

Recibido: 11-04-2020 / Revisado: 10-05-2020 / Aceptado: 16-06-2020 / Publicado: 03-07-2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33262/exploradordigital.v4i3.1347>



## The analysis of the importance of class size on effective teaching of english as foreign language

*Análisis de la importancia del número de estudiantes en la enseñanza del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera*

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### Abstract.

Improving the quality of teaching has been the main objective to raise the quality of the school, unfortunately, most of the learning is not acquired as teachers expect. The objective of this research was to analyze the effects of class size on effective teaching at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade “A” of Bachillerato General Unificado in the Unidad Educativa San Vicente de Paúl. The type of study is qualitative at the exploratory level. The research was carried out with a population of 40 students who were divided into 18 men, 22 women and a teacher. The qualitative method used is ethnographic. A spreadsheet and a survey questionnaire were applied in the academic period February-July 2016, which were developed taking into account the research objectives and the information related to the problem. Class size carries some problems to achieve effective teaching, several of these were shown in this research. It was concluded that the teacher and the students think that the class size is an important determinant in the educational process. Thus, they also agree that this influences over time on individual instruction,

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student engagement, class control, motivational strategies and student attention, blocking the way to obtain effective teaching and learning. Furthermore, this research can help to understand the importance of the problem already mentioned in the educational fields.

**Keywords:** Class size, Effective teaching, English Learning.

### **Resumen.**

Mejorar la calidad de enseñanza ha sido el objetivo principal para elevar la calidad de la escuela, desafortunadamente, la mayor parte del aprendizaje no es adquirido como esperan los maestros. El objetivo de esta investigación fue, analizar los efectos del tamaño de la clase en una enseñanza efectiva en el 2do año “A” de Bachillerato general Unificado en la Unidad Educativa San Vicente de Paúl. El tipo de estudio es cualitativo de nivel exploratorio. La investigación fue realizada con una población de 40 estudiantes quienes estaban divididos en 18 hombres, 22 mujeres y un profesor. El método cualitativo usado es etnográfico. Una hoja de cálculo y un cuestionario de encuesta fueron aplicados en el periodo académico febrero –julio del 2016 los cuales fueron desarrollados teniendo en cuenta los objetivos de investigación y la información relacionada al problema. El tamaño de la clase acarrea algunos problemas para alcanzar una enseñanza efectiva, varios de estos fueron mostrados en esta investigación. Se concluyó que el profesor y los estudiantes piensan que el tamaño de la clase es un determinante importante en el proceso educativo. Así, ellos concuerdan igualmente que esto actúa en el tiempo para la instrucción individual, compromiso de los estudiantes, control de la clase, estrategias motivacionales y atención de los estudiantes, bloqueando la forma de obtener una enseñanza y aprendizaje efectivo. Además, esta investigación puede ayudar a entender la importancia del problema ya mencionado en los campos educativos.

**Palabras claves:** Tamaño, Clase, Enseñanza efectiva, Aprendizaje, Inglés.

### **Introducción.**

Class size is a real problem that the majority of teachers face, researchers has studied this problem and some characteristics related. People who are inside the educational sector have different points of view; some of them think that class size is a real factor to set academics goals, others think that class size is not a real point on students' achievements.

However, when class size is reduced, students gain more than in larger class, which is demonstrated in some researches. If so, it might be interpreted as less students in a classroom, more goals are achieved, not just academically, it can help for life. If students have a wide range of knowledge and a good way of acting, they are going to be citizens with critical

thinking. This project is going to help to understand whether there is a link between class sizes and effective teaching.

Teachers are conscious that it is a big problem, at the moment of teaching. Many students feel stressful, some of them have many doubts that cannot be clarified because of time and the class size. It also affects in the teacher and students' interaction because students' opinions cannot be expressed, as a result, students become shy and passive learners, they are only part of the class.

This research is important academically because it gives a clear idea about class size problem and how it can be threatened to reach students' outcomes in a better way. Moreover, it will provide some techniques and strategies, which will be useful to maintain a safe and successful environment for helping teachers in the learning process.

Educators are in an ongoing process of searching new strategies for solving some problems that the educational sector has. There are some problems to teach English as a foreign language and one of them is "Class Size". Is the class size an important element to learn in a good way? Undoubtedly, it has been a really interesting question for all people who are related with the educational process. For that reason, since many years ago, some researchers around the world put their approach on overcrowded classroom management.

In Ecuador, this problem is found in most of the public institutions. However, the lack of interest by the government, authorities and teachers have got overcrowded classrooms that make classroom management a big challenge.

The Unidad Educativa "San Vicente de Paul" in Riobamba city is not the exception. Here, English has become as a requirement to achieve a good academic growth but class size and students' achievements are a real problem because there are 39 students per class. Specifically, at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade "A" of Bachillerato General Unificado, teaching English is a real challenge for teachers who need to take into account the amount of students to choose the activities, topics and the didactic materials, trying to do the best effort to teach as well as possible. The Unidad Educativa "San Vicente de Paul" in Riobamba city is not the exception. Here, English has become as a requirement to achieve a good academic growth but class size and students' achievements are a real problem because there are 39 students

### **Methodology.**

The present research was focused in the qualitative method, this allowed getting descriptive results for contrasting with the theory and gave the opportunity to engage students to respond in spontaneously.

Field and Documentary analysis was applied in the present research and because of the absence of variables it is considered, no experimental.

This research had characteristics at an exploratory level, because it allowed knowing some situations in every single class. Therefore, it provided a direct observation and applied an interview that gave the opportunity of gathering qualitative data.

The research was conducted to the teacher and 40 students at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade “A” of Bachillerato General Unificado in the Unidad Educativa San Vicente de Paúl in Riobamba city, where the authorities showed deep interest in this research problem and gave way to the development of this project.

The present project was carried out from February to July 2016. First, the problem was identified and the research problem was presented. After that the tools and techniques were chosen according to the aspects to be analyzed. The researchers played an important roll being part of it. When the authorization was got in the institution where the problem was identified. Immediately, the interview and the observation guide were applied to the students and teacher in a general way. Moreover, the information was collected from tasks in classes, group work, participation and assignments. This process lasted three weeks. After gathering data, it was analyzed according to the objectives already set up and it was interpreted separately according with the theoretical foundation. It was necessary taking notes and record the teacher interview. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were presented.

## **Results.**

This research was carried out at Unidad Educativa “San Vicente de Paúl” during the academic term February- July 2016. The objective was to analyze by observation the importance of class size on effective teaching of English as a foreign language with students at Segundo de Bachillerato A.

Observation guide was applied to whole students to gather real and useful information about the class size problem. And interview was used for the teacher. Therefore, the results were taken to establish conclusions and recommendations.

Observation guide and the interview were applied since March until June 2016. These instruments allowed analyzing how important class size is on effective teaching of English as a foreign language.

By means of the analisis of the interview to the teacher of Bachillerato General Unificado at Unidad Educativa “San Vicente de Paúl” during the academic term February- July 2016, class size is a real problem in educational process. That is why, teacher and student agreed that students cannot acquire knowledge as teachers expect due to class size. It interferes in every single class, resulting in discipline problems which can become a challenge for controlling the class so create a safe environment is not possible. Given that, the physical space is really small and the students are sat too close. As a result students are distracted most of the time, especially in the back of the classroom where the students spend most of the time

speaking to each other and do not pay attention. Moreover, they mentioned that the class must be personalized to gather meaningful learning process in second language use. But in a large class size it is not possible because large class size limits the time to monitor and evaluate all students in the best way. Also, for giving feedback according to students needs is a challenge. It shunts, that some students' doubts are not cleared as it should be. As a result, students mentioned that they have to look for help to other teachers or in particular institutions.

Motivation plays an important role in teaching – learning process, students who are motivated have a better performance but class size affects the motivational strategies used by the teacher. As a result participation in large class size is not appropriated because only some students participate; others who are shy become passive learners. Teacher and students in a large class size think that these problems can be avoided in smaller classes.

**Tabla 1.** Applied observation guide

Objectives	Information	Results	Analysis	Theory
To identify the specific characteristics of class size that can cause differences on students' progress.	<p><b>Motivation</b></p> <p>Lack of willingness to learn English.</p> <p>Lack of interest to learn English.</p> <p>Shy students unable to ask questions.</p>	<p>The lack of interest to learn English was noticed in some activities which were asked by the teacher. The students did not do any effort to complete the tasks.</p> <p>Instead of doing the activities they spent their time doing other things. Also, some students did not express their ideas, doubts and feelings because shy learners became passive learners.</p>	<p>The teacher needs to consider other strategies for motivating students and encourage them all of the time. Moreover, motivation is important to keep students' attention and enthusiasm in the educational process.</p>	<p>Yusuf, T.A., Onifade, C. A., and Bello, O. S. (2016) said that: class size has a significant effect on the motivation of students to attend classes as well to their studies. The study again reveals that class size may significantly encourage or discourage students from attending or being present in classes. Large classes are often too boring, noisy and rowdy which may constitute discouragement. On the other hand, small class size is less congested and may encourage</p>

	<p><b>Concentration</b></p> <p>Class size influences in student's concentration.</p> <p>Inability to get individual attention.</p> <p>Difficulty in hearing the teacher and vice-versa.</p>	<p>The inability to get individual attention was a challenge that the teacher faced. The students could not concentrate and paid attention to the class topic. Because of the amount of the students the class got noisy and the given instructions were not understood clearly. The difficulty to listen made mistakes in the students works.</p> <p>Definitely class size is an important determinant on students' concentration. That is why; students sometimes get distracted into the class.</p> <p>All of the students were asked for giving opinions in groups work but</p>	<p>It is an important part of safe environment because if the class becomes noisy the students cannot concentrate the difficulty of listening to the teacher instructions is a fundamental part for doing task according what teachers ask.</p>	<p>staying in the class room.</p> <p>According Yusuf, T.A.; Onifade, C. A.; and Bello, O. S. (2016) It is not unexpected that attention or concentration is impaired in the large classroom where noise is inevitably a usual occurrence.</p> <p>The student' attention is the most size, followed by punctuality. This implies that students' attention in class in being diverted when class size is large due to various distractions.</p> <p>Daniel Yelkpieri, Matthew Namale, Kweku Esia-Donkoh, Eric Ofosu-Dwamena.(2012) concluded that</p>
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	<p><b>Participation</b></p> <p>Every students participate in class</p> <p>Low participation of students in class.</p> <p>Difficulty of most students to read from the board.</p>	<p>only some students participated actively in class. Moreover, the students who were in the back part had problems for reading what teacher had written in the board. So taking notes about the class becomes hard.</p>	<p>Participate actively shows students interest. But in this class the students cannot participate frequently and the teacher needs to focus his attention in those students who are not participating. In addition, all actions that the students do: listening, reading, writing and speaking are affected by class size which does not permit to reach the objectives already set.</p>	<p>encourage student participation by calling on any of the group members at any given time to answer a question or do the presentation. If students know that they could be called upon at any given time to present the group work, they will participate fully in the work.</p>
<p>To contrast any variations in the progress and achievement</p>	<p><b>Teaching quality</b></p> <p>Class size affects the quality of teaching.</p>	<p>The teacher tried to organize quizzes to students but class size limited the time for doing it. When the teacher used his creativity</p>	<p>In addition, all actions that the students do: listening, reading, writing and speaking are</p>	<p>Daniel Yelkperi, Matthew Namale, Kweku Esia-Donkoh, Eric Ofosu-Dwamena.(2012)        This does not</p>

<p>levels of the two extremes of large and small classes.</p>	<p>Inability to organize quizzes and class tests regularly.</p> <p>More theoretical work than practical work.</p>	<p>for learning English in a better way using some resources or other place the teacher are restricted by some institutional norms.</p> <p>Therefore, teacher preferred theoretical work than practical. The teacher experience can help to manage a large class size and use resources for contrasting some problems carried out by class size which affects in the use of strategies.</p>	<p>affected by class size which does not permit to reach the objectives already set.</p>	<p>promote quality teaching and learning in any learning situation</p> <p>irrespective of the level of education. It was pointed out by lecturers that large class size makes it difficult to organize quizzes and class tests regularly.</p> <p>Achilles, Ch. M. (2012) Small classes provide short- and long-term benefits for students, teachers, and society at large.</p> <p>Schanzenbach, D.W. (2014). Smaller classes are particularly effective at raising achievement levels.</p> <p>Jepsen, C. (2015) Smaller classes are generally associated with higher student achievement</p> <p>Daniel Yelkpiერი, Matthew Namale, Kweku Esia-Donkoh, Eric Ofosu-Dwamena.(2012) In relation to this, lecturers also</p>
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	<p><b>Monitor and Feedback</b></p> <p>Class size allows clarifying whole students' doubts.</p> <p>Inability to monitor the lesson effectively.</p> <p>Individual differences not taken care of</p>	<p>The students felt that the teacher has the will for teaching in the best way. However, the majority of students' doubts were not clarified because it was not possible to monitor and giving feedback. The amounts of the students are too many. So, got and individual instruction became hard. Also the teacher did not do more than two activities per class.</p> <p>Large class size was a synonym of discipline problems. In fact, when the</p>	<p>The students are not monitored according their needs. Also feedback is not given so if the students doubts are not cleared the teacher need to give individual instruction.</p>	<p>mentioned the difficulty they encountered in marking large class assignments and providing feedbacks in time. This implies that individual attention is not given to students who may need it.</p> <p>Brabo, H. C. (2014) The ability to provide direct, specific feedback to all students is a challenge</p> <p>when teachers are responsible for more than 40 students per class.</p> <p>Pearson, A. (2017) Large class size lends itself to discipline problems because teachers are not able to establish the consistency needed to promote good classroom management. As teachers struggle to handle individual student needs, it becomes very difficult to control a large class. Discipline becomes ineffective, more</p>
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	<p><b>Class control</b></p> <p>Discipline problems are hard for controlling in large classes.</p> <p>Low contribution from students due to lack of communication.</p> <p>The Class is very noise.</p>	<p>teacher tried to create a safe environment only the students who were closer kept a good behavior, the rest continued annoying in class. For example, if the teacher put order in front of the class the students who were in the back part made noisy. So, the class got noisy the most of the time and the teacher instructions were not listened.</p>	<p>Creating a safe environment is a challenge in a large class size but the teacher needs to do his best effort for maintaining a safe environment.</p>	<p>sporadic and inconsistent.</p>
<p>To describe teacher and student teachinglearning experiences in overcrowded</p>	<p><b>Students engagement</b></p> <p>Students do their best effort for learning English language.</p>	<p>It was noticed low contribution from the students due to the lack of communication Students were not</p>	<p>For engaging students into English language the teacher needs to be careful that some new</p>	<p>O’Neill, S (2009) stated that: Effective teachers use techniques that have each student working on tasks that engage and challenge</p>

<p>class.</p>	<p>Low contribution from students due to lack of communication.</p> <p>Inadequate time for questioning.</p> <p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p>Use of different activities or papers for</p>	<p>completely engaged in learning English language; they made some activities just for getting a score. Also, they needed to be taught those things which were important for all students to know.</p> <p>In addition, time for questioning and answering were part of students' engagement but the teacher and students' interaction did not occur.</p> <p>The teacher assessed only a part of the students who participated more. And he had difficulty for giving more than two assignments per class because in an overcrowded class marking the students</p>	<p>strategies or the use of didactic material can help to engage the students.</p> <p>For assessing in a good way the teacher must be conscious that the assessment is not only</p>	<p>them to achieve their personal best.</p> <p>They understand that students learn best when they are presented with new material in a way that enables them to connect it to what they already understand and know how to do.</p> <p>Daniel Yelkperi, Matthew Namale, Kweku Esia-Donkoh, Eric Ofori-Dwamena.(2012) concluded that lecturers were not able to assess their teaching effectively,</p>
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	<p>assessing students.</p> <p>Difficulty in giving more than two assignments.</p> <p>Difficulty in marking students' tasks.</p>	<p>was limited by the time. The teacher felt stressful to mark a lot of works.</p> <p>Good assessment is essential in every single class; it could be done in different ways in which the students were part of this process.</p>	<p>for some students it is for the whole class. So, instead of marking or evaluating students teacher can assess students in every activities.</p>	<p>because to ensure effective teaching throughout a course period, lecturers must necessarily assess all the topics treated in the semester to establish the success level of the instruction. widely accepted that students' learning patterns, educational focus, and allocation of time will be directly influenced by assessment.</p> <p>Salaudeen, W. A. (2011): Large classes present more challenges for classroom management, pupil control, and marking, planning, and assessment.</p>
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**Conclusiones:**

- While some studies carried out indicate that class size is not a determinant in the academic development of students, this research concludes that with this specific population, class size is a latent problem that the teacher must face.

- The research shows that class time is a limitation to clarify doubts for students, which logically affects teacher-student interaction and consequently their academic development.
- And despite the use of strategies to control discipline in the classroom, this is a great challenge that the teacher has to deal with.
- In general, the negative factors attributed to a large class, affect the ability of the teacher to provide productive and quality instruction in the English class in the population studied.

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**PARA CITAR EL ARTÍCULO INDEXADO.**

Chacha Soldado, E. P., Salazar Calderón, E. H., Martínez Chávez, A. F., & Escudero Orozco, G. I. (2020). The analysis of the importance of class size on effective teaching of english as foreign language. *Explorador Digital*, 4(3), 226-240.  
<https://doi.org/10.33262/exploradordigital.v4i3.1347>



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