007) focus on an excessive noise as a problem worthy of being pointed out and necessary to work out the solution, but they add other problems such as uncomfortable layout, no space for monitoring, difficulty to organize them, difficulty to hold students attention, unplanned activities for pair or group work,

non-feasibility for an interactive class, lack of concentration, discomfoting setting atmosphere and so on.

Managing Learning

Khan (2005) thinks that the incoming of sophisticated devices has led to willing and unwilling changes in societies. Thus, the development of information technology goes in line with changes in society. The evolution of technology goes beyond and impact significantly in the educational system and, of course, it affects the change performers, who need to go into a process of training in order to get used to handle the sophisticated technological devices that provide them with a high quality instruction with efficient support services, which goal is to meet society's needs.

Additionally, Li Wai- Shing (2008), has targeted his focus from a different perspective, but oriented to an effective management learning as an essential aspect that contributes to a positive classroom environment. Within this premise, effort and attention make the most relevant elements with teaching and instructional roles. This means that knowledge and skills to maintain the desirable discipline have been given a secondary importance. The writer rather focuses on the motivation as a parallel element to achieve effective management learning. This process and its results, basically depend on the setting and the culture and idiosyncrasy in which they perform their teaching activity. Thus, classroom management is closely linked to socio cultural and moral values of both teachers and learners.

Managing Large Classes

Claiyasook (2006) ponders the positivity of the research, by focusing on good teachers who center their attention on solutions to teaching in large classes, rather than on the

problems they face every day. This action will allow teachers go beyond what and how to teach and get the means to find out why students have a low or high performance. Thus teachers must be concerned on determining if their students are learning, but if they are not reaching their goal, they have to find the reason of the failure. Whatever be the result the teacher is required to make changes, either slight or significant in order to improve the whole language teaching-learning process.

Cordes (2008) states that large classes' problem does not have to be a surprise or something new. That means, getting a solution demands a consensus from a significant group of people involved in the teaching of large classes. As the problems are the same, the challenges are similar, and so must be the solutions. This attempt must start with discipline problems such as distractions, loud talking, late arrivals, partner's copying, poor fluency, class anonymity, lack of concentration and heterogeneous background. These aspects lead students belonging to large classes to experiment challenges in their learning, which conducts to some teaching learning drawbacks such is the case of not knowing relevant information, uncertainty in asking questions, incorrect administration of timing and the lack of teaching tips towards succeeding in the class. From what has been stated so far about large class problems, the primary aspect to reach a workable solution is the correct control of discipline in order to present any class activity and get students to assimilate the class content.

Activities for working with large classes

For Claiyasook (2006), all students do not learn in the same way, but it is their active participation that improves their way of learning due to a variety of strategies that teachers incorporate in class. This diversity of learning involves interaction, action and changes of

strategies, which have to be categorized so that they might be used in the class as a whole, either in pair or group work activities.

In the author's criterion one of the common problems in large classes is the difficulty to develop speaking skills because students are usually afraid of talking in front of numerous groups of students. Thereby, a new technique is required to overcome this drawback. As to the setting of the topic or explanation teachers must implement a new strategy, but assigning them occasional tasks and giving them some time, so that they can infer the answers instead of just questions to the class and obtaining nothing more than silence and the subsequent waste of class time. From this point of view, the solution has been proposed under the following techniques: First, as you present the lesson topic in a graphic organizer, secondly, provide them with a brainstorm related to probable workable solutions, and request of them, further ideas, thirdly, give an argument with the way and the reason a given concept may be useful in real life and finally, discuss the reasons why a solution results to be correct or incorrect

Similarly, Woodward (2001) expresses his concern related to the strategies stated in this research dealing with crowd control, which starts with the aim of giving learners some confidence and identity. In order to achieve this, teachers must keep close and in constant contact with students which open the possibility to make questions about doubts or problems or even to confirm something that is being done in the right way. This system has proved to work better than the traditional loud speaking, floor-tapping or attention-holding clapping. As far as, the writer suggests, confidence and identity create an atmosphere with plenty of social stimulus, especially, when setting pair or group work. In this respect, it is lightly recommendable to form small groups in order to provide more opportunities and

therefore more identity. In so doing, students center their interest in the task, and give it none value because this technique gives them independence to express their ideas and freedom to come to a solution – consensus. To meet with the requirements of this technique, instructions must be given step by step.

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement

Robert and Mester (2007) assert that some research made in the field have fairly proved that desks layout influence significantly in the learners' attitude and determination towards learning. That is why, it is strongly suggested that students' desks commonly placed in a row must be changed to a circle, which enables multichannel communication and better discipline control.

Indeed, the writers claim that not all seats of the class provide students with the same chance to visualize the exposure of class explanation. It is obvious that certain seats favor students and even encourage them, but other seats especially those on the corner, on the farther sides and on the further back affect their visualization and level of attention. The authors remark that it is a must for teachers to establish a regular rotation enabling students to sit in visible enough sites; this of course, must be complemented with the teacher's strategic movements; forcing the teacher to place his or her self in the most attention getting position within the room. However, this teaching suggestions do not intent to lead teachers to extreme positions of discomfort but rather promote ways to improve learning effectiveness as well as to learning good will and determination through attentiveness and real interest in the topic being focused.

Evertson (2006) manifests that young learners' attitude and desire to learn reflect the way how classes are organized and how they feel with a given layout and the subsequent

effect on their learning, because it is this environment that molds on the learners' perception. From this perspective it is evident that the classroom atmosphere is a raising push to motivate learning. In the writer's opinion, the growth of the on-task behavior must overlap with the seats arrangement, which evidences that comfort is a decisive element when it comes to improve language learning, and understand that ultimately it contributes to improve assimilation in the individual level, which evidences that students do not take advantage of the fact that two minds think more. Contrarily, they devote most of the time to trivial talking and show somewhat careless towards the task itself.

Different levels of proficiency

Pitoniak, Young, Martiniello, King, Buteux, and Ginsburgh, (2009) state that proficiency levels have always been and are still being regarded as a heterogeneous aspect, especially in places where there is a linguistic struggle of national languages with the immersion of English language. So, this is essentially relevant to take into account the linguistic imbalance between the impossibility to provide assessment to all national languages, in front of the feasibility of an assessment with English.

In the authors' assumption, students who are fluent in English can be proficient in understanding written directions, but not in a standardized test. In other words, learners who are proficient in interpersonal communication, not necessarily are good at academic English, which is the bridge to words elaborating assessments. Of course, the level of proficiency is an advantage on the processing speech.

The above-mentioned authors establish a clear difference between language proficiency in fluency and written texts directions, but the result is that being fluent even in

native language does not mean being proficient in understanding instructions when dealing with the target language, the situation is similar but the difference is more remarkable.

Zehler (1994) concludes that the problem of having students who have not developed their ability to speak English is common and frequent at the beginning of the school year. In such cases, students with low level of speaking are raised to countries where other languages than English are spoken. Therefore, writing and understanding at the same level of their classmates is a serious problem. This fact blocks the possibility of having heterogeneous classes, because teachers used to teach English-Speaking students, but now it is quite different because school classes are a mixture of learner's levels, whose language is not English. This pushes students to conduct communication understanding in English, which is a compulsory linguistic channel to get understood among them.

The development of these cases tries to provide both, teachers and students, with a clear guidance on how English language is being taught in large classes in several countries. and the difficulty that teachers and students face due to overpopulated classes that could be handled and improved by creating an interactive model of teaching with the use of new technologies and adjustment of the content, as well as the way to seeking how to make the language learning process as effective as in small classes. The results of this research show us that student's participation in small classes strengthens their rate of language assimilation through confidence, and self-interest, especially when being critically evaluated by teachers and peers.

In synthesis, this information reveals that providing students' freedom to express their opinions through interviews, gives greater insight into the ETL classroom. Therefore, the

relief of the psychological aspects results in the clearing out and elimination of cultural obstacles and rather the linking of these elements.

Obviously, this is not a general rule due to the fact that not all students are able to share this cultural outlook because there is a significant difference between students, who are fluent speakers, and those whose communicative skills are poor and cannot benefit from the target culture components.

The above-cited authors have all emphasized on the frequent and long-felt problems of large classes. In this sense, each has framed solutions to the problem from a different point of view. Though any of the suggested solutions do not encompass the three aspects might be achieved for the good of large classes. Naturally, problems will not disappear once of a sudden, but teachers and students will be benefited from these solutions in a gradual way as much as possible. Therefore, the studies that come up will support our thesis statement at the time that they prove that each of the recommended solutions make an evidence that they are efficient and workable enough, which constitutes a must and a challenge for the class actors to try them all.

Ahmadin (2009) whose principal objective of the study was to list as many problems as teachers, who work with large language classes have faced since long. For such a purpose the responses have been classified into three major groups: teacher based, learner based and curriculum based problems as an integrated pedagogical entity.

To support his previous statement, Ahmadin gives details of how this controlled activity has been and can be adapted according to how situations change as time goes by. This allows students to practice some language skills such as listening, reading and speaking trying to get the maximum of efficiency. To reach this goal, the use of the direct,

TPR and didactic methods has been necessary as the main channel. Besides of the methods, the key of the methodology is to provide students with clear instructions so that they can be clearly enlightened on what and how to do it.

The above statement allows us to reach to the conclusion that handling and improving the teaching quality in large classes is not an unsolvable problem, but a matter of creativity with the help of the appropriate and correct methodology or technique that involve thinking and movement at the same time in order to produce total interaction.

Merab (2011) focuses the problem from a different perspective. He carries out this study to analyze the nature of social infrastructure and teaching materials in high schools in Uganda; at the time that he identifies strategies that students devise, so that they can match appropriately to the students setting. The study was carried out by using a purely qualitative method centered in group discussion with teacher trainees and interviews with cooperating teachers and supervisors, who have been randomly selected from public and private schools located both in urban and rural areas. The advantage of using this method is that it permits to establish real insight into teachers' trainer's experience that helps them understand school situations.

The study has reported that the learning environment is the main problem affecting teachers and students in a different way, so does infrastructure at all levels, which demotivates the learning process.

Sunday (2010) establishes that the core purpose of this study is to show and prove that the performance of the students belonging to schools of rural and urban areas are just a nuance, whatever may be the size of the class.

The research model for this study is a descriptive survey of the ex-post facto type. This consists in leaving out the manipulation of the variables in a random way through the use of the sampling method, having as an essential instrument a student class size questionnaire designed by the researchers based on gender, age, school type and grades.

The author does not give relevance to the difference in the performance of the students coming from rural and urban areas, so it is not necessary to give individual attention to students who may face assimilation problems.

Flaieh (1997) synthesizes the set of questions related to the two major educational challenges: What are the challenges of teaching a large class? And how can the teacher respond to these challenges?

In most of the cases there are no alternatives in choosing between large or small classes, but they have to teach in large classes, and they know that the larger the class size, the more problems they will have to face and solve. The author recommends adjust the content and the way they teach accordingly in order to make their teaching just as effective as in small classes.

Goretti (2006) quotes Ives (2000), who asserts that there is not a unique and specific way to teach in large classes. This fact forces teachers to consider three things: teaching style, characteristics of the students; and goals and objectives of the course in order to optimize methods and methodology being used for such a purpose.

This study was supported by the observation method, undertaken in two faces: the Vaseline survey in 20 schools among 35 teachers and the reflective action face involving 10 teachers in 5 schools in order to develop further strategies. The author concludes that even teachers, who do whatever is possible to facilitate teaching and learning in large classes,

they will also need institutional and policy support that does not have to be only with the basic structure as bigger space of the classrooms, enough furniture and instructional materials but also increasing the number of teachers at least two teachers for class, providing schools with the necessary resources and enabling teachers to develop their confidence and skills to improve the learning environment in large classes.

Method

Setting and participants

This study was conducted in the urban area of Azogues city in the province of Cañar. A sample of one hundred eighty four students ranging from twelve to sixteen years old, belonging to two high schools of five different classes from eighth of basic education to first year of high school were selected.

Procedures

The study started with the gathering of information for the literature review coming from books and journals. The information was found in the Internet and in some virtual and physical libraries. The instrument used to gather information was a questionnaire divided into three sections with a total of 21 statements, distributed in the following way: 9 statements about academic implications, 5 statements about social implications and 7 statements about psychological implications.

To apply this questionnaire, an authorization from high school authorities and teachers was necessary in order to gather the necessary information. Once students completed the questionnaire, the information was tabulated by hand and entered into an electronic spreadsheet in order to convert the data into percentages for the analysis of the three different sections; classifying them into positive and negative aspects by mentioning the rates for each one, to do this, first we codified the data in the light of the aspects considered for the study, then we established rates based in each graphic.

The next step consisted in tabulating the information coming from the 21 statements, which permitted us to draw differences and similarities. These data were

described, analyzed and interpreted considering the purpose of study and the research questions which deal with academic, social and psychological aspects that clarify any doubts in order to change the philosophy of the teaching learning process.

Discussion

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This section displays the description, analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from questionnaires given to students in five large classes from secondary school.

In order to provide people with a complete and useful explanation about the current research, it is important to include a chart with each statement explanation and its answers, related to the three research questions, instructional, social and psychological.

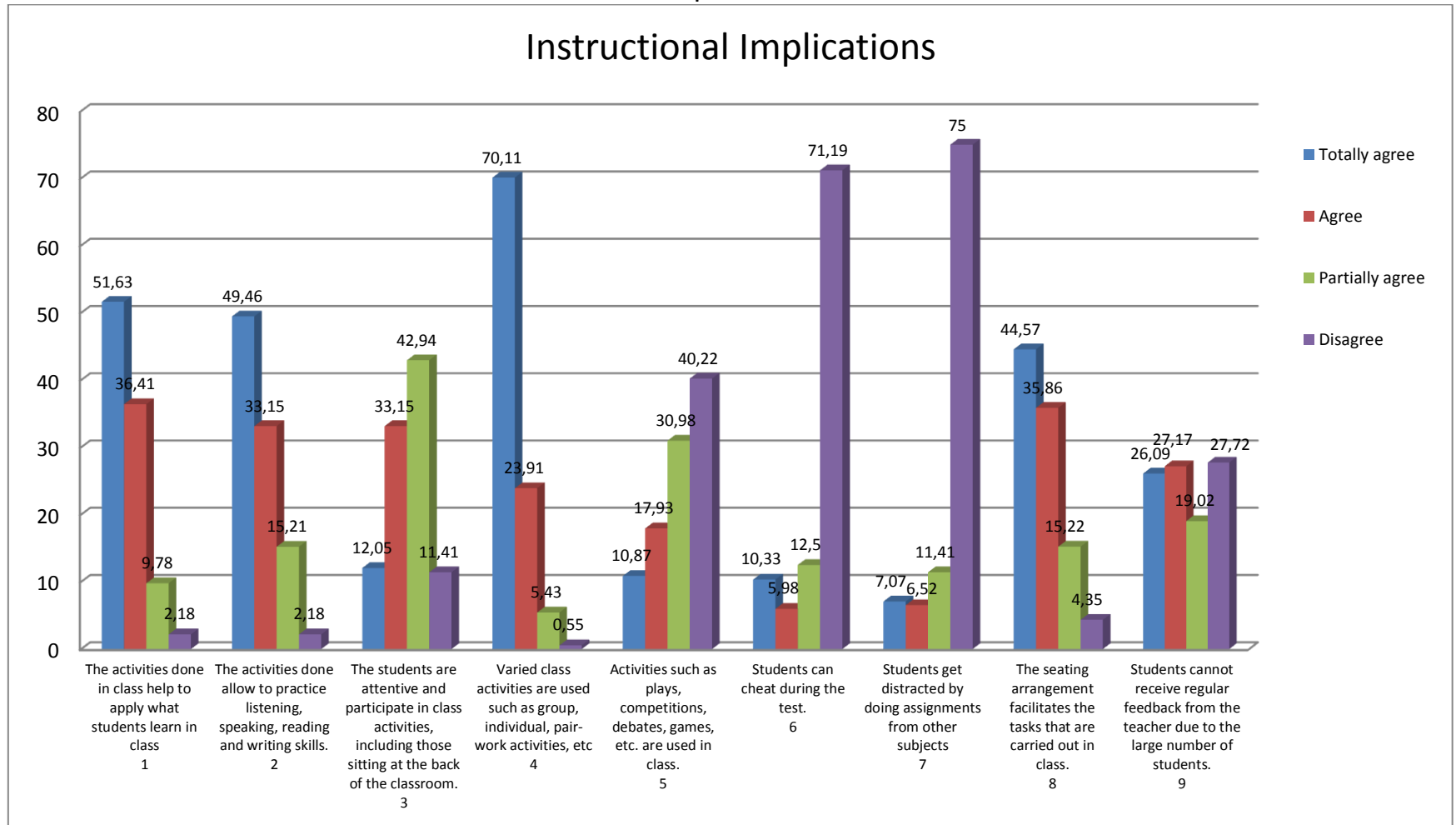
The analysis of these three variables and the findings will tell us more about the oversized classroom management that could help teachers to implement new techniques and strategies to solve large class problems.

Chart 1

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

| 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. | 95 | 51.63 | 67 | 36.41 | 18 | 9.78 | 4 | 2.18 | 184 | 100 |
| 2. | The activities done allow to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. | 91 | 49.46 | 61 | 33.15 | 28 | 15.21 | 4 | 2.18 | 184 | 100 |
| 3. | The students are attentive and participate in class activities, including those sitting at the back of the classroom. | 23 | 12.50 | 61 | 33.15 | 79 | 42.94 | 21 | 11.41 | 184 | 100 |
| 4. | Varied class activities are used such as group, individual, pair-work activities, etc. | 129 | 70.11 | 44 | 23.91 | 10 | 5.43 | 1 | 0.55 | 184 | 100 |
| 5. | Activities such as plays, competitions, debates, games, etc. are used in class. | 20 | 10.87 | 33 | 17.93 | 57 | 30.98 | 74 | 40.22 | 184 | 100 |
| 6. | Students can cheat during the test. | 19 | 10.33 | 11 | 5.98 | 23 | 12.50 | 131 | 71.19 | 184 | 100 |
| 7. | Students get distracted by doing assignments from other subjects. | 13 | 7.07 | 12 | 6.52 | 21 | 11.41 | 138 | 75.00 | 184 | 100 |
| 8. | The seating arrangement facilitates the tasks that are carried out in class. | 82 | 44.57 | 66 | 35.86 | 28 | 15.22 | 8 | 4.35 | 184 | 100 |
| 9. | Students cannot receive regular feedback from the teacher due to the large number of students. | 48 | 26.09 | 50 | 27.17 | 35 | 19.02 | 51 | 27.72 | 184 | 100 |

Graph 1



Authors: Morayma Molina and Ruth Verdugo
 Source: Students' Questionnaire.

For a better understanding of the instructional implications, nine different aspects were included according to the students' point of view.

In item 1 of this graph, we can observe that a high percentage of students, 88.04% (combination of totally agree and agree) converge that activities done in class help them assimilate the content of the topic, whereas, only around 12% of students disagree. This means that teachers responsible for large classes manage to use good strategies and techniques that allow them to present activities that help to reinforce lessons taught in class.

According to item 2, 82.61% (combination of totally agree and agree) of students believe that the activities done in class allow them to practice the four skills; while the 15.21% of them, partially agree, and only the 2.18 % totally disagree. These results show us that the students of large classes do benefit from activities oriented to the practice of the four basic language skills.

Statement 3 shows us that 45.20% (combination of totally agree and agree) of students consider that almost all of them are attentive and have the opportunity to participate in class (including the ones sitting at the back) students responded negatively with a 42% who think that they are not really attentive. In contrast 11.45% of students totally disagree with this idea. These results determine that not all students are focused on the lesson.

The information displayed in item 4 shows that the highest percentage of students 94.02% (combination of totally agree and agree) confirming that a variety of class activities can be used in class, especially, those involving pair and group work whereas, the remaining 5.43% partially agree and only 0.55% of students disagree. The results indicate us that it is possible to carry out varied activities in pair or group work in large classes, which could be handled and improved by creating an interactive model that help students

assimilate better. These results support statements made by Woodward (2001) who emphasizes that even though the way to achieve the variability of activities is not so simple. It is possible if the process is started in the right way by involving students throughout the process, an automatic change will be noticed from the working atmosphere to an energetic and socializing attitude of doing tasks to their best, which will result in the expected individual and group identity. Therefore, it would help teachers to be more attentive and more helpful in class.

Figures of Item 5 corresponding to complex activities performed in class show a negative trend, which percentage is 30.98% of students' answers partially agree and 40.22% corresponding to disagree, whereas only the 10.87% totally agree and the 17.93% agree. The figures show that complex activities such as debates, plays, games, competitions are not commonly used in class due to the large number of students.

Item 6 deals with academic dishonesty which results show that only 10% of students totally agree that it is possible to cheat or requesting answers from each other during the test. The 5.8% agree, 12.05% partially agree. Whereas, the highest percentage of 71.19% stay strongly their disagreement regarding cheating during a test, it means that despite the size of the class, teachers have strict control and establish the rules.

These results concord with the requirements of the new education policy whose main objective is to promote academic ethics and proficiency in order to ensure students' real acquisition of language knowledge, which should be complemented with the easiness of tests that demands reasoning and intuition, instead of memorization.

Item 7 shows quite different information related to getting distracted by doing assignments from other subjects. These figures have been distributed as follows: 75% with

the highest percentage of students who disagree; 11.41% for partially disagree; while 7.07% corresponds to totally agree, and 6.52% is the percentage that stands for agree showing that only a small group of students get distracted by doing other assignments than E F L activities. While, most of them are active and attentive in class due to the ability of the teacher to hold students attention during the teaching learning process.

Item 8 provides information related to the influence of the sitting position. The highest percentage corresponding to totally agree with 44.57%, followed by 35.86% that stands for agree give us an idea that students are satisfied about the seating arrangement and they can do all tasks efficiently. Whereas, partially agree reaches 15.22%. The remaining percentage 4.35% reveals that the percentage for disagreement is really low. According to the figures displayed, the seating arrangement does contribute to achieve a satisfactory performance of the class, in the students' opinion.

Robert & Mester (2007) also state this saying that teachers have realized that students sitting position in certain areas of the room tend to be more attentive and responsive than others. Although this is due in part to the tendency of more communicative students use to select the seats within the teacher direct line of sight, the seat a student happens to be is also a factor that can cause slight modification of his or her pattern of responsiveness.

Information related to regular feedback in large classes is included in item 9. The result of the graph has been distributed as follows. Totally agree, agree and disagree keep a standard rate fluctuation 26 to 27%. The remaining percentage 19.02 corresponds to partially disagree and the 27.72 % shows disagreement, representing nearly the half of students. The results permit us to infer that it is difficult for teachers to give feedback to

some students due to the large number of them and the little or any rate of attention gotten from students.

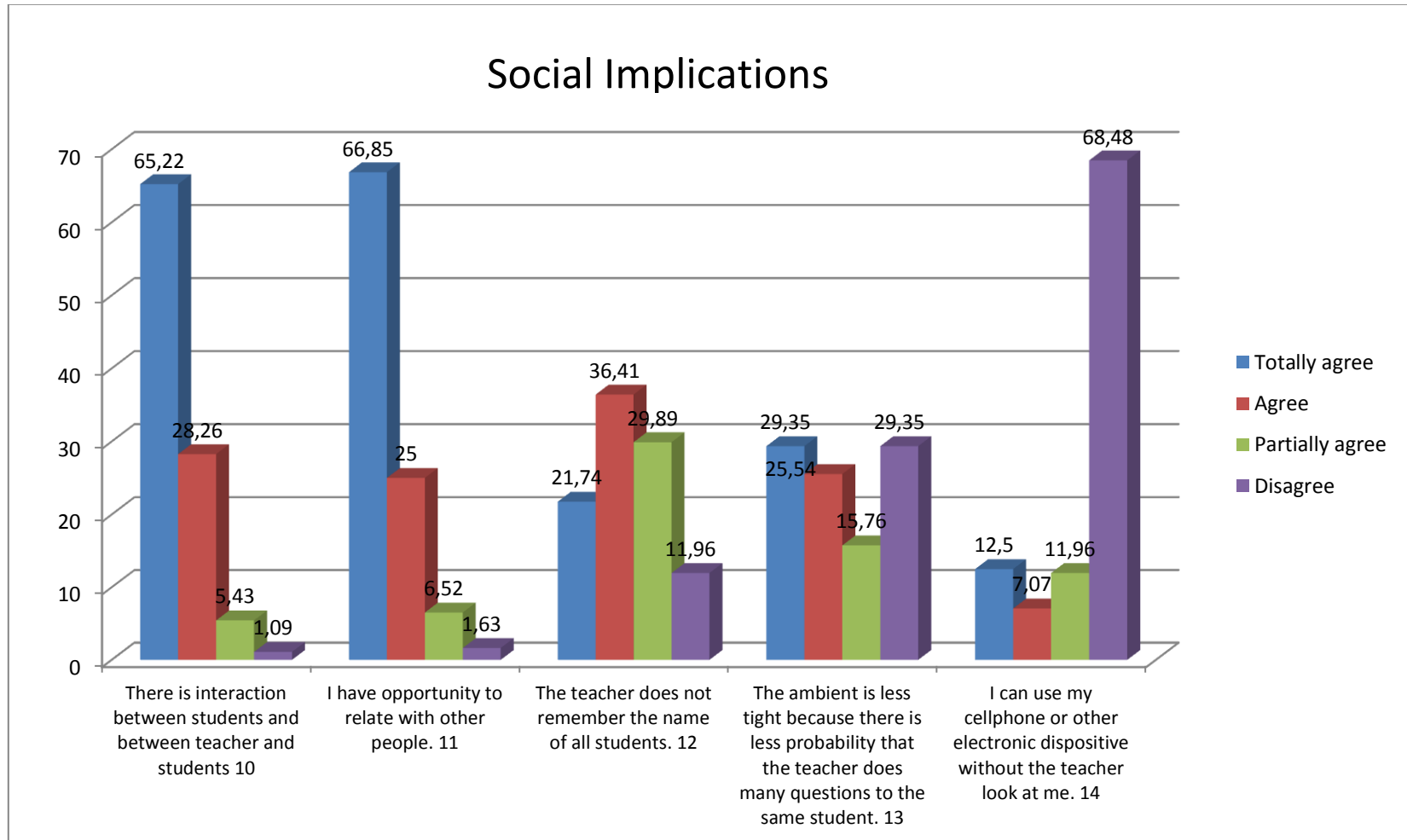
Relating to instructional implications faced by students and teachers when working with large classes. It has been observed that most of the answers were positive because they have the opportunity to interact and practice the language skills by linking their previous knowledge to the new one. All this academic performance has been achieved thanks to teacher's expertise and effort to overcome some language learning barriers and offer students relaxing hints that lead to self-confidence and language awareness. The only since-long standing problem is that large classes do not permit to carry out recreational activities such as role plays, debates, games and competences with the desired frequency.

Chart 2

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

| N° | In classes with a large number of students: | Totally agree | | Agree | | Partially agree | | Disagree | | TOTAL | |
|-----|---|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 10. | There is interaction between students and between teacher and students | 120 | 65.22 | 52 | 28.26 | 10 | 5.43 | 2 | 1.09 | 184 | 100 |
| 11. | I have opportunity to relate with other people. | 123 | 66.85 | 46 | 25.00 | 12 | 6.52 | 3 | 1.63 | 184 | 100 |
| 12. | The teacher does not remember the name of all students. | 40 | 21.74 | 67 | 36.41 | 55 | 29.89 | 22 | 11.96 | 184 | 100 |
| 13. | The ambient is less tight because there is less probability that the teacher does many questions to the same student. | 54 | 29.35 | 47 | 25.54 | 29 | 15.76 | 54 | 29.35 | 184 | 100 |
| 14. | I can use my cellphone or other electronic dispositive without the teacher look at me. | 23 | 12.5 | 13 | 7.07 | 22 | 11.96 | 126 | 68.48 | 184 | 100 |

Graph 2



Authors: Morayma Molina and Ruth Verdugo
Source: Students' Questionnaire.

This section related to social implications is mainly focused on the social impact of the classroom environment, where the relationship between students and teacher and among students has to be fair in order to achieve the desired academic results. This section of the survey deals with the social aspects consisting in five statements.

The significant percentage displayed in item 10 reports a positive response to teacher and students interaction with a percentage of 93.48%, (totally agree and agree), whereas only around 6% represents partially agree and disagree, which is an indicator that there is a good balance in the classroom between the teacher and the student that let them create a healthy learning environment. This means that teachers and students get along very well. Ahmadin (2009) supports these findings saying that English language teaching in large class could be handled and improved by creating an interactive model of teaching learning process in which there is a dialogue between teacher and students as well as among students in the form of pair or small group work. Therefore, ELT in large classes can be successful if it uses appropriate and correct methodology or technique with patience, serious, careful and correct management.

In item 11 of this graph we can see that 91.85% of students' answers correspond to totally agree and agree, whereas the remaining 8% correspond to partially agree and disagree. The figures make a clear indicator that students are given enough opportunities to establish a good relationship among them and with other people, which transcends positively on their classroom performance and their discipline. The fair behavior allows students to improve the relationships and their grading scale as well.

The results obtained from the interviewed students according to item 12 reflect that around 40 % of them think that it is possible for the teacher in charge of large classes to

remember a significant percentage of students' names. Whereas the 58.15% affirmed that the teacher does not remember students' names. This social aspect could cause that students whose names are not remembered by the teacher might keep a distant relationship and little confidence. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to learn all student's names in order to establish a good relationship in class between teachers and students. According to Woodward (2001), in large classes teachers must plan to invest plenty of time in learning students' names so that they can nominate individuals breaking up the assiduous grouping that normally deviate their attention to gossiping or talking about trivial things.

In item 13 more than the half of students' opinions, 54.89% are expressed favorably in relation to the friendly class atmosphere because large classes do not permit the teacher to ask several questions to the same student. This answer could be viewed as a negative finding since students know that there is a small chance of being requested by the teacher more than once. While, 45.11% think that even that there is not much possibilities to be noticed by the teacher they feel tense.

The figures displayed in item 14, reveal that 68% of students disagree, claiming that it is not easy for them to use their cell phone during class time, whereas there is a 20% of them that agree. These results give us an indicator that teachers have a strict control of discipline that permits them to manage classes in a good way by preventing the use of the device as a distracting element.

The social aspect of the English language classroom in large classes as represented by this study has overwhelmingly been expressed in a positive sense, reflecting that there is an excellent balance of interaction between teacher and students and among students as well, because interaction deals with students' social nature and makes the way to enhance

academic learning. Therefore, interaction is the road towards reaching socialization that leads students to feel self-confident and strengthen their identity.

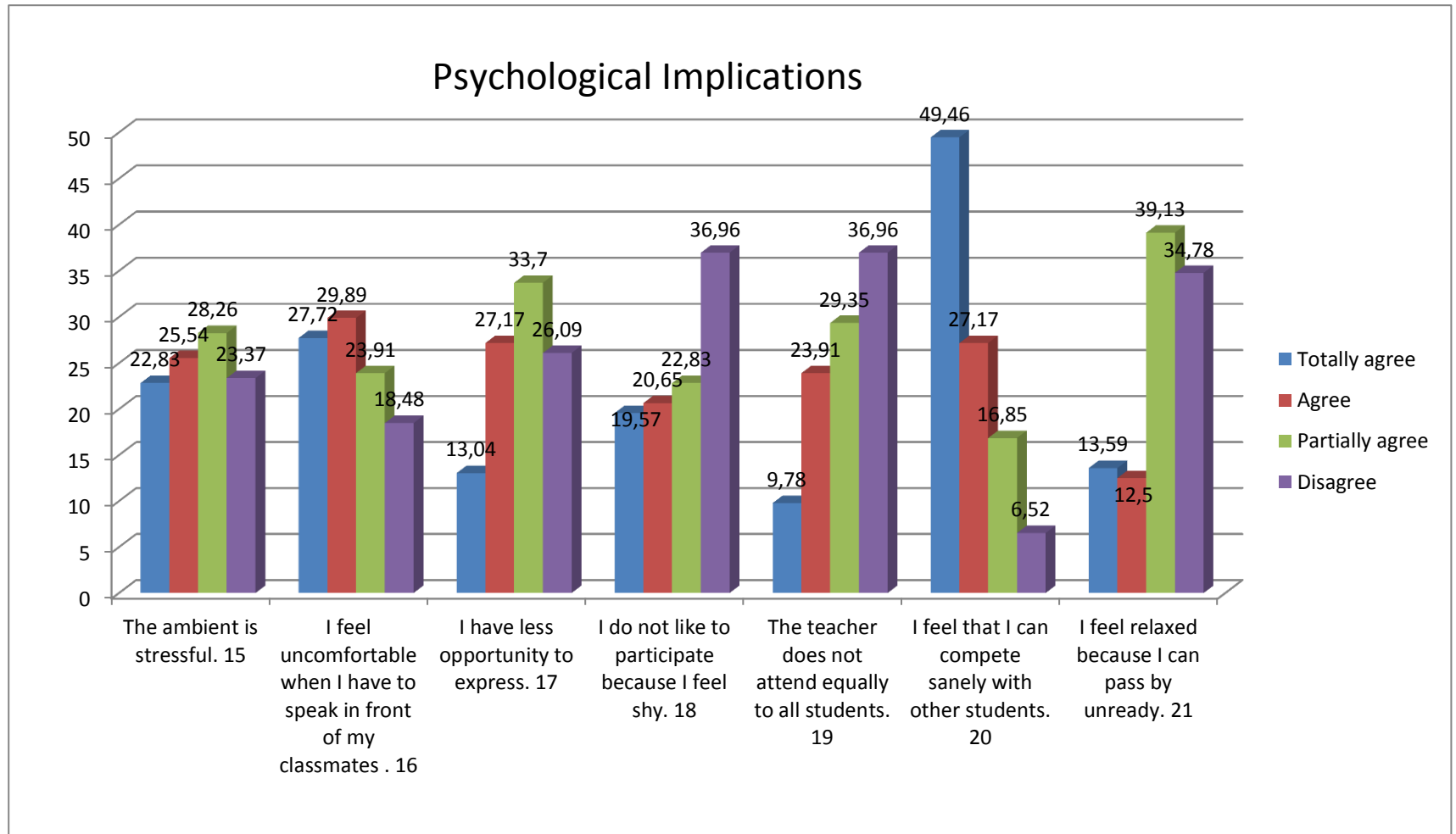
In synthesis, the items listed for describing social implication reveal that most of the students belonging to large classes visualize these aspects as positive, while the remaining percentage might be insignificantly affected, making evident the fact that language and human beings are social and their interaction produce dynamics and positive learning.

Chart 3

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

| N° | In classes with a large number of students: | Totally agree | | Agree | | Partially agree | | Disagree | | TOTAL | |
|-----|--|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 15. | The ambient is stressful. | 42 | 22.83 | 47 | 25.54 | 52 | 28.26 | 43 | 23.37 | 184 | 100 |
| 16. | I feel uncomfortable when I have to speak in front of my classmates. | 51 | 27.72 | 55 | 29.89 | 44 | 23.91 | 34 | 18.48 | 184 | 100 |
| 17. | I have less opportunity to express. | 24 | 13.04 | 50 | 27.17 | 62 | 33.70 | 48 | 26.09 | 184 | 100 |
| 18. | I do not like to participate because I feel shy. | 36 | 19.57 | 38 | 20.65 | 42 | 22.83 | 68 | 36.96 | 184 | 100 |
| 19. | The teacher does not attend equally to all students. | 18 | 9.78 | 44 | 23.91 | 54 | 29.35 | 68 | 36.96 | 184 | 100 |
| 20. | I feel that I can compete sanely with other students. | 91 | 49.46 | 50 | 27.17 | 31 | 16.85 | 12 | 6.52 | 184 | 100 |
| 21. | I feel relaxed because I can pass by unready | 25 | 13.59 | 23 | 12.50 | 72 | 39.13 | 64 | 34.78 | 184 | 100 |

Graph 3



Authors: Morayma Molina and Ruth Verdugo
 Source: Students' Questionnaire.

In item 15 related to the environment of the classroom being stressful, the population is clearly divided into the following ranges 22.83% totally agree, 25.54% agree, 28.26% partially agree and 23,37 % disagree. With these results we can infer that the students think differently about the atmosphere in the classroom, this could probably be due to the diversity of activities which imply the use and practice of the skills that lead students to become stressed or also because they think they cannot fulfill tasks in a successful manner. It is important for the teacher to use the proper methodology, to manage emotions and find a way to make the students feel more comfortable.

Item 16 related to scenic fear the results show that 57.61% of students combination of totally agree and agree feel really uncomfortable when they have to talk in front of others, whereas 42.39% of students feel comfortable. For this reason it is important for teachers to improve other techniques that help students to develop speaking activities encouraging them to lose their fear and produce the language. Claiyasook (2006) supports this saying that in large classes, teachers will probably have difficulty in persuading more students to talk in front of 60 or more of their classmates, it is harmful for them, a different approach is thus needed.

The results obtained from item 17 illustrate us that 40.04% (combination of totally agree and agree) of students feel that they have fewer opportunities to express their opinions or ideas in class, whereas the 59.79% (combination of partially agree and disagree) manifested that large classes do not restrict opportunities to talk. These results show us that even that the time of discussion in large classes is limited; the teacher does achieve his objective of engaging students to the topic and manage it in the desired way.

Shyness percentages displayed in item 18, reveal that around 60% of students feel comfortable and relaxed when they have to participate in class, whereas a considerable percentage, 40% feel fear when it comes to participating in class; the percentage reveals that large classes do permit students become accustomed to speak in front of large groups, this means that the teacher has created a good atmosphere to teaching and fulfilling perfectly the roles in large classes

Item 19, related to teacher's assistance, displays the following figures: 33.69% (combination of totally agree and agree) think that the teacher does not assist equally to all students, while 66.31% (combination of partially agree and disagree) that represent the majority of students who think that the assistance from the teacher is equally to all of them but practice and experience reveal that it is difficult for teachers to give the same amount of attention to each student in a large class.

Item 20 reveals that students are able to compete sanely and friendly as indicated by the figure that reaches the 76.63%, corresponding to totally agree and agree; contrasting with the 16.85% of students that partially agree, and only the 6.52% of them that disagree. These findings show us that most of the students are able to compete with each other, at the time that it establishes a good relationship among them despite of the class size. These findings are in agreement with Thaher (2005) whose supports the idea that in large classes there is a sense of competition and good relationships among students either inside or outside of class.

As to item 21, around 26% of students expressed that they feel relaxed because they go unnoticed by the teacher whereas the 73.91% manifested that they feel uncomfortable when being asked by the teacher. These results show us that most of students in large

classes do not feel comfortable and cannot keep attentive to teachers' explanation the whole class time. Contrarily a low percentage of them manifested that they do feel relaxed in being noticed by the teacher during class time.

The data displayed by the research results show that large classes do permit students to compete confidently and friendly, which makes a positive aspect. On the other hand, shyness, fear, and stress in the classroom environment do not allow students to relieve their anxiety when it comes to speak in class. Consequently, it affects slightly when considering the global performance of the class

Conclusions

- The study shows us that students of large classes do benefit from activities orientated to focus on the language basic skills.
- Large classes do not often permit students to perform more complex activities like debates, dramatizations, competition games.
- Commonly it is difficult for teachers to remember all students' names in large classes.
- The classroom interaction in large classes is a social aspect that results in a good relationship between teachers and students, and among students, creating a healthy balance between them, that conduct us to a good communication channel to achieve satisfactory performance by means of confidence and friendship.
- Large classes provide students with opportunities to compete sanely among them creating a good atmosphere that gives students a sense of confidence and trustfulness.
- Students' shyness and anxiety are a common psychological phenomenon that affects students' performance when they have to talk in front of a large class.

Recommendations

- Teachers should implement and create a range of activities that match the students' needs and likes in order to avoid boredom and disinterest, elements that are typical of large classes.
- Sporadic meetings between students and teachers must be held in order to give feedback and establish results to detect weaknesses on some students and reinforce them in due time.
- Complementary socializing activities must be implemented to break students' ice to speak in front of the group, which must be planned based on time, space, and the large number of students.
- The Ministry of Education should organize seminars dealing on how to manage large classes so that teachers can face it without problems.

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ANEXO

INSTRUMENTOS



UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

Estimado estudiante:

Este cuestionario tiene como objetivo conocer la influencia de las clases numerosas en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje del Inglés.

La información que usted brindará a continuación se usará únicamente con fines académicos investigativos. Le rogamos contestar honestamente de acuerdo a la siguiente escala de referencia.

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

Datos Informativos:

Nombre de la Institución: _____
Tipo de Institución: Pública () Privada ()
Curso: 8vo. () 9no. () 10mo. ()
1ro.Bach. () 2do.Bach. () 3ro.Bach. ()
Ciudad: _____

Instrucción: Marque con una X según su criterio.

A. Aspectos académicos.

| | En clases con bastantes estudiantes | Muy satisfactorio | Satisfactorio | Poco satisfactorio | Nada satisfactorio |
|---|--|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Se realizan actividades que permiten poner en práctica lo aprendido. | | | | |
| 2 | Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de escucha, habla, lectura y escritura. | | | | |
| 3 | Todos los estudiantes están atentos y participan en las actividades desarrolladas en la clase, inclusive los estudiantes de la última fila | | | | |
| 4 | Se utilizan actividades variadas dentro de la clase; como por ejemplo, actividades en grupo, actividades individuales, actividades en pareja, etc. | | | | |
| 5 | Se utilizan actividades tales como: dramatizaciones, concursos, debates, juegos, etc. | | | | |
| 6 | Se puede copiar durante los exámenes. | | | | |
| 7 | Se puede realizar tareas de otras materias. | | | | |
| 8 | El espacio de la clase te permite | | | | |
| 9 | No puedo recibir una retroalimentación adecuada por parte del profesor debido al número elevado de estudiantes | | | | |

B. Aspectos Sociales.

| | En las clases con bastantes estudiantes | Muy satisfactorio | Satisfactorio | Poco satisfactorio | Nada satisfactorio |
|----|---|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 10 | Existe interacción entre los estudiantes y entre el profesor y los estudiantes. | | | | |
| 11 | Tengo la oportunidad de relacionarme con más personas . | | | | |
| 12 | El profesor no recuerda el nombre de todos los estudiantes. | | | | |
| 13 | El ambiente es menos tenso ya que hay menor | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|
| | probabilidad de que el profesor realice preguntas constantes al mismo alumno. | | | | |
| 14 | Puedo usar mi teléfono celular o algún otro dispositivo electrónico sin ser descubierto por el profesor. | | | | |

C. Aspectos psicológicos

| | En las clases con bastantes estudiantes | Muy satisfactorio | Satisfactorio | Poco satisfactorio | Nada satisfactorio |
|----|---|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 15 | El ambiente es estresante. | | | | |
| 16 | Me siento incómodo al momento de hablar. | | | | |
| 17 | Tengo menos oportunidad de expresarme. | | | | |
| 18 | No me gusta participar porque me siento tímido. | | | | |
| 19 | El profesor no presta atención por igual a todos los estudiantes. | | | | |
| 20 | Siento que puedo competir sanamente con otros estudiantes. | | | | |
| 21 | Me siento relajado porque puedo pasar por desapercibido | | | | |

¡Gracias por su colaboración!