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THESIS REPORT:

THE INFLUENCE OF LARGE CLASS SIZE ON ENGLISH TEACHERS'
PERFORMANCE AT "MARGARITA CORTÉS", "MARÍA
AUXILIADORA" AND "FRACÉS" EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN
ESMERALDAS, 2016

TESIS DE GRADO:

LA INFLUENCIA DE LAS CLASES NUMEROSAS EN EL DESEMPEÑO
DOCENTE EN LAS INSTITUCIONES EDUCATIVAS "MARGARITA
CORTÉS", "MARÍA AUXILIADORA" Y "FRANCÉS" DE
ESMERALDAS, 2016

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And recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Bachelor of Applied Linguistics in Teaching English.

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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College. I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

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STATEMENT BY THE AUTHOR

I, Maricela Mabel Ante Boboy, affirm that the investigation in the present thesis report research is totally unique, authentic, and personal.

The content of this research is a limited legal and academic responsibility of the author and “PUCESE.”

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ABSTRACT

This research was aimed to analyze the influence of large class size on teachers' performance in different educational institutions in Esmeraldas. A descriptive, qualitative and quantitative investigation was carried out by using the deductive and inductive methods. The participants of this study were female and male full-time English teachers from public, fisco-misional and private Institutions older than 30 years. They were observed for two weeks and then a survey of ten questions was conducted. The results showed that in classes with more than 35 students the teaching performance decreases as teachers lack the appropriate training, class time and suitable conditions to teach to that number of students. It also revealed that teachers' success in managing large classes is not particularly affected by large number of students but for students' low motivation in learning the language. Besides, teachers have a growing tendency of speaking more Spanish than English. This research coincides with a number of investigations done related to large classes and teaching English as a Foreign Language.

KEYWORDS: EFL, Large classes, English teacher performance, collaborative work, Esmeraldas.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar la influencia de las clases numerosas en el desempeño de docentes de diferentes instituciones educativas de Esmeraldas. Una investigación descriptiva, cualitativa y cuantitativa se llevó a cabo mediante el uso de los métodos deductivos e inductivos. Los participantes de este estudio fueron profesores de inglés a tiempo completo, tanto mujeres como hombres de instituciones públicas, Fisco-Misionales y privadas, mayores de 30 años. Fueron observados durante dos semanas y luego se llevó a cabo una encuesta de diez preguntas. Los resultados mostraron que en las clases con más de 35 alumnos, el rendimiento docente disminuye porque los maestros no reciben las capacitaciones apropiadas, el tiempo de clase necesario y las condiciones adecuadas para enseñar a este número de alumnos. También se reveló que el éxito del maestro en el manejo de las clases no se ve particularmente afectado por la gran cantidad de estudiantes, sino por la baja motivación de los alumnos hacia el aprendizaje del idioma. Además, los maestros en las clases numerosas tienen una tendencia creciente de utilizar más Español que Inglés. Esta investigación coincide con una serie de investigaciones realizadas en relación a clases numerosas y la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ILE, clases numerosas, desempeño docente, trabajo colaborativo, Esmeraldas

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Acknowledging that there is a need for Ecuadorian English teachers to reinforce and improve their linguistic proficiency in the English language, the Ecuadorian Government has launched since 2012 a set of policies to better the English language teaching-learning process in our educational system. One of them is the Improving English Teaching Project that among other things, offers teachers scholarships to receive training in the United States. English teachers are also required to have a B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. They have received also training such as the one carried out in 2013 by the Longmaned Ecuador Company in charge of training teachers to pass the TOEFL exam.

Despite of the Ecuadorian government efforts to achieve a functional level of use of the English language in teachers as well as students, Ecuador ranked 35 out of 63 countries in the 2014 annual report of the EF English proficiency Index. In 2015, Ecuador ranked 38 out of 70 countries. These results, although “low” are relatively better compared to those of 2011, 2012 and 2013 considered “very low”. Regardless of the slow progress Ecuador is making in this matter, some factors such as class size have not been considered yet by the government.

The number of students in a class affects the quality of teaching that teachers can offer to students (Blatchford et al., 2002; Hattie, 2005; Pedder, 2006). At the same time, large classes are usually said to be inappropriate to teach and learn a new language (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Besides, the circumstances in which new languages are taught are not always the appropriate ones. In fact, most EFL teachers do not have the suitable environment to teach and have to adapt themselves to diverse contexts. Having large English classes is a reality many teachers have to face and cannot change (Hayes, 1997). Instead, they have to adjust themselves in order to be able to fulfill the educational goals, requirements and needs of their students as well as the institutions in which they work and the government.

Class size is very important to improve the teaching-learning process of the English language and it can be a determinant factor for teachers' performance. A study conducted by Northwestern University Associate Professor Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach in 2014 emphasized the importance of class size in the teaching-learning process and stated that *“even high quality teachers are limited in what they can do when they teach in large classes”*.

The influence of large class sizes on the teaching-learning process has been recently analyzed in Ecuador (Ríos, 2014; Maldonado, 2014; Tutivén, 2015). However, how these classes influence specifically teachers' performance has not. Class size has an impact not only in the way in which teachers manage the classroom but also in how they plan their lessons (Atkins, Carter and Nichol; 2002). In other words, large classes impact teachers' preferences for methodologies, strategies, techniques, didactic materials and seating arrangements.

According to Locastro (1989), teachers consider the ideal class should have 19 students while at 39 students problems begin to arise. Ecuadorian Laws of Education state that there must be up to 35 students in a high school classroom. However, many classes in Esmeraldas are over that number, for example the number of students in Senior High School classes in María Auxiliadora Educational Institution is around 35-40. This situation constitutes a challenge for English teachers, who usually do not have the resources or class time to satisfy students' needs.

This problem is notorious when teachers have many classes with large number of students. For teachers who have no experience dealing with large class, teaching in this kind of environment is very difficult and even for experienced teachers, the lack of resources and facilities create great issues (Harmer, 2000).

Therefore, large class size is a factor that fundamentally influences the way in which teachers teach and plan their lessons. This situation raises the following scientific problem:

How do large class sizes influence English teachers' performance at "Margarita Cortés", "María Auxiliadora" and "Francés" Educational Institutions in Esmeraldas? It also implies some other questions such as: What do teachers consider is a large class in Esmeraldas? How do teachers present the lesson in large classes? How do the resources, facilities and time available for teachers affect their effectiveness in large class sizes?

1.2. OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. General Objective

- To analyze the influence of large classes on English teachers' performance at "Margarita Cortés", "María Auxiliadora" and "Francés" Educational Institutions in Esmeraldas.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

- To determine English teachers' perception about teaching in large classes.
- To make a diagnosis about teachers' performance in large classes in various educational institutions in Esmeraldas.
- To describe the different ways in which large classes influence English teachers' teaching and planning in educational institutions in Esmeraldas.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Class Size

2.1.1. Defining Large Class Size: advantages and disadvantages

According to the U.S Glossary of Education Reform (2014) class size refers to the number of students in a classroom. Determining when a class is large or small is not a question of numerical determination though. Hess (2001) suggested that a large class has 30 students or more. In a study conducted by Locastro (1989), the participants, who were teachers and lectures familiar to teaching in large classes, concluded that when classes are above 38-39 students, they become problematic. For Ur (1996), teachers' perceptions towards the size of a class depend on certain contexts with particular tools and facilities. Bahanshal (2013) defines a large class as a class with a specific number of students that the teacher cannot manage, insufficient resources to facilitate the teaching-learning process and that consequently, presents insuperable problems for students as well as teachers.

Teaching in large classes has its advantages. For example, when teaching in large classes, teachers are more active since they have to take advantage of the time they have to finish the lesson while trying to keep students motivated and interested. On the other hand, a large class can be too exhausting for teachers to perform well while attempting to keep students engaged in the lesson. Besides, teachers may be forced to choose among a narrower range of activities that do not require much time to be carried on, making classes more and more monotonous.

2.1.2. History

Class size has been a topic of debate in recent decades. Even when the advantages and disadvantages of different class sizes is something any educator has experienced through all human history. The importance of class size in education goes back to Athens around 392 B.C.E, when Isocrates is believed to have admitted up to eight students in his academy in order to satisfy his students' needs.

According to Erasmus (De Pueris Instituendis, 1529), small classes are more advantageous than large classes. However, they are not the most chosen ones by parents because of its financial cost. It is very important to highlight Erasmus point of view, because he thought at the time, classes had grown too large (mainly in public institutions) to be effective.

Many researchers in history have shared Isocrates and Erasmus points of view about class size and how small class sizes are better for students as well as teachers (Dewey, 1899-1924). However, educational policies have not been following researchers' suggestions about class size, mostly because they are too expensive to be sustainable. This situation has led to a long history of growing large class sizes with a reputation of being disadvantageous for educators and pupils.

In the past decades, this problem has been tried to be solved by some governments that implemented several class size reduction policies investing millions of dollars (Lee & Ready, 2007). But, not all governments around the world can afford to do so, for example, the average class size in Estonian is 17,3 while in Singapore it is 35, 5 (OECD report about average class size, 2013). Considering a class large depends on many factors, a class of more than 35 students is already taken as large by some researchers such as Kurt Vonnegut, who in an interview in 2006, expressed, "a class of 35? Poor teacher!"

2.1.3. Large classes and teachers' evaluation systems in Latin America

A 2015 UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) report about the State of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean analyzed the main educational policies in 8 countries of the region: Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic. The report indicates that the average of students per class vary from 15 to 45. For example, there is around 20-30 students in each class in Peru while the maximum of students per class in Paraguay is 45. It is also noticeable, that none of the countries has class size policies. The Dominican Republic is the only one that suggests institutions to have up to 40 students in secondary education. Besides, it shows that classes tend to be larger in high schools, for instance,

there is around 25-30 students per class in a basic education class in Costa Rica and these numbers rise to 25-40 in high schools.

The report does not show the class size of Mexico and Guatemala. However, the 2013 OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) report shows that Mexico has the largest classes among the OECD's countries with 30 students while the average in these countries is 15, and that this problem gets worst in secondary education with 32 students per class. It also highlights that there is a huge gap between private and public institutions in terms of class size. Public institutions have 15 more students than private ones. The report states that teachers who teach in large classes spend less time in teaching-learning activities and more time in managing the class and controlling students' behavior. After Mexico, the second country with more students per teacher is Colombia, followed by Chile, Turkey, United Kingdom, Brazil and Indonesia. This shows that the largest classes among the OECD's countries are in Latin-America, occupying the three first spots and 4 places out of 7.

Teachers' evaluation is a way of measuring teachers' performance. According to UNESCO's report, some countries have systems to evaluate teachers. But, these systems are based on written tests and teachers' performance as well as their students' performance in standardized tests is not considered. Nonetheless, the evaluation systems are not consistent in all countries:

- In Colombia, Mexico and Peru, evaluation is made to establish salaries and contract conditions.
- In Guatemala, teachers are assigned to different educational institutions according to the result in their tests.
- In Costa Rica, teachers must answer a questionnaire about the use of pedagogical methods, their relationship with parents and their academic training but it does not include evaluating their performance.
- Up to 2015, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic were still developing systems for teachers' evaluation.

2.1.4. Large Class Size vs Small Class Size

Small classes influence positively the teaching process (Normore and Ilon, 2006) as misbehaved students are fewer and teachers have enough time to complete their lessons. Small classes also help to reduce the noise and allow teachers to focus on students as individuals (Chen, 2005; Yazedjian et al., 2007; Herington & Weaven, 2008). For Brown (2001) a class should not exceed 12 students to offer enough opportunities of interaction between teachers and students.

Miller-Whitehead (2003) concluded that small classes motivate teachers and decrease discipline problem. She also stated that these classes help teachers to identify and solve problems quicker.

Many researchers already mentioned above believe small class sizes have more benefits than large ones. Nonetheless, the many benefits of class size reduction have been questioned lately. Even when teachers give students more individual attention in small class sizes, not all students benefit at the same level (Jerome Bruner's Individual differences theory). For example, a study at Southern Methodist University (2005) concluded that class size reduction increases test scores. However, researchers at Northwestern University (2008) found that “smaller class size improves academic achievement of high achieving students more than for low achievers”. This means that some small class size advantages are not consistent for all students. However, those findings have not affected the bad reputation large class sizes have with teachers. Many of them may incline to believe large classes influence their performance negatively. For instance, the variety of activities they can do in larger classes is more restrictive. Controlling students or managing the classroom may lead teachers to incline for activities that keep students at task rather than making more interactive ones. This situation results in monotonous classes that low quality of teaching and learning.

2.2. Teaching

2.2.1. Definition

Teaching is the formal transferring of knowledge and experience from one individual to another that occurs in a modified and adapted environment and which main objective is making learners function effectively in society. Cages suggests that teaching is influencing others' behavior potential using interpersonal relationships. For Amidon (1967) "teaching is an interactive process that focuses mainly on talking in the class during specific activities". According to Brubacher (1991), "teaching is a situation that has been adapted or modified so an individual learns during overcoming it". Skinner considers "teaching is the adjustment of planning for reinforcement". Ryans et al. (1985) state that teaching is about arranging activities that aim to the learning of others.

2.2.2. Teaching Performance

Teaching is a profession and as any other profession, teachers are supposed to do well their job. Performing well for a teacher is not just about being on time for every class, planning lessons or managing students, they must have students with positive academic outcomes and fulfil many educational requirements.

In the 1990's and through the 2000's, new research data started to show how students would learn better from some teachers than they would do from others. Hanushek (1992) concluded in his paper "The trade-off between child quantity and quality" that top-performing teachers would not just help students get good grades, they would also help worst achieved students improve in just half a year of studies. In 2009, a report of the U.S former New Teacher Project found that 99% of the teachers evaluated were ranked as satisfactory so; there was no distinction between skilled and low performing teachers. They also found that tenured teachers were almost never fired. This suggested that the process used to assess teachers were ineffective.

National or local governments and/or the institution where a teacher works oversees stablishing when they perform well or they do not. To do so, teachers' performance and

effectiveness are rated and reviewed in a process called teacher evaluation. In 2012, the Ecuadorian government changed its teacher evaluation process.

2.2.2.1. Ecuadorian Educational Standard for Teaching Performance

The Ecuadorian government has set quality teaching standards to evaluate teachers' performance. The first standard is Educational Management. It should do with the process and practices that institutions put in motion to favor students' learning and teachers' development. The second standard is Teaching Performance and it's about what efficient teachers are supposed to do regarding students' academic training. The third one is the Learning Standard and refers to students' performance. The last standard is Infrastructure and relates to the areas and facilities that ease students' learning and teachers' effectiveness.

According to the Ecuadorian government, teaching performance is based on how much teachers know the subject they teach, how well they design teaching strategies and how good they manage their social and emotional abilities. The standard is supposed to allow teachers' evaluation, self-evaluation and self-reflection so; they have better feedback about their performance. It is divided in four sections:

- Dimension: field or area of action of teachers who have a specific objective in terms of student learning.
- General Standard: the set of skills, abilities, knowledge and attitudes that must demonstrate their performance.
- Specific Standard: concrete elements for verifying the general standard accomplishment
- Indicators or Evidence (level of performance): Actions or practices of the teacher performance that allow qualifying their work.

The following are some of the aspects mentioned in the evaluation standards:

GENERAL STANDARDS:

Dimension A: Curriculum and Disciplinary Management

- Know, understand and manage the subject and educational investigations and the didactics of it and the national curriculum and manage the language they teach.

Dimension B: Learning Management

- Plan for the teaching-learning process
- Promote participation and debates
- Assess, provide feedback and report about processes of student learning

Dimension C: Professional Development

- The teacher is updated regarding the progress and research in teaching their area of knowledge; they are involved in the construction of a community of knowledge.
- The teacher reflects before, during and after the lesson about the impact of their management on student learning.

Dimension D: Ethic Commitment

- The teacher has high expectations about the learning of their students.
- The teacher promotes values and guarantees the permanent exercise of human rights.
- The teacher is committed to the development of the community

SPECIFIC STANDARDS

Dimension A: Curriculum and Disciplinary Management

- Manage the subject they teach
- Know the relationship of the area they teach and other disciplines.
- Understand the components of the curricular structure

- Use efficiently the language in which they teach

Dimension B: Learning Management

- Selects and designs teaching resources that are appropriate to enhance student learning.
- Change the schedule times according to the learning needs of students.
- Use several strategies that offer students different ways of collaborative and individual learning.

Dimension C: Professional Development

- Share their experiences and knowledge with other professionals in the community.
- Work with parents or legal guardians and other members of the educational community, involving them in classroom and institution activities.
- Value his work as an agent of change and as a teacher
- Examine the effects of their teaching on students' learning and is responsible for their academic results; analyze their own processes of teaching and those of their peers and the feedback received from the educational community.

Dimension D: Ethic Commitment

- Encourage students to develop their individual and collective capabilities considering special education needs.
- Act to protect students are at risk situations that violate their rights.
- Promote actions to sensitize the community about processes of educational and social inclusion.

Although class managing, appropriate use of teaching strategies and resources and time schedule are mentioned in the standards, there is no real way of evaluating how teachers perform in these aspects. Institutions usually “controlled”, not evaluate teachers by demanding their weekly and annual lesson plans, no feedback comes from this request, it is just a way of ensuring teachers are doing their job. Therefore, the standards are more like a guide to improve teaching than a real evaluation system. (ECUADOR, 2012)

2.2.3. Teaching Effectiveness

2.2.3.1. Definition

Effective teaching refers to a kind of teaching that is successful; it means that it produces learning in students. So, when students have positive outcomes, teachers are believed to be effective. That is one of the problems when trying to define what teaching effectiveness is because students' academic success does not entirely depend on the teacher.

2.2.3.2. Features of Effective Teachers

Alton Lee (2003) considers an effective teacher has the following characteristics:

- a) Focuses mainly on their student's achievement
- b) Uses pedagogical principles to create a caring and inclusive environment
- c) Links effectively what is taught in school and its application in real life
- d) They are sensible to students' learning process
- e) Tries to give as many learning opportunities as possible in a way.
- f) Sets different tasks and context to help develop the learning of students
- g) Establishes effective curricular goals
- h) Provide feedback to students and engage them in every activity
- i) Uses pedagogy to promote learning strategies and self-regulation
- j) Engages students in goal-oriented assessment

(Alton-Lee, 2003: vi-x)

2.2.3.3. Teaching in Large Classes and Teaching Effectiveness

Mulryan-Kyne (2010) defines a large class as "a class that is too large for effective teaching to occur". Teaching in large classes reduces the pace, depth and breadth of curriculum coverage that teachers can achieve because they use significant part of their time in non-academic activities such as managing students' behavior (Pedder, 2006). It is also important to highlight that in large classes the quality of teaching is negatively affected thanks to

various factors such as insufficient class time and resources and inappropriate facilities, what can be transferred into a lacking teaching effectiveness.

For example, teachers in María Auxiliadora Educational Institution have at least 35 students in each class. This may not be regarded as teaching in large class sizes. But all teachers must also have six of these classes, this means that they are teaching at least 210 students during 30 hours per week which is the minimum of hours a teacher has for teaching. Besides, teachers work six hours a day teaching in classes of 40 minutes which means, they teach every day to at least 105 students in 240 minutes, leaving two minutes and twenty eight seconds to each student and no instruction time included. Teachers also have (2) two hours every day for planning and assessment, which is of course, not enough time.

In a study conducted by Finn et al. (2003), it was also revealed that class size affects greatly teachers' personality. However, some studies have concluded that it is teachers' quality and methodology that play an important role in how class size affects the learning process (Maged, 1997; Nakabugo, 2003 and O'Sullivan, 2006). Locastro (1989) suggested that for effective language teaching to occur in large classes, teachers must use an appropriate set of methodologies and practices.

The lack of resources, time or space available for instruction, assessment and planning are important factors to determine when a class is large as they change the perception teachers have of a class independently of the number of students. Besides, factors such as time influence the way in which teachers see large class sizes hindering them from enjoying teaching and finding any advantage large class sizes may have.

2.2.4. Classroom Management in Large Classes

2.2.4.1. Pedagogical Planning

It is important to give diagnostic tests to students. The results help teachers know their students' individual strengths and weaknesses. Setting learning goals and learning strategies is good for teachers because students have their own aims and move at their own

rate. Another important thing to consider in large classes is labelling students such as “that student never listens” because it could affect students’ motivation. Teachers should also know the name of their students, it may be hard for the number of students they have but they can use name cards or any other type of identifier to help themselves learn students’ names. Individual interaction may be hard but creating a plan to give individual attention to each student every day is a good strategy.

2.2.4.2. Classroom Learning System

Teachers must organize the classroom in a way that facilitates the goal of the lesson and if it is possible that allows students’ movement. The environment should be calm to do so; teachers should clear expectations and set routines. Teachers must have high expectation of their students and let them know. While using cooperative group work, it may be hard to shift from one group to another; teachers must have trained their students in classroom logistics from the begging of the school year so they can move smoothly from one activity to another. Self-check and pair-check save a lot of time to the teacher. Explanations and directions must be brief and clear and teachers must make sure all students understand the instruction. It’s good to have routines for worksheet distribution and work completed.

2.2.4.3. Student behavior (Discipline)

Teachers have authority in the classroom. However, they must respect students and avoid humiliating them. Teachers must let students know or make their own rules and expectations and then follow them consistently. They can also use reward systems and peer reinforcement so that the whole class works together towards a same behavioral goal. On the other hand, they can establish consequences for inappropriate behavior or apply them in a fair manner when it is necessary. Nevertheless, teachers must leave individual discipline matters for the end of the class and talk to each student separately.

(Teachers in Action, 2002)

2.2.5. The use of Cooperative Learning in Large Classes

“Cooperative Learning is a diverse group of instructional methods in which small groups of students work together and aid each other in completing academic tasks” (Jacob, 1999). According to Xiangju (2004), the use of cooperative learning in large classes is especially necessary as it helps teachers to engage their students in the lessons. It also saves a lot of time to teachers leaving them more space available for other activities such as monitoring and evaluating because they can do it for groups instead of individually. Besides, students are more active as part of small groups what leads them to learn from each other and correct themselves. This means that teachers can motivate their pupils to be independent and autonomous using cooperative learning. In a study made Liu (2012), it was revealed that cooperative learning creates an active class atmosphere where students interact more and therefore have an improvement in their English language learning.

2.2.5.1. Socio-Cultural theory and Constructivism in Cooperative Learning (Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget)

Vygotsky (1978) believed that collaboration among students promoted cognitive growth because they learn better from each other than by themselves. Furthermore, cooperative learning is one of the best strategies teachers can use in large classes as students do not compete among them for attention from the teacher but instead they work together and help each other to construct their own knowledge. For Piaget, learning depends on the interest of learners. It is a big problem in large language classrooms as teachers focused on feeding their students with information according to the curriculum and do not pay attention to what students are interested in mainly because time, facilities and resources are limited to do so. As time passes by, classes become monotonous and students demotivate. Therefore, the use of cooperative learning is imperative in large classes as students can suffice their individual interest and increase communication and interaction among them. This is of great help for teachers who can use cooperative learning in large classes to prompt their students to be more active and keep their motivation on.

2.3. Antecedents

Bahanshal (2013) studied the effect of large classes on English teaching and learning in Saudi Secondary Schools. Participants were teachers with experience in large English classes teaching. The study analyzed the impact large classes have in teaching and what are the appropriate strategies Saudi teachers should use in their classes. The study concluded that teachers perceive large classes as daunting because despite their efforts to elevate the learning outcomes of students in these contexts, the results were often unsatisfactory. Teachers also believed that the use of effective methods could facilitate the teaching-learning process.

Maldonado (2014) has analyzed some factors that influence the teaching-learning process of the English language in Ecuadorian High Schools. In the study, it is stated that class size has an important role to play in the way teachers plan their classes which may affect students' academic achievement by the end of the school year. Besides, teachers struggle to find activities that are appropriate to use with large numbers.

Tutivén (2015) studies the influence of large classes in the teaching-learning process in high schools in Esmeraldas. Around 177 students of public and fisco-misional educational institutions answered to a questionnaire. The findings of this research suggest that students agreed with the activities made by teachers and that there was also a good rapport between the teacher and students. However, students believed that the environment in large classes is too stressful what influences negatively the teaching-learning process.

2.4. Legal Bases: Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards

The Ecuadorian in-Service English Teacher Standards is a document that specifies all the expectations the Ecuadorian government has concerning the teaching-learning process of the English language.

2.4.1. Curriculum Development

According to the Ecuadorian government, English teachers must be familiar and use standardized processes to plan and manage their classes. Teachers must as well implement strategies aimed to develop the four English language skills. They must integrate technology and select and adjust the appropriate resources for their students.

There are three main problems for teachers teaching in large classes when it comes to the curriculum development according to the Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards. The first one is the use of standardized processes in students with different backgrounds. So, most of students don't have the same motivation and proficiency in the language even when they are in the same class. It is difficult for teachers try to help those students individually in large classes. The next problem is about exercising and developing the four skills when there is no enough time because of the large number of students. And the last one is technology. Teachers are required to integrate in their lesson this resource when they do not count with it.

2.4.2. Assessment

Teachers are required to use a variety of assessment procedures to measure students' progress individually and integrated with the class. This is a big problem with teachers in large classes because there are some skills such as speaking that are better to be assessed in the class but there is usually no time to do it individually during the lesson. Large classes limit a lot the variety of activities teachers can do with students and therefore, the different ways in which they can assess their students.

2.4.3. Professionalism and Ethical Commitment

English teachers in Ecuador are asked to create a personal relationship with students and the community, but teachers who have large classes do not even get to learn their students' needs personally, the best they can do is to try to find and solve their students' problems as a group.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. TYPE OF INVESTIGATION

This was a descriptive study because it was aimed to describe how larger numbers of students in class influence English teachers' performance at "Margarita Cortés", "María Auxiliadora" and "Francés" Educational Institutions in Esmeraldas.

3.2. VARIABLES OF THE RESEARCH

The following variables were used in this investigation:

- Independent: Large class size
- Dependent: English teachers' performance at "Margarita Cortés", "María Auxiliadora" and "Francés" Educational Institutions in Esmeraldas.

3.3. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

This research used both a deductive as well as an inductive method of investigation. The deductive method was used in the analysis of the information found in the literature review in which many authors recognize how much larger classes influence teaching effectiveness and teachers' performance. On the other hand, the inductive method allowed suggesting some strategies to improve teaching performance in large classes.

3.4. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The participants of this research were 8 senior high school English teachers of Esmeraldas, male and female. These teachers were from Esmeraldas-Esmeraldas and had at least one class of more than 35 students.

3.5. DATA PROCESSING

All the information gathered throughout the survey was processed by using the percentage manual method. Therefore, all the research data was tabulated and charted manually.

3.6. TECHNIQUES

It is a qualitative research because observation was used as a technique. On the other hand, it is also a quantitative research as a survey was used to gather the data.

3.6.1. Observation

The first technique used in this study was the observation. It was used to recognize the different ways in which the larger number of students in a class affects the way in which teachers plan and teach their classes. Teachers were observed for two weeks from October 10th, 2016 to October 21st, 2016. There were a total of 8 classes observed during this time.

3.6.2. Survey

A self-report survey methodology was used in this study. It consisted of 10 questions to find the most common problems, preferences, advantages and disadvantages teachers admit having while planning and teaching in large classes. The first four questions were aimed to find out English teachers' opinions, feelings and knowledge about teaching in large classes. Questions five, six, seven and eight were about how teachers adapt the topics, educational goals and activities (strategies, techniques and methods) provided by the government. Questions nine, ten were about teaching instructions and students' achievement.

3.7. INSTRUMENTS

The instruments used for each technique were:

- Bibliographic records
- Questionnaires
- Observation Guide
- Statistic graphs and tables

4. RESULTS

4.1. Observation

The results of the observation revealed that most teachers showed a good command and knowledge of the topics they were teaching; however, they often made mistakes related to pronunciation and English language structures. Teachers over 35 were usually not through with each lesson despite of showing subject matter preparation; they spent most of their time in non-academic activities such as controlling students' behavior. Teachers with less than 20 students showed to have a closer and better relationship with students as they had more time for one-to-one interaction.

Most teachers evidenced a lack of variety in the use of methods, being repetition the commonest one; classes were noisy; students at the back usually had problems listening to the teacher's explanation and instructions; students got easily distracted and started to talk about topics not related to the class and/or to do the homework of other subjects.

Teachers were less flexible to accept bad behaviors and late work when they were from large classes. Besides, it is seen that teachers in larger classes usually do not have time to assist students as frequently as they do it in smaller classes.

Teachers' self-confidence would decrease as the number of students grew bigger. It was also noticed that classrooms in general lack any kind of technological equipment and appropriate materials to teach English.

4.2. Survey

When the teachers were asked about their criteria concerning the number of students in a large class, as can be seen in figure 1, most of them consider a large class as having 35 students and more. It means that they are aware of this concept.

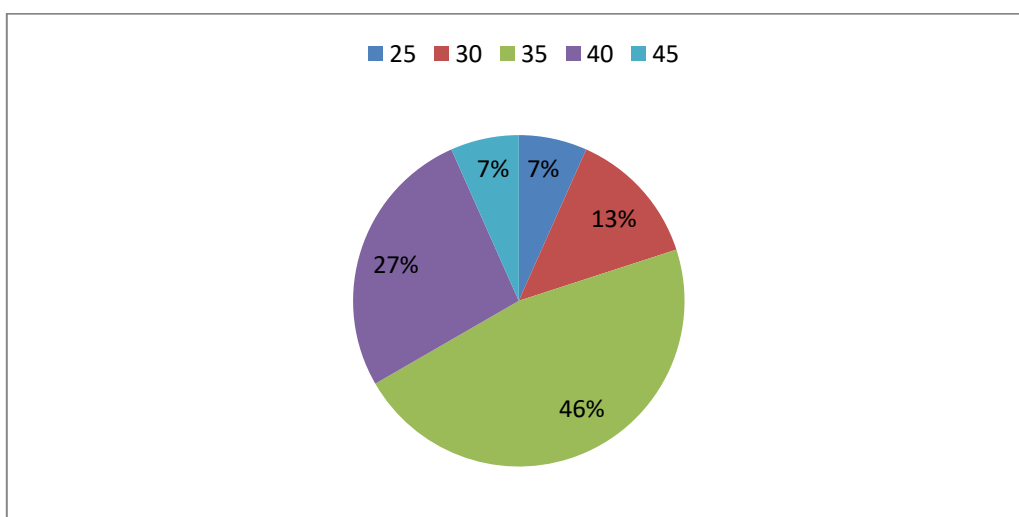


Figure 1. Teachers' criteria about the number of students in a large class
Source: survey applied to teachers

According to the teachers' perception of what a large class size is, 44% of them have at least 6 large class sizes. It is important to highlight that 6 is the maximum of classes by week a teacher can have in Ecuador. That means that most of the surveyed teachers think all their classes are large. Another 25% of participants believe they have 5 large classes

which is almost all their classes. There are also 13% of teachers who have three large classes, as shown in figure 2.

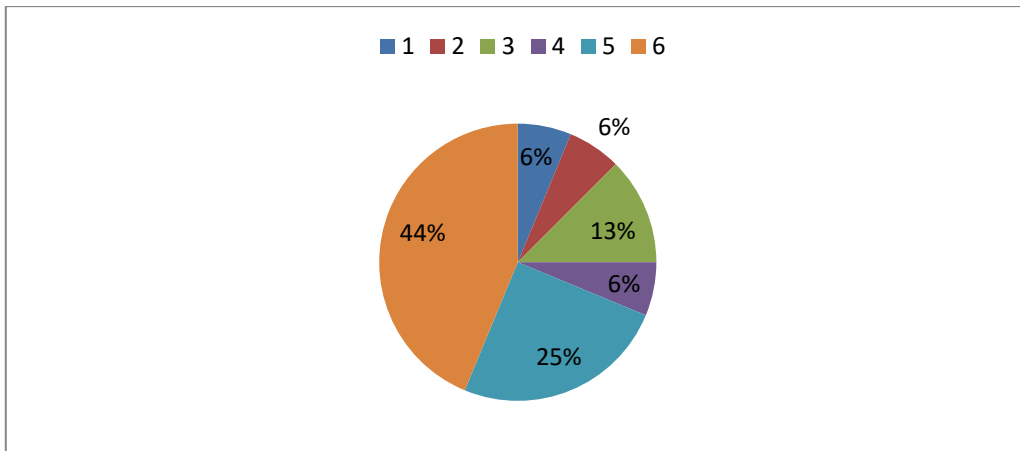


Figure 2. Total of large classes surveyed teachers have
Source: survey applied to teachers.

In relation to teachers' feelings about large classes, they were not generally positive, as illustrated in figure 3. Most participants expressed feeling unsatisfied while teaching in large classes. A 23% feel fine in large classes, so the large number of students is not something they feel affect them personally. However, no teacher expressed large classes can make them feel accomplished. The rest is divided into a 15% of teachers who feel satisfied in these classes and another 15% who do not feel so good in them.

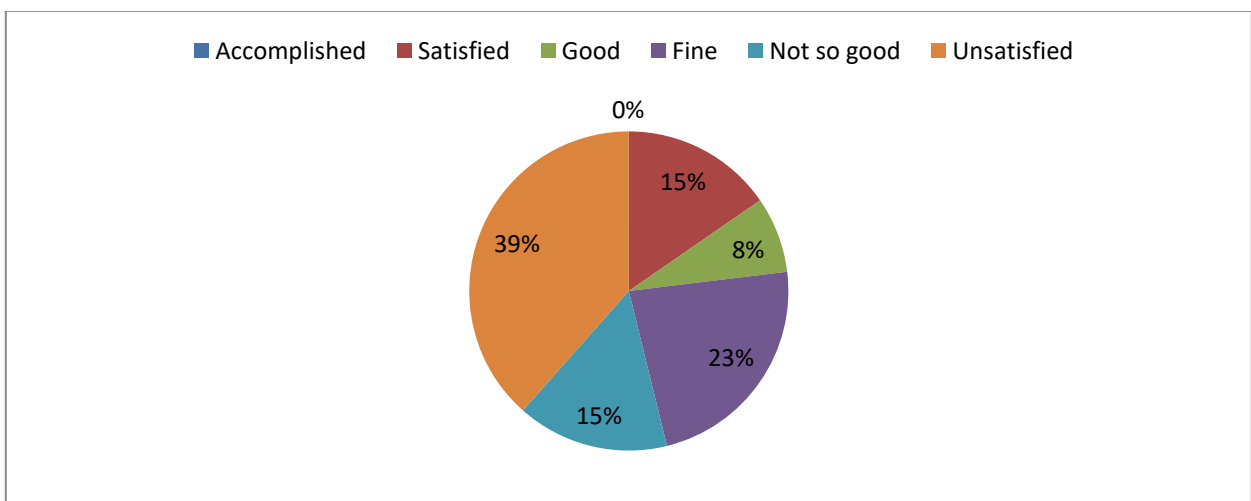


Figure 3. Teachers' feelings about teaching in large classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

Regarding teachers' management in large classes, figure 4 shows that 50% of them refer teaching superficially in large classes. Based on the observation results, it is noticeable teachers do not think that with low English level students it is possible to teach all the topics deeply. Another 25% considered most of their classes were based on teaching reading and writing.

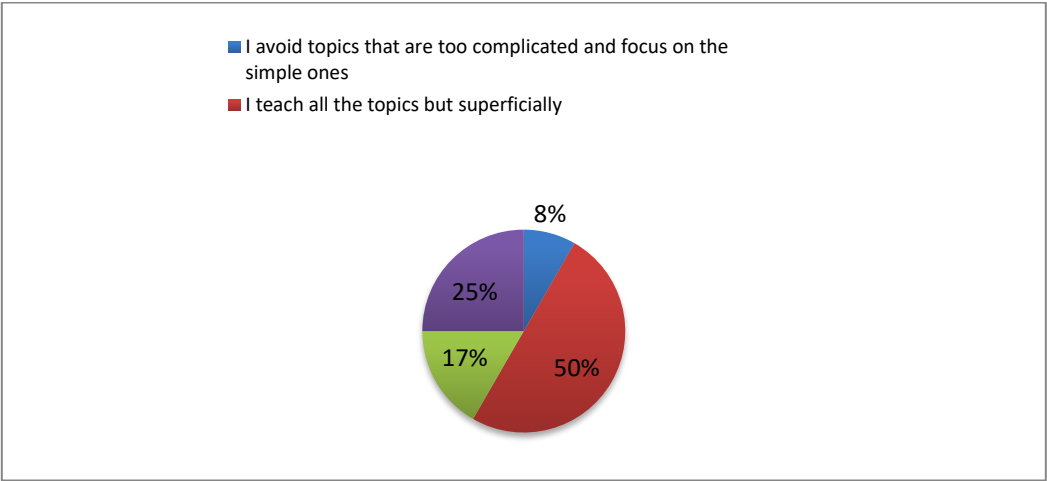


Figure 4. Topic management in large classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

When analyzing achievement of goals in large classes, as represented in figure 5, 54% of teachers manifested that in large classes they never finish a unit on time, while 20% of them expressed it is difficult to achieve the objectives in each class.

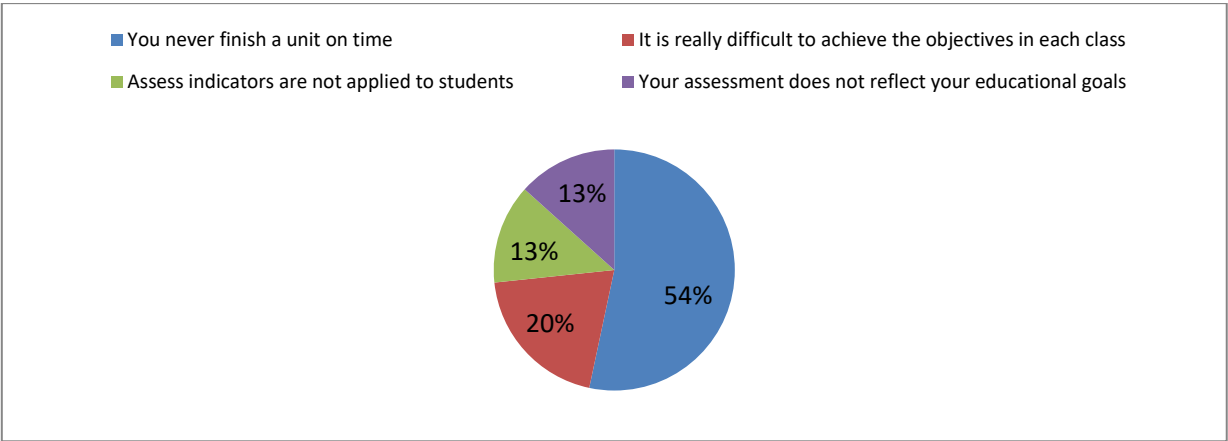


Figure 5. Achievement of educational goals in large classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

In accordance with techniques teachers prefer to use in large classes, the results revealed, as shown in figure 6, that 50% of teachers prefer to use pair-work as a technique to work in classes, while 31% choose group-work. Another 13% chooses solo work and 6% lectures. No teacher considered debates were good for large classes.

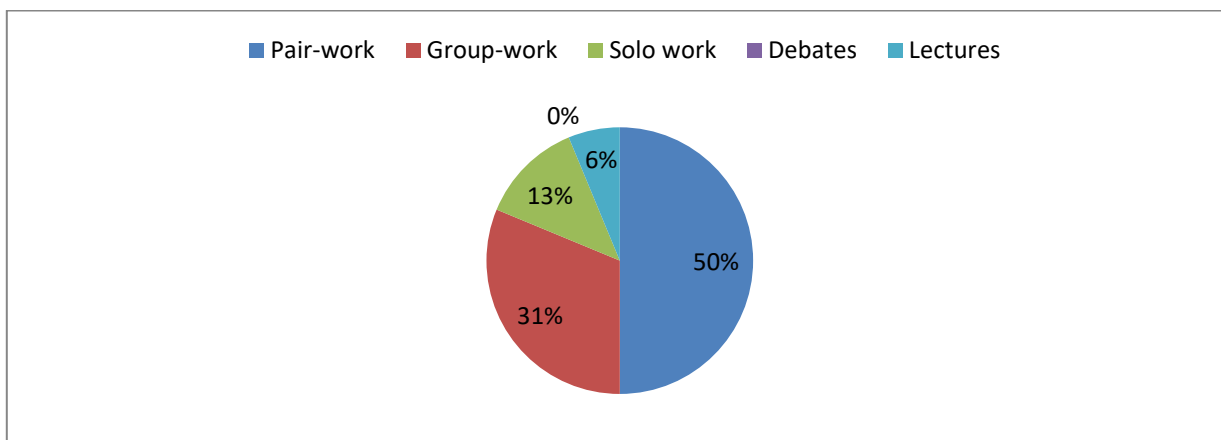


Figure 6. Techniques teachers prefer to use in large classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

In relation to teaching instructions in large classes, it can be seen in figure 7 that 34% of teachers make their own instructions when they are in large classes. Then, 33% of participants expressed they say the instructions in English and explain them in Spanish. On the other hand, 22% of teachers say the instructions in Spanish and explain them in Spanish.

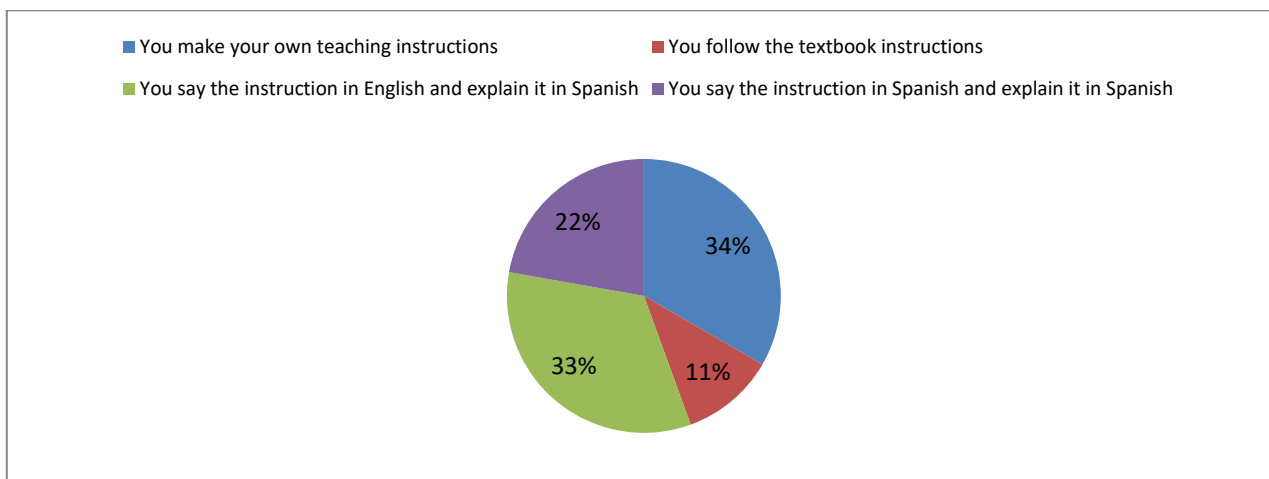


Figure 7. Teaching instructions in large classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

When analyzing the management of discipline in large classes, as is illustrated in figure 8, surprisingly 80% of the surveyed teachers do not think their classes are affected by a large number of students, while 20% expressed that they cannot control students' discipline and another 20% that it is difficult to keep students at task.

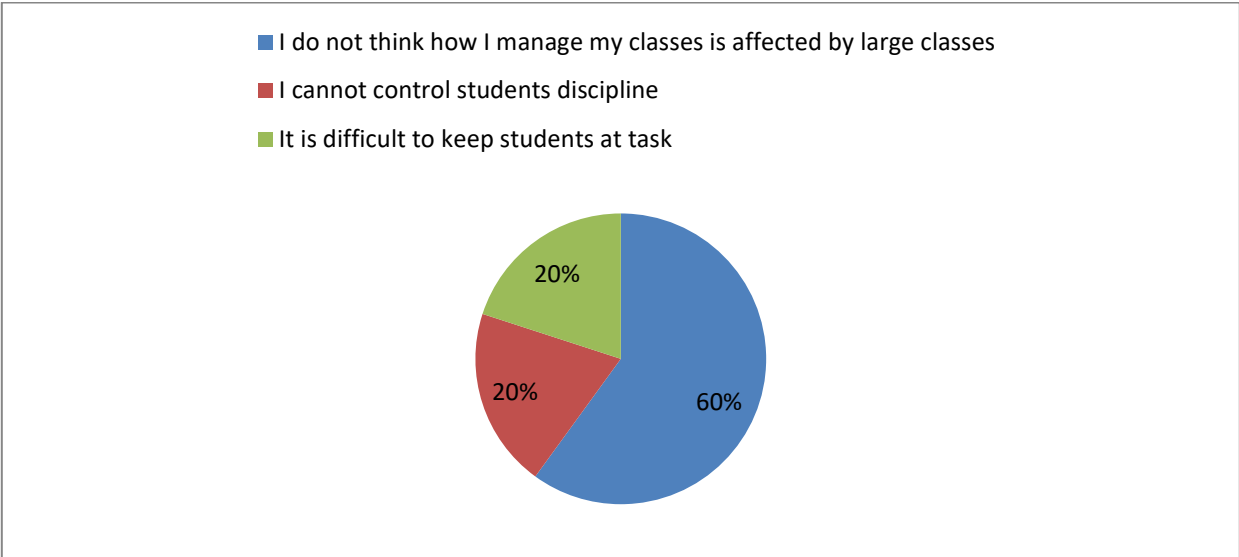


Figure 8. Discipline management in large classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

Concerning the resources teachers use for teaching in large classes, as can be observed in figure 9, all teachers have a classroom, a blackboard, markers and books available for teaching. However, classrooms do not have appropriate lightning and are dirty most of the time. Besides, there is no technology available to practice listening, just the teacher's voice. Teachers do not have any extra resouce to work in listening activities.

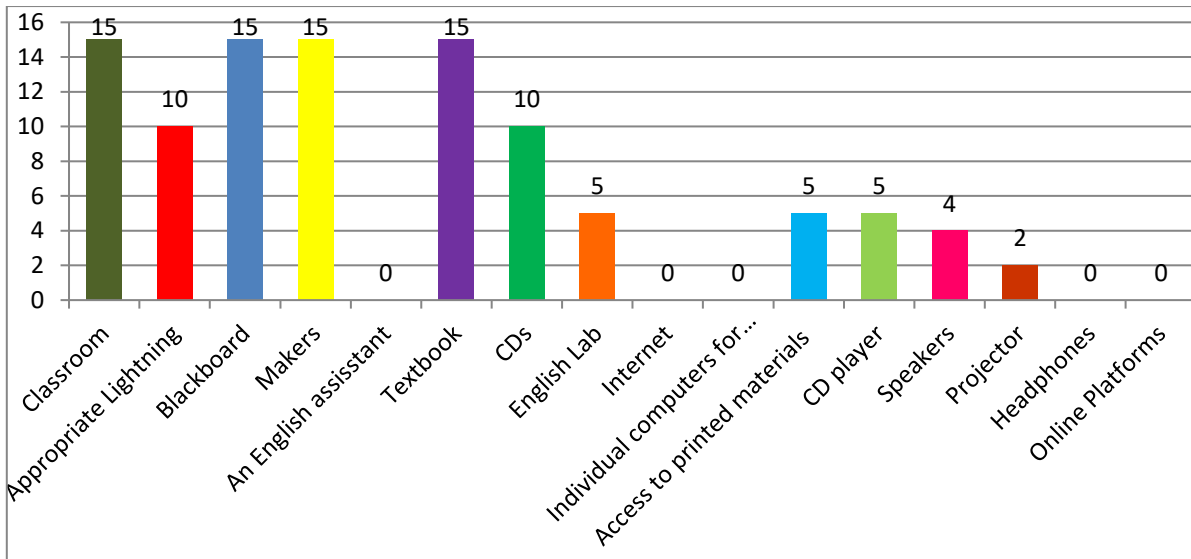


Figure 9. Resources used for teaching in large classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

Dealing with general aspects of large classes influencing English classes, as shown in figure 10, it was revealed that 29% of teachers believe their classes are negatively influenced by large classes because students do not have the opportunity to participate orally, 22% considered most of students do not pay attention and 14% believe activities are difficult to complete and to adapt.

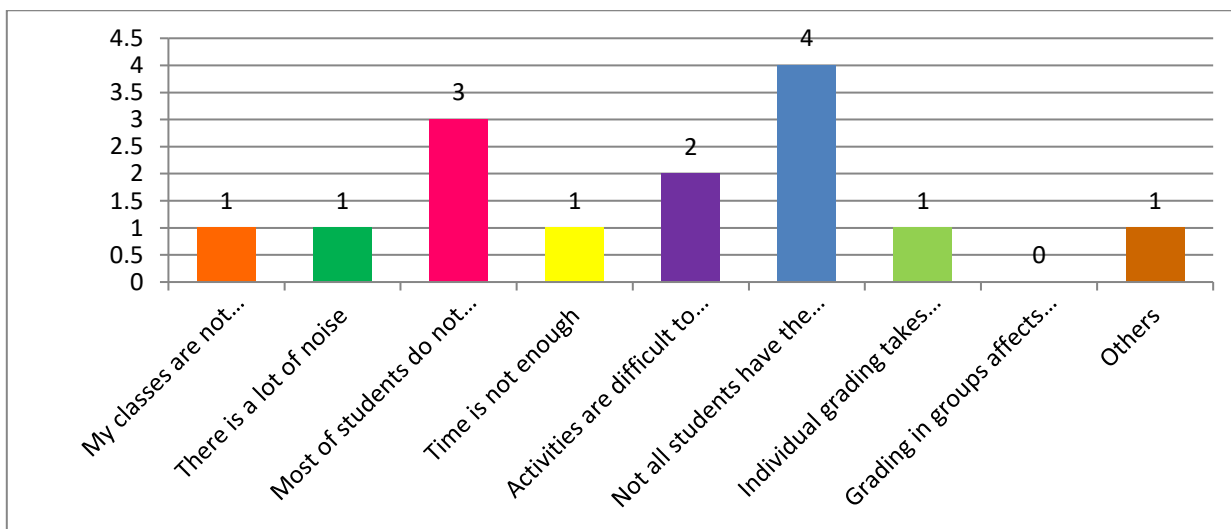


Figure 10. General aspects of large classes influencing English classes
Source: survey applied to teachers

5. DISCUSSION

The objectives of this research were achieved as it was proved that English teachers' performance in Esmeraldas decreases as English classes grow bigger, not necessarily because of the large number of students (although it does affect their perception towards the class) but mainly because of the lack of resources to teach effectively in this kind of environment.

English teachers usually consider a class as large if it has 35 or more students. Therefore, the number established by the government which is 35 should be lower as English classes are already problematic at this point. These results differ from those of Locastro (1989) and Hess (2001). The first one suggested English large classes have above 38-39 students, while the second considered them to have 30 or more. Even when participants had a variety of class sizes, between 20 and 40 students, 7% reported having large classes of 25 students and 27% believed their classes were large when they were of 40 students. These findings follow Ur's (1996) definition of large class size because it is teachers' perception towards a class what makes it large, not numerical determinations. It is important to regard that teachers' perception is a very subjective thing and varies considerably from one teacher to another following the different contexts in which they teach.

One factor that affects the teaching context is the resources the teacher has available for each class. Teachers who believed a class of 25 was large had the same resources than those who said 40. This is relevant because the same teacher would have different class sizes of 20, 30 and 40 and the same amount of resources to teach in each of them. The only materials, they had were books, markers and a blackboard and of course, they are not enough to teach a foreign language. For Bahanshal (2013) is the insufficient number of resources what creates problems as teachers do not have what they need to make the teaching-learning process easier. That would explain why, a class of 25 would be as large as a class of 40 for some teachers.

Another factor is class time. Teachers in classes with over 35 evidenced not just to have less interaction with students but also to use less effectively their class time. The reasons behind these results agree with those of the OCD's report (2015), in which it is stated that

teachers who teach in large classes spend more time in non-academic activities such as managing the class and controlling students' behavior.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- English teaching effectiveness in Esmeraldas decreases in large classes as teachers lack the appropriate knowledge to deal with this kind of classes and the suitable conditions to teach in them.
- English teachers have a general understanding of what a large class is and feel unsatisfied teaching in this environment. They also believe 35 and more students are difficult to work with in a lesson.
- When teaching in large classes, teachers deal with topics superficially. However, they are not usually thorough in each lesson and therefore do not finish units on time. Besides, they speak more in Spanish than in English. They also prefer using pair-work instead of group work. Finally, they think management problems are due to students' low motivation to learn the English language.
- There is a huge lack of resources to improve the English teaching effectiveness in Esmeraldas. Besides, many facilities are in bad shape and do not offer the appropriate environment to teach. Finally, the time available for teaching is not enough.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- To promote the use of a variety of methods to teach in large classes. The government or institutions themselves should train teachers in topics specifically related to large class' management, so they are well prepared to cope with teaching in this context.
- To improve the conditions in which the English language is being taught in Esmeraldas. Although class size is concerned with government regulations and it is not a topic of discussion nowadays, institutions should require the government to fully equip and adapt classrooms to be able to satisfy students' educational needs in large classes.
- To research how large class size affects teachers' development in school and pre-school education in Esmeraldas. Taking into consideration that students require more individual attention as they are younger, the negative effects of large classes in school and pre-school education should be bigger as teachers must but cannot work individually with larger numbers of students.

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9. APPENDICES

9.1. OBSERVATION SHEET



PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DEL ECUADOR SEDE EN
ESMERALDAS

APPLIED LINGUISTICS SCHOOL

Classroom Observation Form¹

Institution: _____

Number of students: _____

Topic: _____

Target Group: _____

Subject : Teaching Practice I

Date and time _____

English teacher: _____

Student –Teacher: _____

CRITERIA	INDICATORS			
	ALWAYS	OFTEN	RARELY	NEVER
1. SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT (shows good command and knowledge of subject matter; demonstrates breadth and depth of mastery)				
2. ORGANIZATION (organizes subject matter; evidences preparation; is thorough; states clear objectives; emphasizes and summarizes main points, meets class at scheduled time, regularly monitors on-line course)				
3. RAPPORT (holds interest of students; is respectful, fair, and impartial; provides feedback, encourages participation; interacts with students, shows enthusiasm)				
4. TEACHING METHODS (uses relevant teaching methods, aids, materials, techniques, and technology; includes variety, balance, imagination, group involvement; uses examples that are simple, clear, precise, and appropriate; stays focused on and meets stated objectives)				

<p>5. PRESENTATION (establishes online course or classroom environment conducive to learning; maintains eye contact; uses a clear voice, strong projection, proper enunciation, and standard English)</p>				
<p>6. MANAGEMENT (uses time wisely; attends to course interaction; demonstrates leadership ability; maintains discipline and control; maintains effective e-platform management)</p>				
<p>7. SENSITIVITY (exhibits sensitivity to students' personal culture, gender differences and disabilities, responds appropriately in a non-threatening, pro-active learning environment)</p>				
<p>8. ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS (assists students with academic problems)</p>				
<p>9. PERSONAL (evidences self-confidence; maintains professional comportment and appearance)</p>				
<p>10. PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF CLASSROOM (optional) (state location and physical attributes of classroom, number of students in attendance, layout of room, distractions if any; list any observations of how physical aspects affected content delivery)</p>				

Strengths observed:

Overall impression of teaching effectiveness:

¹ College of Technology Faculty and Staff Forms and Procedures. (2015). *Classroom Observation Form*. Idaho State University, Idaho. Retrieved from <https://www.isu.edu/tech/departments/forms-and-procedures/>

9.2. SURVEY



“HOW DOES LARGE CLASS SIZE INFLUENCE ENGLISH TEACHERS’ PERFORMANCE AT HIGH SCHOOLS?”

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

•To analyze the influence of large class size in English teachers’ performance at “Margarita Cortés”, “María Auxiliadora” and “Francés” Educational Institutions in Esmeraldas

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Test person male female English
teacher

18-30 over 30

(All the information you submit in this survey is confidential and anonymous. It will be used only for academic purposes).

PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

All questions must be marked highlighting them. Your personal opinion is very important for this study so please, include them in your answers.

1. What is a large class for you?

A class with more than:

- | | |
|-------|---------------|
| a. 25 | d. 40 |
| b. 30 | e. 45 |
| c. 35 | f. 50 or more |

2. How many large classes do you have?

- a) 1
- b) 2
- c) 3
- d) 4
- e) 5

f) 6

3. **How do you feel teaching in large classes?**
 - a) Accomplished
 - b) Satisfied
 - c) Good
 - d) Fine
 - e) Not so good
 - f) Unsatisfied

4. **How do you deal with topics when you are in a large class?**
 - a) I avoid topics that are too complicated and focus on the simple ones
 - b) I teach all the topics but superficially
 - c) I teach all the topics profoundly
 - d) I based on writing and reading rather than speaking and listening

5. **How is the achievement of your educational goals affected by large classes?**
 - a) You never finish a unit on time
 - b) It is really difficult to achieve the objectives in each class
 - c) Assess indicators are not applied to students
 - d) Your assessment does not reflect your educational goals

6. **Which of the following techniques WOULD you prefer to use in your large classes?**
You may choose more than one option.
 - a) Pair-work
 - b) Group-work
 - c) Solo work
 - d) Debates
 - e) Lectures

7. **How are your teaching instructions affected by large classes? You may choose more than one option**
 - a. You make your own teaching instructions
 - b. You follow the textbook instructions
 - c. You say the instruction in English and explain it in Spanish

- d. You say the instruction in Spanish and explain it in Spanish
8. **How is your class management affected by large classes?**
- I do not think how I manage my classes is affected by large classes
 - I cannot control students discipline
 - It is difficult to keep students at task
9. **Which of the following resources can you count on for teaching English:**
- Classroom
 - Appropriate lighting
 - Blackboard
 - Markers
 - An English assistant
 - Textbook
 - CDs
 - English Lab
 - Internet
 - Individual computers for each student
 - Access to printed materials
 - CD player
 - Speakers
 - Projector
 - Headphones
 - Online platforms
10. **How are your classes influenced by the number of students? You may choose one or more from the following list:**
- My classes are not affected by the number of students
 - There is a lot of noise
 - Most of students do not pay attention
 - Time is not enough
 - Activities are difficult to adapt and to complete
 - Not all students have the opportunity to participate orally in classes
 - Individual grading takes too much time
 - Grading in groups affects individual students' achievement
 - Others

9.3. PICTURES

