

The Influence of Class Size on Learning EFL in Two Public High Schools

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Resumen

El siguiente estudio intenta identificar cual es la influencia del tamaño de una clase en el proceso de aprendizaje, ya que los resultados en las pruebas nacionales no han sido como se esperaban. Por otra parte, ofrece algunas ventajas y desventajas teniendo en cuenta que hay diferentes tipos de clases que fueron identificadas en el contexto de San Juan de Pasto. Además de lo que se ha mencionado anteriormente, este estudio considera algunas teorías relacionadas con el tema y sus subtemas con relación a estudios previos. También, describe que un buen desarrollo de una clase no depende sólo de su tamaño, pero menciona la importancia de algunos otros elementos que deben considerarse. Por último, da algunas ideas que posiblemente ayudaran a maestros y estudiantes para tener una buena experiencia en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje considerando la realidad de nuestro contexto.

Abstract

The next study tries to identify how influential is the size of a class on the learning process, since the results in the national tests have not been as expected. Moreover, it gives some advantages and disadvantages considering that there are different types of classes which were identified in the context of San Juan de Pasto. In addition to what was mentioned above, this study considers some grounded theories related to the main topic and also its subtopics. Furthermore, this study describes that a good development of a class does not depend in just its size, but it mentions the importance of some other elements which need to be considered. Finally, it gives some ideas that possibly help teachers and students in order to have a good teaching and learning experience regarding the reality of our context.

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Introduction

The next study tries to identify how influential is the size of a class on the learning process, since the results in the national tests have not been as good as they were expected. Moreover, it gives some advantages and disadvantages considering that there are different types of classes, such as those with more than 40 students or classes with less than 20 students, which were identified in the context of San Juan de Pasto. In addition to that, this study tries to compare those classes and how they are developed in order to know more aspects that also have a role in the development of a class. Finally, this study describes that a good development of a class does not depend on just its size, but it mentions the importance of some other elements which need to be considered.

Key elements: classroom management, large classes, small classes.

Chapter I: The Research Problem

Problem

It is not difficult to notice that the proficiency of English in some students is not good when they finish high school in some schools of San Juan de Pasto. It seems that the problem has different causes, but the result is that they are graduating with not enough knowledge in this subject and with a bad score in the national tests that they have to take. Despite the implementation of different strategies in order to improve this issue, there are no clear causes that show the real situation that most of the high schools are facing. That is why, different aspects through this study will be considered and are going to focus on the class size aspect that involves students as well as teachers and the context in which the classes are taking place.

Problem description

In Colombia, the importance of learning English has been raised in the past years and that is why the government has created a plan for schools to improve the English teaching: Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo (MEN, 2005). However, the results have not been as expected. For instance, according to MEN (2010), students of 11th grade that presented the national test known as Pruebas SABER 11, got an average of A1, the one that belongs to a low level according to the Common European Framework (CEF).

Despite all the efforts that the government and some administrators have done, there have not been good results. For example, implementing the English subject during 11 years, where students are attending English classes since they are in elementary school, implemented by “Ley General de Educación 1994”, has not had any improvement, either.

Narrowing the situation, we are going to focus on students of high school in San Juan de Pasto. In this city, there have been several problems regarding public education. All those

problems affect the students' process of learning. Some of these possible causes are: available resources for schools, not enough teachers for the rural area, number of English hours, teaching multiple proficiency levels, the compromises with the institution, cheating, discipline which have influence in the development of a good English class, among others. This study is going to focus on class size which is an important component in classroom management. Moreover, classroom management is a big topic, too.

Regardless of the results that this study might show after following the whole process, some ideas are going to be proposed in order to enhance the situation. First of all, a good management of the educational component, regarding students and teachers' needs, and the real situation that is lived in Colombia. Also, a good training for those people who decide to be teachers, because there is a big misunderstanding that says that being a teacher is one of the easiest professions, which is not true. Moreover, the government should invest more resources in the educational field, giving public schools the materials needed in order to receive a good learning experience. Finally, a good solution could be motivating teachers to take free courses of classroom management in big classes.

Problem Statement

Main Question. ¿How does the number of students in the 11th grade of two public schools, one in San Juan de Pasto and another in Catambuco influence the English learning process?

Sub Questions.

What are the teachers' opinions about the influence of the number of students on the English learning process?

What are the students' opinions about the influence of the number of students on the English learning process?

General Objective

To analyze the influence of the number of students in the 11th grade of two public schools, one in San Juan de Pasto and another in Catambuco, on their English learning process, according to the teachers and students' opinions.

Specific objectives

To identify the teachers' opinions about the influence of the number of students on the English learning process.

To identify the students' opinions about the influence of the number of students on the English learning process.

Significance of the study

This study is important because of the following reasons. First, a serious problem has been seen in the high school students learning process: most of them do not have a good proficiency level when they finish high school and this is demonstrated by the results of Pruebas saber 11 (MEN, 2010). Consequently, there is a need of studies that help us understand the problem and look for possible reasons.

The second reason is that by understanding the influence of a very important aspect, such as the big number of students in each class and how this is affecting the whole process of teaching English as a foreign language, we could have the opportunity to propose solutions to improve it, and to suggest the implementation of strategies or methodologies to manage big classes.

Limitations

This study has as limitations two important factors. First of all, there could be some teachers as well as students who could not be willing to collaborate with some tasks due to personal reasons. Also, the different ways of data gathering have a limitation regarding the people because some could not say the truth talking about interviews or questionnaires. Those limitations are connected directly with personal points of view from people who may not like to participate in studies like this one.

In this chapter, the problem statement, objectives, and some other aspects were explained. In the next chapter, a review of the literature throughout the use of different references and previous studies in order to clarify some doubts having into account the problem already named will be briefed.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

When people talk about the size of a class, it is usual to find some other concepts that describe the process of learning in a very general form.

Learning a Second Language

First of all, it is necessary to know what the meaning of learning a second language is. According to Brown (2000) “Learning is defined as acquisition or getting, retention of information or a skill” (p.7). It also involves some form of practice, perhaps the reinforcement of that practice. Learning a second language involves different aspects such as age, educational background, input, among others. First, it is important to make a difference between acquiring the first language and learning a second language (SLA) which is related with a set of hypotheses whose objective is to know how people become proficient in a second language. Those hypotheses are about understanding what learning is and how people really learn. There is also a need to have into consideration his/her idea of communicative competence. Moreover, it is important to know that several theories exist which explain second language acquisition, but this project is going to be based on Krashen’s hypothesis (1982).

Krashen’s theory is an innatist model that includes 5 very important facts that are going to be briefly explained in the following sections:

The acquisition-learning hypothesis: according to Krashen (1982):

There are two independent systems of second language performance. They are called: the acquired system and the learned system. The acquired system or acquisition is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process from which kids go through when they acquire their first language. It needs a very meaningful interaction in the target language in which speakers are not focused in the form and structures but in communicating. Regarding the “learned” system or learning, this is the product of formal

instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge about the language. (p.10)

In this way, it can be differentiated how a second language is learned, in this case, following the second system mentioned above because students attend class where an instructor should create a perfect environment in which the learning and teaching experience can take place.

Monitor hypothesis: according to Krashen (1982), the monitor hypothesis complements the acquisition-learning hypothesis by claiming that the only function of learning a second language acquisition is by using a monitor for language, produced by the acquired system in order to produce grammatical forms not yet acquired. However, it is important to know that there are some critics about this hypothesis because it is impossible to determine and prove how this monitor works in the brain. (p.15)

The natural order hypothesis, according to Krashen (1982) “we acquire (not learn) the parts of a language in a predictable order”. Which means that learners acquire structures of the language easier and faster than other structures, for example the –ing structure most of the time is acquired faster than others such as the third person of the verbs. It is not true that simple rules are acquired first than complex rules. There is no way to change the natural order of acquiring these rules. Even if the teacher continues with a specific topic for weeks by using different methodologies, the structures will not be acquired until the student is ready to do it as a natural process. (p.12)

As reported by Krashen (1982), the input hypothesis explains how a learner acquires a second language. The learner improves and progresses along the “natural order” when he/she receives second language input that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if a learner is at a stage “i”, then acquisition takes place when he/she is exposed to “comprehensible input” that belongs to level “i+1”. (p. 20)

With this hypothesis it can be understood how acquisition of a language takes place. A student comes with his own level of language, but when this student is exposed to comprehensible input which is any kind of modified knowledge, this student is going to add new information to his first stage.

The affective filter hypothesis, Krashen (1982) reviews a number of “affective variables” that play a facilitative, but non-casual, role in second language acquisition.

The variables include: motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety that are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to “raise” the affective filter and form a mental block that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is “up” it obstructs language acquisition. (p. 31).

In short, the affective filter includes variables related to the learners’ emotions which can affect in a good or bad way the learning process. Moreover, there are some aspects included in the learning process. They are going to be displayed below.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is one of the most important aspects in the field of teaching a language. According to Brown (2001) “classroom management includes plenty of factors ranging from physical arrangement of the classroom to teaching “styles” and classroom energy” (p.192). It is said that learning and students are affected by some physical elements which make them feel comfortable or not, secure, relax, stressed and also motivated to learn. This is also significant because depending on the planning that a class has or what elements are involved, the lesson will be perfectly given and successful.

Physical Arrangements

Brown (2001) mentions some of the physical arrangements that have an influence in the process of learning. Some of these elements are: sight, sound and comfort. They refer to what students see, hear or feel. It is also important the chairs arrangement, the cleanliness and order, how isolated from noise it is, and also ventilation. At this point, a little quick comparison can be done. It is known that in some countries like the United States or France, buildings are equipped with a system of ventilation which makes every place or in this case classrooms feel comfortable in an adequate temperature and environment according to the season, then students will not feel uncomfortable because of the weather, and the class can go in the correct order. Yet the complete opposite takes place in Colombia, specifically in Pasto, where the weather is not predictable and there is not a system of ventilation in most of the buildings and it includes classrooms.

Voice and body language

After having the adequate materials and organizing the classroom, the next step is focused on the teacher, the manager and in other words the “owner” of the class. Every teacher has to have an adequate tone of voice, so the person located farthest can listen to him/her. Furthermore, body language also counts in this process. Students will notice the teacher’s attitude, that is why they need to show brightness and optimism. Brown (2001) suggests some pointers that can be followed by a teacher, for example: talk with a natural flow, to articulate clearly, to use an appropriate tone of voice, to have a correct body posture, to be confident, optimistic, to move properly, not exaggerating hands and facial gestures and also consider some rules of proxemics.

Unplanned teaching: Midstream lesson changes

Every teacher must have a plan to develop in the class, to be organized and to have things done on time. Sometimes, class does not always go as planned and something unexpected

happens. For instance, the class has already started, the teacher gives directions and one or more students interferes while the teacher is talking or any of them breaks the rules, goes far away from the topic proposed in class and causes trouble for the teacher, affecting the lesson. Or the opposite, the teacher gives a question, one student answers, then another one does the same and before the teacher notices it, all the students involved in the conversation are using the language to make comments and it becomes a debate but that was not what the teacher was expected to do or had prepared for that lesson.

For that reason, the teacher has to be prepared for these situations by having another plan in mind, an extra activity, and in the most respectful way is able to handle the situation. Brown argues “teachers will keep the respect from their students and their own self-confidence by staying calm, assessing the situation quickly, making a midstream change in the plan, and allowing the lesson to move on”.

Teaching under adverse circumstances

In Colombia, there are some situations that affect the process of education. The money invested in education is not enough to cover the basic needs of all public schools. For this reason, teachers have to face many situations such as lack of resources, school dropout and the one that this study is focusing called class size. According to Brown (2011), there are other concerns that contribute to the success of the class which are the following: Teaching large classes, teaching multiple proficiency levels, using only English in the classroom, compromising with the institution, disciplining and dealing with cheating. However, “teaching large classes” is the topic that is going to be developed in the following sections, after a brief review of the other concerns mentioned above.

According to Brown (2011), one concern is teaching multiple proficiency levels. Roberts (2007) defines that as “The student’s educational background in his/her first language” (p.1)

which is what makes an ESL classroom multilevel. It is not clear the level which students come with until the teacher proves it. It may happen more commonly in other countries in which there are oversea students due to immigration purposes.

A second concern about teaching under adverse circumstances is using only English in the classroom. In an EFL setting and countries like The United states, where there are students from different parts of the world due to an immigration, and the lingua franca is English, it is possible to use only English in the classroom, all of the students are there for a specific purpose and the classes will be taught in different ways and using different methodologies. However, Colombia is a country where almost all of the students share the same native language because there is not a high percentage of immigration from other countries or indigenous groups (whose native language is not Spanish).

For teaching a language, it could be possible to use only English in the class, then students will acquire in a better way the language. But there is a problem in the Colombian context. On one hand, the number of English classes at schools is not enough, most of the schedules of public schools just have two hours of English per week. On the other hand, to acquire a language easily, students have to be in an environment where the second language is spoken, but in this case, teachers prefer using the native language in order to avoid misunderstandings. According to Brown (2011) “there is a common problem: too much use of the native language in the classroom”. (p. 247)

The third concern of teaching English under adverse circumstances is compromising with the institution. “Teaching under institutional conditions that do not meet their ideal standards or philosophy of education”. (Brown, 2011, p. 249). Teachers in Colombia have to follow what national curriculum says of more specifically what “Lineamientos Curriculares” impose to do.

These documents are made for the government of Colombia but that model is taken from one from Europe and it is not well accommodated to the Colombian setting. It pretends to teach English in primary school with just one hour a week (MEN, 2006) and two to three hours a week in middle and high school. And with these parameters, the Ministry of Education of Colombia pretends to reach level B1, classified according to the Common European Framework.

The last concern is teaching large classes, a common issue that most of the public schools in Colombia have to handle with. According to LoCastro (2001), “a large class is the one that has more than 15 students per group”. (p.495). However, Renaud, Tannenbaum & Stantial (2007) from their own experience define a large class as having between 50 and 80 students, and according to a study cited by Ur (1996) the average perception of a large class may be around fifteen students. Brown (2011) makes a comment about this type of classes: “they should be large enough to provide diversity and student interaction and small enough to give students plenty of opportunity to participate and to get individual attention”. (p.245). Unfortunately, it is known that in Colombia, there is an ordinance from the Ministry of Education (2002), that says “the number of students per each teacher will be 32 in urban areas and 22 in rural areas”. (p. 2). However, the reality that it is faced is that the number of students is higher than that, there are up to 45 students or more per class.

According to Brown (2011), large classes present some problems such as: proficiency and ability vary widely among students, individual teacher-student attention is minimized, students’ opportunities to speak are lessened, and teachers’ feedback on students’ written work is limited. It is also understood that as more students are in class, less attention from the teacher is given, what is meant from this statement is that with large classes teachers cannot focus individually on each student, and the attention from the students will be divided. There are some solutions proposed by Brown, for instance: to make each student feel important, optimize the use of pair

work and small group work, to give students the chance of perform in English, organize informal conversation groups and study groups, etc.

It is very important to consider that some of the topics related with classroom management have been already studied. Those previous researches show perspectives that are given according to what researchers where trying to identify. For that reason, there is a local study that made an observation which gives conclusions of the topic mentioned above. According to Urbano, J. and Quiroz, J., (2010) large classes are very challenging. Regarding what they observed, reading and writing tasks were not carried out effectively because of some reasons. First of all, the teacher was focusing on speaking rather than on writing. It caused that some students took notes, but most of them were doing what they wanted, clearly defined as indiscipline. Second, the teacher did not have enough time to check the students' work, and finally, there was not enough time to provide feedback.

Furthermore, when the class is very large, sometimes it is easy to identify that the skills needed in order to learn a second language are taught separately, but that is not a way in which this activity should be developed because the four skills complement each other and so a class will be much better developed. According to Brown (2001), the integration of the skills gives students greater motivation that convers to better retention of principles of effective speaking, listening, reading, and writing. (p.232). As a consequence, students are going to diversify their efforts in meaningful tasks. At this point, the four skills used for the teacher as well as for the students are going to let them work harder, continuously improving their knowledge.

Moreover, there are some reasons why these four skills should be integrated, or what causes they will bring. For example, in some tasks, the teacher will give the instructions orally, here, the students will listen, and most of them will take notes, what will reinforce their writing,

and they used to end up reading what they have written or articles that sometimes teachers provide. As a result, in just one session, the whole experience was developed completely. Regardless the educational level, this integration must be developed from the very beginning of the teaching and learning experience. Not as a good point, in high schools of Colombia this kind of situations are not common. On the contrary, teachers used to give instructions by means of speaking but in Spanish because they make sure their students will understand better. Here, the experience of teaching and learning starts for the wrong path. Moreover, at the moment of presenting a topic, the explanation is done in Spanish, which does not really make sense if what really matters is that students develop their speaking and listening ability, taking notes of what they hear and for a better results studying what they got. It is important to have into consideration that this situation is not common in each place where English is taught, but unfortunately it is a general situation that most of teenagers face when they are in high school.

However, this integration of the four skills can be managed for the ones who create the curriculum and teachers, so they will provide ideas in a cooperative way for better results. Nevertheless, sometimes teachers have to totally adequate their methodology into what the head of the school asked for, even if those rules are wrong.

This kind of situations represent a very difficult task for the teacher, due to she/he has to look for ways in which students get encouraged and involved in the class. However, when the class has more than 15 students, it requires much more effort from the teacher as well as from the students because each one of them is not going to get all the attention from the teacher. That is why, these students attending in a large class are not going to receive feedback when needed, because probably the teacher will be focusing on a group that is doing another task totally different to the one assigned. Moreover, if the teacher does not have control over his/her class,

this could become a distressing moment ending in a bad experience for both sides, the students and the teacher.

Furthermore, when it comes to a large class in which kids are involved, it is very difficult to start. First, the teacher is not starting until everyone is sitting down, it is going to end in a waste of time due to it could take more than 10 minutes. The point is that kids receive clear directions with a very loud tone of voice that causes fast answers. Though, there are some teachers who do not show a correct body language and some others who do not have a lesson plan, which will cause misunderstandings and indiscipline.

The importance of body language in large classes is related with the movements and expressions done without words. In each class, body language is needed in order to provide a better learning experience, also to avoid repetitions of directions, and to have control over the class.

Also, in both types of classes, it is needed a clear plan of what it is going to be done in class, activities and topics connected with what has been taught before. This plan not always is going to be carried out perfectly, but a teacher needs to be prepare for whatever can happen. This plan is going to avoid teachers get stressed, because if students notice it, they are going to realize of the lack of preparation that the teacher has, causing misbehavior. This plan must be done with both kind of classes, large and small. This plan is called: "Lesson Plan". According to Linda Jensen (2005) a lesson plan is a useful tool that serves as a combination guide, resources and historical document reflecting the students' goals, the teaching philosophy, and student population, that is going to work like a map telling teachers what to do next. It will clearly help teachers in order to know what they must do in a lesson, so the class, regardless its size, it is going to be carried out in a good way.

Different from what has been told before, in Colombia, there have been different situations related to classroom management and its size. It is very important to take into consideration that classes are different since the setting and the available resources depend on the place in which the class is going to take place. First, there will be considered those classes in which resources are available for every student, but there are around 30 students per class. In this kind of classes, a good learning experience should take place, but the teachers' role takes an important place. Not as a good point, some teachers do not have enough experience in this big field of education, it brings lots of bad consequences that are not difficult to identify. One of them is the results in Pruebas Saber developed in 2008, which got bad outcomes. Therefore, the students' proficiency when they graduate in 11th grade is not high. (MEN 2004). It cannot be ignored that situations are different and that this is not a general case.

Also, some other cases exist. Probably teachers are well prepared, students are motivated and resources are available, but there are some schools in which teachers have to follow a very specific syllabus, a syllabus that most of the time is not done by experts in the field. In addition, there are circumstances in which classes are not prepared. Since there is a misconception in which being a teacher is very easy, some people who are not prepared, get teaching jobs, jobs that are going to be very bad developed.

The next situation is presented in those large classes, but with a lack of resources and an appropriate setting. This situation is very common in Colombia, most of the time it is seen in public schools. Considering that the teacher is developing a very good job, it is easy to notice that the teaching experience in this large classes without resources is much more difficult than in those that have a setting and resources. Teachers who work in these situations, sometimes cannot develop an adequate class. This big number of students per class, brings indiscipline that in most of the cases cannot be controlled.

Finally, there is another issue in this country. There are some academies which teach English. Most of the time, these academies have classes with less than 15 students, resources and settings are provided. Generally, results are as expected, since here the person who wants to learn, attends voluntarily.

Related Studies

In order to have more information about the topic studied, it is very important to compare two different situations. The one with a large class and lack of resources that happens in Colombia which was mentioned above that concludes in a difficult teaching and learning experience, and a foreign large class in the same conditions but with good results, found in a journal called *Tesol Quaterly*. Sarwar (2001), developed a plan called PBL (Project Based Learning) with over 150 adult students between the ages 16 and 21, teachers and learners were nonnative speakers and they were mixed in different proficiency levels. This was a voluntary investigation that was carried out outside the classrooms. Students had to compose a newspaper or compile a booklet on a topic of interest. About the method, this investigation was developed through stages. In the first stage, students could raise their self-esteem due to they were feeling more confident when using their English as a result of different activities. In the second stage, students gathered information, they saw the value of their skills. In the third stage, it was done the process of rewriting conclusions, peer checking and self-editing generated excitement. More than 20 groups were working on different projects. In the fourth stage, students were reorganizing materials for their final presentation. In this case, English was their tool and their living language. As a result, they felt ownership since they had invested a lot of time and effort. Finally, students were able to present results, books or newspapers, which made them feel very proud of themselves. Some of them were awarded with grades but all of them got a certificate. The confidence of each participant was remarkable, they had understood that English was very

meaningful when exposed to a real world. As a conclusion, although both classes were large, they had different results. We can notice that the project carried out by Sarwar in 2001 was effective. On the contrary, in Colombia there have not been good results when talking about large classes and lack of resources.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the efficiency of large classes. According to Ur (2000) and Hess (2001), large classes can provide richer human resources and greater opportunities for creativity than smaller classes. For that reason, large classes do not have just bad consequences. First, as the class will have many students, there will be different ideas and opinions, what is going to build a very important resource of thoughts. Moreover, with a large class, creativity can be shown. Teachers can develop different projects with those large classes because they can get in groups. At this point, it can be included cooperation, a very good strategy for a teaching/learning experience to take place. Also, as teachers will see a very large class who is waiting for him/her to teach, she/he will create strategies in order to overcome any obstacles that can appear. Lewis and Woodward (1988) express that teaching large classes is not just about challenges but also opportunities for teachers.

Moreover, considering the group work, there will be a very interesting strategy to learn, this is called interaction. Interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, and ideas between two or more people resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. (Brown, 2001, p. 164). In an EFL setting, making students interact between them or with the teacher will have lots of benefits. First, feedback is produced constantly, since people can correct their mistakes among them or the teacher can do it right after the mistake was made. Also, interaction allows students to develop their four abilities, but emphasizing in listening and speaking, because they will be paying attention to what is told in order to answer correctly. Moreover, interaction joins different

thoughts and perspectives of different people. As it is known, people are all different, so it is pretty interesting to know what others think through interaction.

In large classes, interaction will work as a tool for a better development of the class, in which despite of the big number of students attending, all of them can work and give opinions by means of group work, what means interacting among them. According to Rivers, W. (2002), through interaction, students can create their language store as they listen to or read authentic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. (p.3) This kind of activities, allows the teacher to manage the class.

Considering what Kramsh (2002) tells about interaction in large and small classes, learning takes place in a double context: on one side, students learn words and grammatical structures to refer to an established distant culture, the external culture of language. On the other side, they use these words and structures to communicate with other in the classroom. This internal context brings an interaction with this social group that the language is used and learned. In this case, although students are not in contact with the external culture, they can practice everything they learned with their classmates.

In order to facilitate the instruction for those students attending large classes, there must be considered the importance that teachers must give to all their students. According to Brown (2011), this is a solution to the problems that large classes have. For that reason, a very significant strategy is to learn the students' names, and working with all of them.

Local study

Although there have been studied different aspects that involve classroom management and how to develop a good class in which the need of both sides, teachers and students, is been taken into consideration, there is no a local project which bases their objectives in knowing how the size of a class has influence on the learning experience. However, there is a monograph that

tries to identify the implications of class size in the foreign language teaching process by means of observation. They compare both cases and describe different aspects of a small and a large class. This was a project developed by Urbano and Quiroz (2010) who were students of University of Nariño. They identified that large classes were very challenging. They worked with students of the Institución Educativa Municipal Tecnico Industrial Pasto (ITSIN) who were around 10 and 12 years old. They found out that the classroom management could be affected by the size of a class but they also identified different variables such as the environment and the resources available.

As a conclusion, a development of a class depends on many elements, but as this research is focusing on large classes, there are given different opinions and results from what has been researched. So, large classes have issues but also great opportunities to the teaching and learning experience to take place.

Chapter III: The Research Method

After having developed a very extensive review of the literature about L2 learning and classroom management and its components, we are going to continue with the research method in which we are going to discuss the methodology, the different techniques that are going to be used in order to gather information, its validation, and some ethical issues.

The Research Paradigm

This study will be associated with a qualitative paradigm. According to Woodsong (2005):

A qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. This kind of research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations. There are some important characteristics of a qualitative research, they are: researcher interacts with that being researched, it looks for answers to a question, it collects evidences, and it produces findings that were not determined in advanced. (p.1)

Having in mind the previous information, some reasons for selecting this paradigm are: first, the study is going to be based on teachers and students' opinions. Also, the process of gathering information will be done through qualitative observation, and finally, interviews will be used to collect individual perceptions.

3.2 The Research Type

This study is ethnographic because as it is said by Harris (1968): "an ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural o social group or system. The researcher examines the groups' observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life". (p.116). Some

characteristics of an ethnographic study are: to observe the interaction among the participants of the group, to analyze the language and how it is used in the same context.

In other words, this study pretends to get information by means of various observations and interviews to students and teachers to ask for the way they perceive the atmosphere of their class focusing on the number of students per each class, and its possible influence on FL learning.

Population, Sample and Setting

Population. For the observation we are going to work with two different classes, a large one (approximately 40 students) located in San Juan de Pasto, and a small one, situated in Catambuco with approximately 15 students. The students are currently studying in 11th grade of high school and they are boys and girls between 14 and 17 years old.

Sample. For the application of the interviews, we are going to select at random 10 students from the classes named above and there will be the same number of girls and boys per each group. From the both groups we will choose the same number of girls and boys of 14-17 years old in order to develop the interviews and to check if their opinion differ because of gender.

Setting. The study will be taking place in two public schools, one in the city of San Juan de Pasto called INEM Luis Delfin Insuasti, located near Panamericana Avenue, and the other one located in Catambuco, called Institución Educativa Municipal Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. The first school, has morning and afternoon sessions, it belongs to a middle-social class, and it has around 4.500 students. About the second one, it has just one session, and it belongs to a middle-social class with around 350 students.

Research Techniques

This research is going to be developed through two important techniques: interviews and observation. The interviews are going to be open-ended questions to know the personal opinions that teachers and students have about the number of students in a class and its possible influence

on the learning of English. These interviews are going to allow us to recognize different points of view of teachers and students who are the principal affected in the process of teaching and learning. Moreover, with the use of observation, we are going to get information according to our perspective, because we are going to analyze the teacher's behavior and the different ways they control more than 40 students in comparison of managing less than 20 students. That is why, we intend to attend to real English classes that present the conditions we are analyzing, in this case, a large and a small class, with the purpose of knowing about the development of that class.

Research Procedure

We will ask for the correspondent permissions in order to have access to the school without any inconvenient. We will send a letter to the administrators of the institutions as well as to the parents of the students.

After getting a positive answer, we will choose the population that will be working with us.

When we are with the chosen population, we will share with them our ideas and project as well as what we intent to do with it.

At this point, we will start the observation.

Then, we will start the interview with teachers and students.

At least, we will conduct three interviews with each participant.

Then, we are going to share the results with students, teachers and with parents if possible.

Finally, we will thank them for all their help. Also, as a way of reciprocity we will leave a copy of this study in each school.

Validation Criteria

In this section we will analyze and interpret all the information we collected during the process of

data gathering and to validate our results, we will use triangulation, member check, and constant comparison.

According to Glesne & Peshkin (1992), triangulation is a technique used to accurately increase fidelity of interpretation of data by using multiple methods of data gathering. In this project, the instruments of data collection are interviews and observation, which are going to be applied to two different groups from the one selected originally to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the information.

About member check, it is when data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups whom the data were originally obtained. Then, we will corroborate the information we got from the interviews and observations with the original population we have been working through the whole study in order to avoid misunderstandings between what they really think and our perspective. (Cohen, 2006)

Last, constant comparison is defined as a process of comparing recent collected data with grounded theory or previous studies. (Cohen, 2006). Then, we will establish relations between what we got during the data gathering and articles, books or any source with the purpose of relate theory and practice.

Ethical Issues

In order to carry out this project, we will follow some ethical issues. First of all, we are going to send a letter asking for permission to the administrators of the school. Also a letter will be sent to parents of the students telling them about the project and asking for their permission for the data gathering which includes taking pictures, and recording. Furthermore, we are going to avoid the use of real names to keep confidentiality of all the people who are involved in it.

As a final step, we are going to thank all the people who were part of the project, by sending them a letter and sharing the results with the school. In addition, if the administrators are

interested in carrying out some changes for the improvement of their classes, we will be willing to leave a copy of the final project as a useful reference.

In this chapter there were explained some important aspects about the methods such as research paradigm, type and techniques. We also identified the population, sample, and setting. Then, we referred to the procedure and finally we acknowledged some ethical issues.

Table 1. Chronogram of activities which were developed from September 2015 until March 2017.

Activities	Sept 201 5	Marc h 2016	Apri l 2016	May 201 6	June 201 6	July 201 6	Aug 201 6	Sept 201 6	Oct 201 6	Nov 201 6	Dec 201 6	Feb 201 7	Marc h 2017
Elaboration of the proposal													
Editing process													
Correction process													
Application of the process													
Elaboration and presentatio n of the project													
Correction process													
Final presentatio n													
Final defense													

Table 2. Budget

The assigned budget for this research will be about \$174.500

QUANTITY	RESOURCE	AMOUNT	TOTAL
45	Photocopies survey	50	\$2250
4	Folders	1000	\$4000
45	Sheets of paper	50	\$2250
	Transportation		\$100000
90	Printing	8000	\$16000
	Subtotal		\$124500
	Extra-expenses		\$50000
	Total		\$174500

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Annexes

Annex A

OBSERVATION RUBRIC

DATE:

NUMBER OF STUDENTS:

SCHOOL:

GRADE:

ORSRVFR:

ITEMS	OBSERVERS' COMMENTS
<p>Activity type What is the activity type? Drill, role play, dictation?</p>	
<p>Participant organization Is the teacher working with the whole class or not? Are the students working in groups or individually? If group work, how is it organized?</p>	
<p>Content is the teacher following the syllabus? Is the range of topics broad or narrow?</p>	
<p>Student Modality Are students involved in listening, speaking, reading, writing, or combination of these?</p>	
<p>Materials What types of materials are used? How controlled is the use of materials?</p>	
<p>Use of second language To what extend is the second language used?</p>	
<p>Classroom management Does the teacher have control over the students? How? How is indiscipline managed?</p>	

Annex B.

ENTREVISTA ESTUDIANTES

FECHA

NOMBRE DE LA INSTITUCIÓN:

EDAD:

GRADO:

1. ¿Cómo se siente con el número de compañeros en su salón?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. ¿Tienes suficiente espacio para desarrollar tus actividades?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. ¿Cómo se maneja la disciplina en su clase?

.....
.....
.....

4. ¿Cómo trabajan generalmente? ¿En grupo o individual?

5. ¿Te gustaría que tu clase tenga más/menos estudiantes? ¿Por qué?

Annex C

ENTREVISTA A PROFESORES

FECHA:

NOMBRE DE LA INSTITUCIÓN:

GRADO:

NÚMERO DE ESTUDIANTES:

1. ¿Cómo le afecta el número de estudiantes en su clase?

**2. ¿Usted cree que la disciplina se deriva de la cantidad de estudiantes en un salón?
¿Por qué?**

3. ¿Tiene suficiente tiempo para desarrollar sus actividades y evaluaciones?

4. ¿Prefiere en trabajo en grupo o individual? ¿Por qué?

5. ¿Le gustaría que su clase tenga menos/más estudiantes? ¿Por qué?

