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Facultad de Lenguas

*Students' perceptions of belonging to a large group and the effects
on their participation in the classroom.*

A thesis submitted to obtain the degree in

Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés

by

Luis Alfredo Hernández Olivos

Thesis Director

Sandra Juárez Pacheco



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After reading the research made by:

Luis Alfredo Hernández Olivos

The members of the jury had considered that this research deserves to be accepted as completed and it accomplishes all the requirements to obtain the degree of

LICENCIADO EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

Sandra Juárez Pacheco

Gareth Luke Scyner

Eva María Sánchez Rodríguez

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I dedicate this project to my parents, Gonzalo and Rosa Isela, for supporting me all this time, there are not enough words to express how I feel. They had faith on me to approach all my goals, especially, this one.

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Abstract

English is one of the most spoken languages around the world in different fields, therefore, this language is taught in many schools as a second language (ESL). The process of teaching English involves different issues that teachers, novice or experienced, could face at schools. One of the main factors that would affect the learning process is the number of students within the same classroom, especially, in Public Institutions. Learners are the most affected ones by the number of people in a group (Hannah, 2013). This research aims to explore how the number of students affects their acquiring English process and their participation in the class. This project's goal would be achieved through a qualitative method.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This is the first chapter of a research based on the issue of having large groups in the teaching practice. In this introduction, it is briefly explained every important part which will be better developed in further chapters. After this introduction, the purpose of the study is presented followed by the description of the research context. In the fourth subsection of this chapter, the background of the researcher is presented and the reasons to perform this particular investigation are explained. Finally, the researcher enlisted two questions which will be better explained in the chapter based only on methodology.

Novice teachers can face many factors during a class, one of these factors, that seems important for the author of this research is large groups. Teaching to large groups of students effectively requires the same skills and commitment as teaching to smaller groups of learners such as: motivating students to learn through stimulating assessment tasks and being systematic and organized. However, having a large group of students involves many possible issues such as losing the control or students not paying attention while teachers are giving the class. These aspects can affect or benefit the learning English process (Hannah, 2013). Nevertheless, it is also important to understand if the students feel comfortable when they are in a large group, and if they learn the same way students in a small group do in an English class. Particularly, this study investigates meaningful factors that affect students' development, their English learning process, and how their participation is influenced while they learn English within a large group.

1.1 Significance of the study

The factor of having large groups is something that is faced in teaching practices at different ages, for example, children, youths, and adults. Thus, this study will describe students' point of view about their English learning process within an overcrowded class. The importance of this study is that most of the theses are related to the teachers' point of view, and this research will be focused on the students' point of view, since there is not enough work done on this field. Within this research, in particular, it has been considered that it is important to know how students feel when they belong to a large group of students, and understand what the perceptions students have when they learn English are and how their participation is affected by the factor of an overcrowded lesson. In addition, this work might help novice or experienced English teachers to understand and face this factor while teaching in public schools and/or private institutions.

1.2 Context of the research

The school that has been chosen to carry out this study is an Elementary School called "Manuel Dominguez" in Santo Domingo, Atlixco, Puebla. The institution has eight different groups from 1st to 6th grades; in addition, the learners take Computing, Gymnastic and English classes as extracurricular subjects. Besides, there is a teacher who provides attention to pupils with special needs. Students who studied the fifth grade were chosen to apply the instruments. They were 35 students, 23 are males and 12 are females, from 9 to 10 years old. They belong to the Basic level of English, A1.

1.3 Background of the researcher

Researcher's experience while performing his classes has proved that teaching English in educative modalities such as Elementary and Junior High in Public Institutions is not an easy task to perform because of the amount of students in each classroom. The number of students is an aspect that many novice teachers are not aware of. For instance, this is one of the reasons why this investigator was interested in this project is that he wanted to point out how the number of learners could influence their language acquisition and their participation within the classroom.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the principal aim of this study, it was necessary to state different research questions:

- What are the students' perceptions of being in a large group when they learn English at a public elementary school?
- How is the students' participation affected by the large size of the classroom?

1.5 Conclusion

The purpose of chapter one was to present a general view of what this study investigates and analyzes. The general ideas presented in the first chapter provided readers with a brief view about large groups as a factor to concern about while teaching in public schools. The subsequent chapter will go more into detail about the problematic given, from a general to a precise understanding. In addition, the chapter of literature review will reinforce important topics that guide this study to be performed in Chapter 2.

Chapter II Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This part of the research presents an overview of the study and literature related to oversized groups, giving teachers' problems and perceptions while teaching English in large classes. But mainly, presenting the students' troubles while they acquire English as a second language by focusing on their own point of view of belonging to an oversized class and how their participation is influenced by the number of learners in the class.

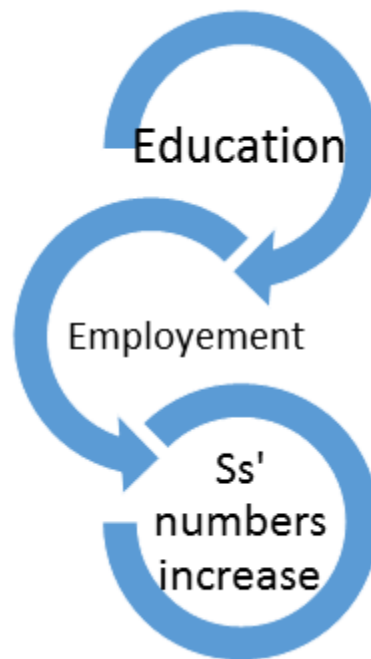
First, a general view of education is given to provide a perspective of what this is about, then, the factors that affect education are presented where the oversized class factor appears, which is the matter of this paper, soon after, the problems that teacher and students face while they are in large groups are given by descriptions supported by experts, and finally, the paper shows what the perceptions of instructors and pupils are when they belong to oversized classes.

2.1 Education

Education is seen as a key factor in the development of any society. It is also considered as a spine for social and economic prosperity since it brings countless benefits to society (Solberg and Borge, 2015). It is evident that education, like any other field, is facing numerous difficulties that require urgent attention. For instance, Jerald (2009) states that the students' population has more than doubled over the last decade of the 21st century. This might be attributed to a conviction that a country cannot prosper without education in this era. This increase in students' numbers has been associated with a high social demand for higher instruction and the fact that education leads to the acquisition of a lucrative

employment (Gimuguni, 2000). It is not surprising that as pupils' numbers increase, institutions face a problem of large classes giving way to numerous setbacks that are likely to affect the teaching and learning process if not properly handled (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2017).

2.1 Based on Gimugini, 2000.



2.1.1 Factors that affect education

Evidently, some language students are successful by virtue of their sheer determination, hard work, and perseverance. Lightbown and Spada (2013) establish that people who learn a new language are capable to acquire it rapidly and easier than others. However, there are crucial factors influencing success that are out of the learner's control. These factors can be regarded as internal and external (Macaro, 2010).

The prominent categorization of Macaro's (2010) external and internal factors, determines the speed and facility with which a new language is acquired. The following lines

will clarify it better by giving a consistent explanation of them, and the following sub-sections of this topic will describe internal and external factors which may influence students' language acquisition.

2.1.1.1 Internal factors

Internal factors are those that the second language learner brings with him/her to the particular learning process (Macaro, 2010). He lists age, personality, motivation (intrinsic), experiences, cognition and native language; all these factors, are better described in the following paragraphs.

First, the explorer Macaro (2010) argues that *age* influences the acquisition of a second language. This theory is also supported by Lenneberg (1967) who suggests that there is a biologically determined period of life when a language can be acquired more easily. Beyond this time a language is more difficult to learn.

The second factor that affects the acquisition of a language, is *student's personality*. For instance, "introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak or to seek out such opportunities. More outgoing students will not worry about the inevitability of making mistakes" (Macaro, 2010, p.122).

In third place, *intrinsic motivation* determines how successful the language would be learned. Ryan and Deci (1985) believe that intrinsic motivation is founded upon innate needs for competence and self-determination. They consider that when students are free to select to perform an activity, those learners will seek interesting situations where they can rise to the challenges that the activity presents. Furthermore, learners who have acquired general

knowledge and *experience* are in a stronger position to develop a new language than those who have not. Silins and Murray-Harvey (1998) establish that schools are responsible to provide and stimulate experiences that empower the psychological, emotional, social and physical development of learners.

Fourth, *cognition* is the act of recognizing or of having knowledge. Hence, cognitive development theory explores the mental process used in “the formation of all internal processes such as perception, intuition, and reasoning” (dictionary.com, 2017, para.1). The Language Acquisition Device is a “mental capacity” which enables an infant to acquire and produce a language (Chomsky, 1965, p. 25). This learning ability is stronger in some pupils than in others. Finally, an adult person’s *native language* can provide misleading information when learning to segment the second language into words. On the other hand, students who are learning a second language, which is from the same language family as their mother tongue, have, in general, a much easier task than those who are not. For instance, “some researchers have even claimed that children acquire a second language without reference to their first language” (Dulay and Burt, 1974a, b, p.37).

2.1.1.2 External Factors

Macaro (2010) holds that external factors are the ones that characterize the particular language learning situation. He mainly enumerates the following features: culture, motivation (extrinsic), access to native speakers, curriculum and size (number of students). These external factors are described in a deeper way in the following paragraphs as previously done with the internal factors.

First, understanding the relationship between language and *culture* is essential to the process of learning another language. This context is not a single culture as both the target language and culture and the learner's culture and language are simultaneously engaged (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler, 2003). In other words, students in situations where their own culture has a lower status than that of the culture in which they are learning the language make slower progress. It more difficult to learn English in a place where there is no provided the basic elements, school, materials, and qualified teachers, to acquire the language than where those elements are present.

Second, the term *extrinsic motivation* refers to the motivation that people have to participate in an activity, not for the pleasure of it but to accomplish an external goal (Ryan and Deci, 1985). For example, students who are given continuing, appropriate encouragement to learn from their teachers and parents will generally fare better than those who are not.

Third, the access to *native English speaking teachers* is a crucial factor for some students because they have a native pronunciation, therefore, those instructors are good pronunciation model for learners (Busy Teacher, n.d.). For instance, the opportunity to interact with a native speaker both within and outside of the classroom would be a significant advantage for any English as a Second Language student. Researcher considers that the interaction with a native English speaker challenges himself to use the skills acquired.

Fourth, often the *curriculum* is considered the framework that guides the coverage of content aligned with the standards. Tanner and Tanner (2007) described curriculum as:

...as a unity in which the reconstruction of knowledge is integrally related to the learner's ability to increase his or her control of

knowledge and experience. If the school conceives of curriculum in this way, the curriculum will be unified rather than 62 fragmented, and personal-social problems and needs will not be considered intrusions on the work of the school. (p. 123)

In other words, Tanner and Tanner (2007) describe the curriculum as a factor that might affect the acquisition of English as a second language because there are variations on who leads the planning, the content priorities, and institutional approaches; which can make slower or faster progress on students.

The *size* factor has affected students' performance while acquiring a second language. It is supposed that large classes offer few opportunities to teachers to employ quality teaching and learning environment for learners (Blatchford et al., 2002; Hattie, 2005; Pedder, 2006), thus teachers and students, who belong to an oversized group, would have or create chances to achieve the success of language acquisition.

As mentioned in previous sections of this thesis, the main goal of this research is to analyze the perceptions of belonging to a large group of students and the effects on their English learning process, in order to do so, the following main topic of this literature review is presenting the last external factor *Size* established as a large group is, what it is, its problems and how teachers and students perceive to work or belong to this oversized groups according to previous researches done.

2.2 Definition of Large Group

When novice teachers start their careers, they face so many troubles such as dealing with different learning styles, multiple level classes, inexperienced, students who vary in interest and motivation (Ur, 1996). However, what really matters, for the researcher of this thesis, are the external factors that can be changeable still through the development of a class. For

instance, a large class size is a factor that a novice instructor can have problems with at the time of performing a class.

Yet, there is no consensus definition in literature to what constitutes a large class as material developers, teachers, and students in different parts of the world have various perceptions of what frames large, small or ideal classes. Their idealizations, therefore, are affected by the educational philosophies, theories, and experience of all parties involved in the teaching and learning process.

On one hand, Hess (2001) assumed that a class constituted with 30 learners or more learners, it can be considered an oversized lesson. Hence, it is predictable that large classes are those with a number of pupils that teachers cannot handle and resources are not enough to promote the teaching and learning processes and that pose insuperable problems for both, teachers and learners. Brown (2001), on the other hand, assumed that a perfect size class should not exceed 12 students. In other words, a class should be big enough to offer variety and allow interaction between the teacher and the learners, and small enough to provide students with a range of opportunities for participating and receiving individual attention.

In addition, Hayes (1997) says there is no quantitative definition of what constitutes a large class, as people's perception of this varies from context. In some private institutions a class with 20 pupils may be perceived large, while in public schools, large classes generally refer to that of holding 45-50 learners or more, which to some mentors may be super large. Moreover, Ur (1996) concludes by establishing that what it is relevant to the class considered as large on is how the teacher perceives the class size in the specific situation, regardless of the exact number of pupils in it.

2.2.1 Problems with oversized groups

Large classes are associated with a countless list of learning problems as conceived by a number of studies conducted worldwide. Therefore, a large class is one with more students that the teacher prefers to manage and available resources can support, from this point of view, large classes usually are considered to pose insurmountable difficulties for instructors. Buni (1993) conceives ineffective teaching and learning in an outsized lesson when large class size may lead to a reduction in the teacher-student contact which makes the supervision activities and management of students' discipline difficult.

Furthermore, teaching large classes can be challenging, for example, logistical concerns, such as taking attendance, grading, and providing frequent and detailed feedback, can quickly become unmanageable (Allen & Tanner, 2005; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). In addition, any mentor can feel unable to teach to a large group, conversely, in an opposite situation, a mentor can get a better performance in a class besides achieving the class' goals.

Teaching very large effectively requires the same skills and commitments as teaching smaller lessons. Classes with a big amount of learners at times prove to be difficult to control and discipline as they generate an unfriendly environment; and when increased student enrolment demands adequate materials and that lack of the same render teaching and learning ineffective (Oliveira & Farrell, 1993).

Biggs (1999) states the effects of class size are varied and contextual, and the practical problems faced by students and mentors increase and change in their nature as class size increase. When a teacher is in front of an outsized lesson, he/she only keeps his/her attention to those pupils who are within his/her surveillance zone leaving the back zone outside of

his/her supervision (Oliveira & Farrell, 1993). In other words, teachers and learners should focus on their goals established at the beginning no matter which factors, in this case, size class, face while instructor teach and pupils acquire the language.

2.2.1.1 Teaching English to oversized groups

Gibbs (1992) establishes that large-group teaching makes it difficult for teachers to elicit student answers and to know if students understand the whole course content. Other kinds of problems are when students entering and exiting from the classroom, which often results in teaching sessions starting late, dealing noise levels during class tasks. For instance, when the number of students is too high, teachers are forced to delegate their duties either to students or colleagues as a consequence, students can even abandon classes completely (Abua, 1995).

Therefore, a substantial body of research suggests that for effective teaching and learning in large classes, teachers have to consider the following aspects: the course objectives, the characteristics of their pupils, and their teaching styles. Some studies have emphasized that it is not the class size that affects the learning process yet it is the teacher's quality and methodology that greatly counts (Maged, 1997; Nakabugo, 2003; and O'Sullivan, 2006). Furthermore, one of the most current problems related to large classes is classroom management, thus, it is certain that large classes involve assertiveness, leadership and active teacher who is able to control most of the class actions.

2.2.1.2 Learning English in oversized groups

The main difficulties that students have, when they are in an oversized class, are that the instructors, mainly, keep their eyes on learners into their surveillance zone, leaving the back of the class outside instructors' attention zone. For this reason, usually, pupils lose interest

in learning the language because they feel not receiving enough attention which is caught by those are sat in front of the class.

Furthermore, students face so many troubles while they are attending oversized classes, and one of the most often cited problems is the behavior of their fellow students, especially side conversations, arriving late, and leaving early. When teachers take steps to control student behavior in their classroom, instructors are not doing it only for themselves. There is a large silent majority of pupils who want to spend their time listening rather than being distracted by a handful of rowdy classmates (Wuff, Nyquist, and Abbott, 1987). Conversely, Chen (2005), Yazedjian et al. (2007) and Herrington & Weaven (2008) confirm that forming small groups of learners help to reduce the noise, save the time of performing a certain activity and allow teachers to concentrate on small numbers of groups instead of focusing on many individuals.

Learner's location within the teaching space is an important aspect that perhaps it is seen as an insignificant appearance, otherwise that feature plays an important role in the learning process, when the course starts the teacher is who decides where students should locate, while the course is passing by, instructors relocates their pupils on the basis of student ability; however, other learners are who decide for themselves where they want to seat, there is an unwritten rule which says whoever comes first in the morning and keeps his/her school bag reserves the seat. Then, no one can remove the schoolbag (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). (See Figure 1). Additionally, Grubaugh and Houston (1990) mentioned location plays a significant role not only where students sit, but interaction as well, which is divided into two; the front and back zones. The general pattern of teacher-student interaction is linked significantly to the location of the learners in front or at the back of the room. The question-answer exchange between teacher and student is often the only pattern of interaction.

Regarding interaction, Allwright and Bailey (1991) argue that less distraction and noise in the front is perceived by students as an opportunity to own a better understanding of the lesson and get more attention from teachers, as a result, the front zone of the classroom seemed to be the chosen location. In contrast to the front zone, the atmosphere at the back area seems to be distracting and nonconductive to work. In fact, the conditions and opportunities for learning at the back of the classroom seem to be the mirror image of those found in the front. Indeed, learners at the back are not able to hear the teacher's instructions rightly; furthermore, students at the back cannot see the whiteboard clearly. It has been established that in very oversized groups even the minimum conditions for learning, such as hearing the teacher and seeing the whiteboard, are not available at the back of the classroom. Moreover, it seems the difficult learning conditions at the back create an environment of non-work, which can negatively influence the good students in that location (Allwright and Bailey, 1991).

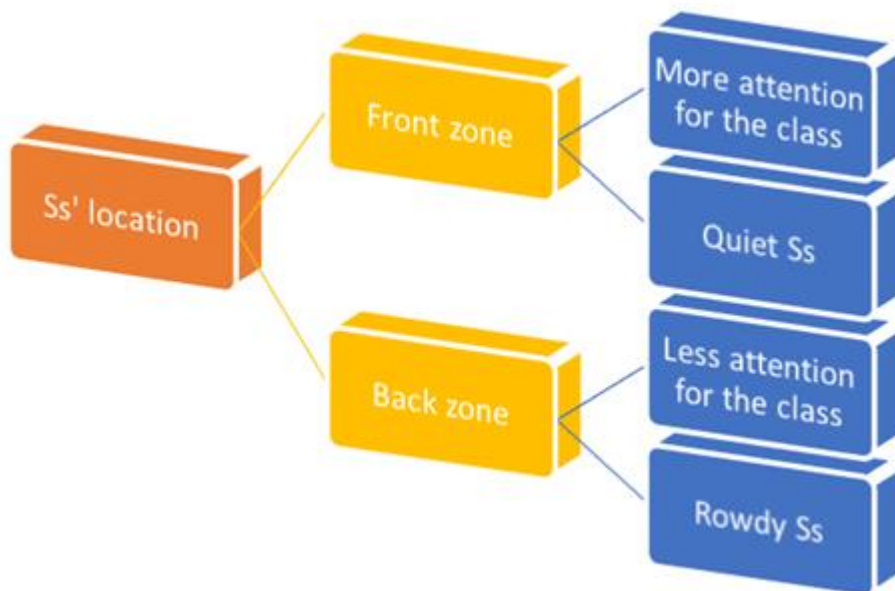


Figure. 1.1 Based on Allwright & Bailey, 1991

In conclusion, teaching and learning processes within oversized groups are as difficult as in small ones but everything depends on the teachers and students are prepared to deal with it and the outcomes that the instructor established at the beginning can be achieved successfully. And the expectations of pupils to acquire the language, English, are also reachable. Consequently, the issue that really matters is that learners can learn the language even in oversized classes. Finally, in the following section of this research, the methodology is presented as well as the description of important elements such as context and participants and instruments that were used to develop this study.

2.3 Teaching and Learning English

Research evidence suggests that oversized and small classes are effective as one another when it comes to learning and comprehension of factual information. The relative effectiveness of the teaching approaches used in large and small classes must be significantly related to the effectiveness of teaching in each setting (McKeachie, 1990). In order to be clearer, some statements are explained.

Firstly, teaching is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social, and ethical conditions under which students agree to take charge of their own learning, individually and collectively (Christensen, Garvin, and Sweet, 1991, p. viii, xv, xvi). Initial work investigating teacher's concerns has suggested that they can be divided into four aspects, discomfort, control, individual attention, and learning effectiveness. In order to be clearer while describing these elements, some brief definitions given by experts are presented as follows:

Firstly, discomfort is defined as the feeling that students have when they sense challenged by the difficulties at acquiring a language, the teacher, the tasks, and their classmates (Hayes, 2017), controlling is the interpersonal emotion and behavior teacher

provide during instruction to pressure learners to think, feel or behave in a specific way (Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon & Roth, 2005). Thirdly, according to American Heritage School Boca Delray, (n.d) the individual attention is provided by teachers based on the learner's' needs because not all students are alike and do not learn in the same way. Finally, Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge (2007) state that learning effectiveness as an activity of construction handled with others driven by the learner, the monitoring, and review of the effectiveness of approaches and strategies for the goals and context.

Furthermore, regarding teaching and learning English process, many instructors are worried by the physical constraints imposed by large numbers in confined classrooms. They feel unable to promote student interaction since there is no room to move about. Teachers are also concerned by the discipline aspects of large groups, they feel they are not able to control what it is happening, and the classes become too noisy. On the opposite side, there is no right answer to the question how much control to exert over the students in large classes (Carbone, and Greenberg, 1998).

Another important point to highlight is that during the teaching and learning process, students behave, in large classes, in ways they never would in small classes. A probable reason for their behavior is they do not like to take classes, and they prefer to spend time in something else. According to Maryellen Gleason (1986) it is suggested to treat the class as if it were a small one, in other words, many teachers are worried that they are neglecting the needs of their pupils as individuals; on the other hand, instructors see that not all learners need individual attention in every lesson; for some, a quick check that they are doing activities correctly will be enough, whereas other will need closer guidance. As it is seen, teachers are not the only ones who have problems in oversized classes; students even have troubles in large classes as well. When students are learning English in a large class, they

may feel not enough motivation from their teachers, they perceive their instructors leave them, and as consequence of that, pupils do not get interested in learning the language anymore, and they leave the class.

Decades of research on learning have highlighted the importance of active learning at all levels of education. The challenge is to find ways to do this within the context of enormous classes (Qualters, 2001). The need for active learning by students in educational settings and the placing learners at the center of the learning process in this context (Jungst, Licklider, and Wiersema, 2003). Voelkl (1995) found that reduction in active involvement by pupils in learning can lead to decreased course performance. Therefore, active participation by students in the context of learning is an integral part of quality education (Booth, and Ainscow, 1998). In further sections, teaching and learning in oversize classes' environments are presented in a deeper way.

2.3.1 Teachers' perceptions while teaching English to oversized groups

Novice teachers are taught to imitate traditional and very common approaches, although, these instructors mainly try to innovate in teaching, and improve what they have already learned. Novice teachers have many problems when they start their career, to mention one of them is inexperience, and according to the researcher of this thesis when this factor is present, students perceive the teacher as insecure when the instructor is in front of the group, and the learners perceive this insecurity they feel disappointed because learners think the teacher does not have enough knowledge or that he/she is not ready to teach any class.

It seems that English teachers have no doubt that large size of classes is a prime impediment to the efficient English teaching and learning. With no more students enrolling in schools, oversized classes in any country tend to be obligatory rather than exceptional.

Therefore, the problem seems to expand widely. As a matter of fact, large classes are not in and of themselves an issue to look forward to with dread (Heppner, 2007).

2.3.2 Students' perceptions while learning English in oversized groups

Students have also reported being uncomfortable and confused in their new class, which is large, spending their first week in a state of shock and feeling anonymous in their class. Consequently, they often adopt a passive role in class and they tend to not ask questions or make a contribution to the rest of the class (Ward and Jenkins, 1992). Furthermore, students' behavior is another aspect they change when they feel abandonment from their teachers, for example, arriving late for class or leaving early and more off-task behavior during teaching sessions (Carbone, 1999). The point is that while pupils are within an outsized class they could lose the interest of learning or misbehaving for the reason that they feel ignored by the number of students and the acquiring process could fail.

Additionally, Gibbs (1992) thinks that students do not get to know each other and high absenteeism may be tolerated or not notice. Another aspect is the amount and the intensity of interactions between learners and teachers generally reduce as class size increases and this can result in anonymity and passivity (Biggs, 1999; Carbone and Greenberg, 1998; Ward and Jenkins, 1992).

2.4 Conclusion

These lines conclude this chapter which was related to the different points of view of those who have worked on this topic. Moreover, distinct authors were mentioned in order to give more support of what the researcher of this project wanted to analyze. In the next chapter,

the methodology will be introduced.

CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This part of the paper deals with the methodology. Some important information about the methodology, subjects and instruments for this study is presented. Firstly, the methodology that was used in this study is presented; soon after, a description of the context is given. The following part describes the participants and a summary of how the research design was done. After that, a general description of the instruments that were used in this study is written, and a deep description of each instrument used by the researcher. Finally, the description of the data analysis is set deeply.

3.1 Methodology

In order to perform any type of research, it is important to establish a definition for such important concept. For instance, Kothari (2004) defines a research as:

“An inquiry into the nature of, the reasons for, and the consequences of any particular set of circumstances, whether these circumstances are experimentally controlled or recorded just as they occur. Further, research implies the researcher is interested in more than particular results; he is interested in the repeatability of the results and in their extension to more complicated and general situations.” (p. 9).

In other words, any person (a possible researcher) who is interested in working with a dilemma that someone is facing in their field, can study it deeply and try to solve any difficulty.

On the one hand, all the techniques that are used to conduct a research are recognized as a research method (Kothari, 2004). This study is considered as a qualitative research

method because it deals with the students' point of view and their perceptions of being in an oversized group and how that factor (large class) has effects on learners' learning process.

Furthermore, the paper uses two types of methodologies which are descriptive and analytical. First, the descriptive methodology is mainly giving a description of what happened to the students within the large classes by using the observations sheets done by the researcher. The analytical part consists in making a critical evaluation of the information obtained from the survey answered by the participants (Kothari, 2004).

3.2 Context

This qualitative study was carried out in Mexico. Unfortunately, it takes the first place with a huge number of students within a class per teacher in Elementary, Junior High and High levels (SIPSE.com, 2015).

The town selected to accomplish this project is Atlixco, Puebla; where English is taught as part of the Full-Time School Program provided by Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP). Thirteen Elementary Public Schools take part of the program which one of them is the academy chosen by the researcher.

3.3 Participants

This project collected data from direct participants studying the fifth grade in an Elementary Public School named Manuel Dominguez. They were 35 students, 23 males, and 12 females, from 9 to 10 years old. They study a Basic level of English, A1, which has been taught for the last three school years. All of them are Mexican and they belong to the middle social class.

3.4 Description of the overall research design

The researcher selected that school to take part of the study for the reason that it is near the researcher's location. Firstly, the Institution's Principal was asked for permission to allow the investigator to choose a group with a big number of students. The Principal kindly agreed and the next step was to talk to the teacher in charge of the class, thus she let the researcher observe her class as well. Finally, learners were asked to answer the survey and they did it with pleasure.

The observations were performed during four weeks, two times a week. Three different aspects were observed per class, classroom management, student-teacher interaction, and students' action zone. The investigator sat at the back of the classroom to see what happened during the whole class. After all the observations were done, the survey was given to the students and they were asked to answer it as soon as they could. The surveys were collected a week later.

3.5 Instruments

This project used three different observations, and a survey as instruments. They were designed by the researcher. The following sections will give a deep description of how the instruments were designed and what kind of instruments they were.

3.5.1 Survey

Burns (2010) suggests that it is better to give a questionnaire or survey than interviewing. Surveys do not need much time and they can be applied to several people at the same time, in contrast, interviews need more time because they are applied one by one.

According to Burns (2010) the type of survey that the researcher designed was a rating scale one. The purpose of the survey was to investigate what the learners' perceptions are about the teacher, the class and which zone of the class is more active.

The survey includes 10 statements written in Spanish, ever since participants have not developed the necessary reading skill to understand it in English. After each statement, an agreement grading scale was presented. The scale went from totally agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and totally disagree (See Appendix "A").

3.5.2 Observation sheets

Observation sheets help to collect data by observing events that occur while the class is given (Burns, 2010). That is the reason why the researcher decided to use this kind of instruments, the following lines will explain what kind of observations sheets were used.

Event checklist sheets were the best option to observe the class and how certain events, established on the sheet, were happening. There were two different observation sheets, the first one was about classroom management, and its purpose was to analyze how the students are distributed and how the teacher deals with a class like that. This observation sheet had ten utterances to be ticked by the observer when they occurred. The second section of the same observation sheet was related to student-teacher interaction, the outcome of this sheet was to observe how the students and teacher interacted with each other, the statements were ticked by the researcher as well. Eight statements were written to help to observe the class. (See Appendix B)

Finally, the second observation sheet is related to a shadowing observation (Burns, 2010). A shadow observation (See C), as the name suggests, is where you set aside blocks of

time, maybe during a whole day or week, simply to follow and observe what an individual or group does as they go about their regular routines. It focuses on tracking their movements, interactions or behaviours while taking in and noticing the main features. (Burns, 2010. p. 70). The goal of this instrument was to observe how the pupils are set and if the sitting place has effects on their participation while the class occurs.

3.6 Data Analysis

This part is about how the data was analyzed when all the observations were applied and the survey as well. The first part of this process was to gather all the information collected, and looking for similar patterns in the applied instruments. Furthermore, the next step was to compare all observations to find if there are similar patterns in all the observations or if there were contradictions. In the following subsections of this point, there are better described the data analysis processes.

3.6.1 Survey Data Analysis

The following Table 3.1 illustrates what participants answered on the questionnaire. This mode is more helpful to get a better understanding. After the image is presented, an explanation is given.

Statement 1 and 2 are related to the *number of students* in the classroom. As it can be seen, most of the participants considered that their classes and learning process are not appropriated to the number of students in their classroom.

Control group and *motivation* are set in utterances 3 and 4. Most of the students totally agreed that teacher does not have control over the group and motivation is not

perceived in their lessons. Ryan and Deci (1985) state that students who are given continuing, appropriate encouragement to learn from their instructors and parents will generally fare better than those who are not.

Statements 5 and 9 are associated with the *team* and *individual working*. These items are expected to evidence which technique works better to get understanding of the lesson. Students agreed that both techniques perfectly work to their learning process.

	Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro	Desacuerdo	Totalmente desacuerdo
El número de alumnos afecta mi aprendizaje.	7	12	5	3	8
El número de alumnos afecta el desarrollo de la clase.	8	12	0	8	7
El profesor(a) tiene control sobre el grupo durante la clase.	17	7	2	5	4
El profesor(a) motiva a TODOS los alumnos a trabajar en clase.	15	7	7	6	0
Las actividades en clase me ayudan más cuando se realizan en equipo.	12	12	4	4	3
La clase me da confianza para aprender porque somos muchos.	4	10	13	3	5
Los alumnos que se sientan en la parte de atrás del salón no tienen suficiente atención por parte del profesor(a).	7	9	6	3	10
Los alumnos que se sientan adelante aprenden más.	16	8	3	4	4
Trabajar individualmente en mi grupo es mejor para aprender.	7	12	5	8	3
El profesor(a) muestra mayor atención a los alumnos que se sientan en la parte de adelante del salón.	8	7	5	5	10
Preferiría que fuéramos menos alumnos para aprender mejor	17	5	6	1	6

Table 3.1 Survey results

The sixth expression is about examining if students are *confident to learn* not matter the number of learners. Most of the students, thirteen, are not sure about their confidence in

class, maybe, they feel uncomfortable because they are many people. However, other participants, 10, feel confident no matter how many students there are.

Statements 7 and 10 are set to examine which zone, front or back, is focused *the teacher's attention*. Participants considered that the attention is equally received for both zones. This was contradictory for the researcher, he expected that the front zone would receive instructor's attention, other researchers stated that teachers in front of oversized classes keep their attention to those pupils who are within their surveillance zone (Oliveira & Farrell, 1993).

Utterance number 8 is related to comprehend what participants opine if students that *sit in front of the class learn the most*. The majority of students considered that learners who sit in front of the class learn the most. This response can be supported by what Allwright and Bailey (1991) argued, they stated that less distraction and noise in the front is perceived by students as an opportunity to own a better understanding of the lessons.

The last statement set is associated to get the *students' point of view* if they would like to be fewer learners in their classroom. Most of them, 17, totally agreed they would like to be in groups with few students.

3.6.2 Observation Data Analysis

The chart below (Table 3.2) shows what researcher observed in classes. A description of each sentence of the observation is given to make it clearer.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Learners show a positive attitude to learn during the class.	4	2	2
Pupils show respect towards their teacher when lesson occurs.	3	3	2
Students are capable to build a positive relation with their teacher	4	1	3
Learners are motivated to learn in class.	3	1	4
Student show confidence to acquire the language.	3	3	2
Teacher provides individual communication to students.	2	3	3
Teacher praises his/her students when they participate in class.	3	4	1
Learners are confident on their knowledge and skills.	2	4	2
Teacher adapts himself/herself to the students' interests and needs.	3	4	1
Lesson flows properly.	2	2	4
Different learners are involved into activities during the class.	3	1	4
All students interact each other while class occurs.	3	1	4
Proper activities for the number of students within the class.	3	1	4
Proper management and control over the group.	3	2	3
Monitoring on the students work.	3	1	4
Proper attention for all learners.	3	0	5
All pupils are interested on learning English.	3	2	3
Instructor gives feedback to students.	2	2	4

Table 3.2 Observation results

For the first sentence, most of the times students were willing to learn, but in other sessions, learners were not, there are many reasons:

- They did not like the activities
- The introduction of new topics
- They were not interested in the lesson.

Learners had a respectful attitude towards their teacher, two sessions this attitude was not seen because they were noisy and it made teaching process more difficult. But what it can be highlighted is that students and teacher are capable to have a relationship in order to achieve the success of the teaching and learning processes (see Table 3.2).

Unfortunately, the teacher did not motivate all students to have an active role within the class, motivation can play a crucial role in the acquisition of English when students get motivated their interest grows and it makes easier teacher's work. And they get confident about their knowledge, statement 4, and they are not afraid of participating; for instance, they take an active role in lessons.

Individual communication was not part of these classes observed, the teacher showed this technique few times, when students get individual communication, they get the confidence and they obtain a better understanding. Praise is also important when classes are given, when a teacher praises his/her students, they participate as much as they can, but when learners are not praised they are more passive. The times that students participated, "OK" and "good" expressions were said by the observed teacher. It did not encourage students to be more active.

What researcher could detect during the observation is that the classes are not based on students' interests and few times the activities were appropriated for the number of learners in the classroom, the most active tasks are the most students get interested on learning. The teamwork technique was useful and it made pupils work, unfortunately, this only happened three times. Not all students were involved, this happened when the activities were performed when they were made in small teams.

The interaction among the learners was only detected when assignments were done in small groups, otherwise, they did not interact each other. The possible reason why students did not interact each other is that activities were not well designed for the number of students, statement 13, as Oliveira and Farrell (1993) suggested that teaching large classes requires the same commitments as teaching smaller lessons. Researcher agrees with what Oliveira and Farrell say, the number of students in the classroom is not an excuse to stop doing our best.

When a teacher is in charge of an overcrowded class, the possible difficulties that can be faced are, control over the class, monitoring and the development of the class, these features were set in sentences 10, 14 and 15. What it can be observed during lessons is that teacher spent short periods of time to control students to be quieter, this made the lessons not flowing properly. While monitoring was not possible because of the number of students within the group, it was difficult to supervise every pupil, this was seen in activities done in small groups, and it was easier for the instructor to examine what students were doing.

3.6.3 Shadowing Data Analysis

The five observations performed by the researcher (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) were analyzed. All sheet observations are related to students' participation in the class. The number on each

diagram represents the day which the observation was performed. The numbers in the squares symbolize the students in the classroom, and the stars next to the number mean the times the student participated during the lesson.

As it can be seen in observation sheet 1 (see Figure 3.1), three students, from the front zone, participated twice in the whole class, while two students from the back zone did it once in the lesson, they gave a short comment, a response to what the teacher asked them, it could say that they spoke forcedly.

Observation number 2 (see Figure 3.1) reported that the most active zone was the front one, nine students participated at least once and one student did it twice, mainly, they gave answers required by the instructor. Only one student, sat at the back, asked for the meaning of a word.

The third observation (see Figure 3.1) illustrates that the back zone follows the same tendency, no much participation by students, this time, two learners spoke once, they had doubts on the task assigned, that is why spoke. Whereas, most of the interaction was presented in the front zone.

Observation sheet number four (see Figure 3.2) showed less participation than other lessons, due to the fact of this time a new topic was taught, the responses given by learners were short answers related to previous knowledge. Unfortunately, the back zone showed a lack.

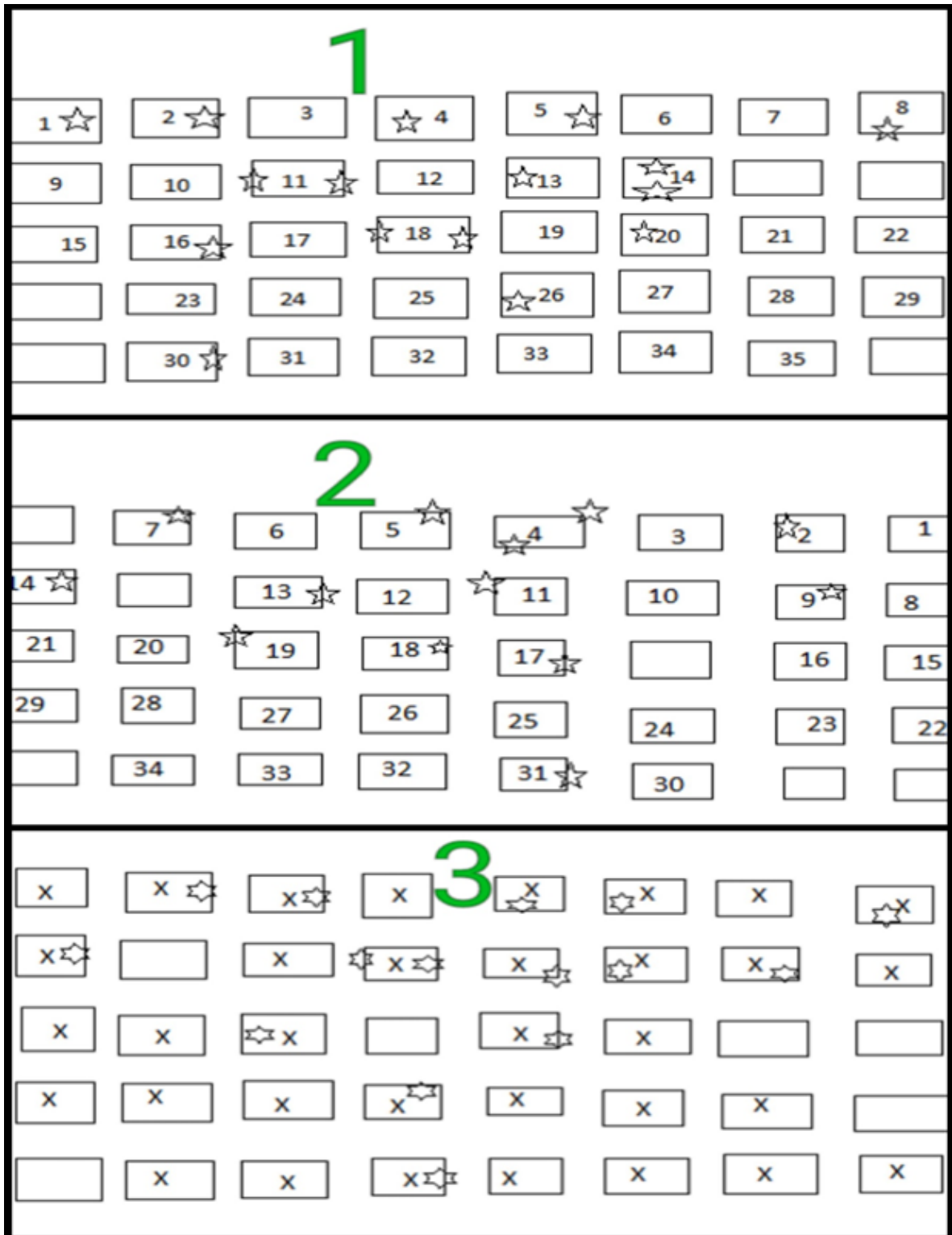


Figure 3.1 Shadowing observation days 1 till 3.

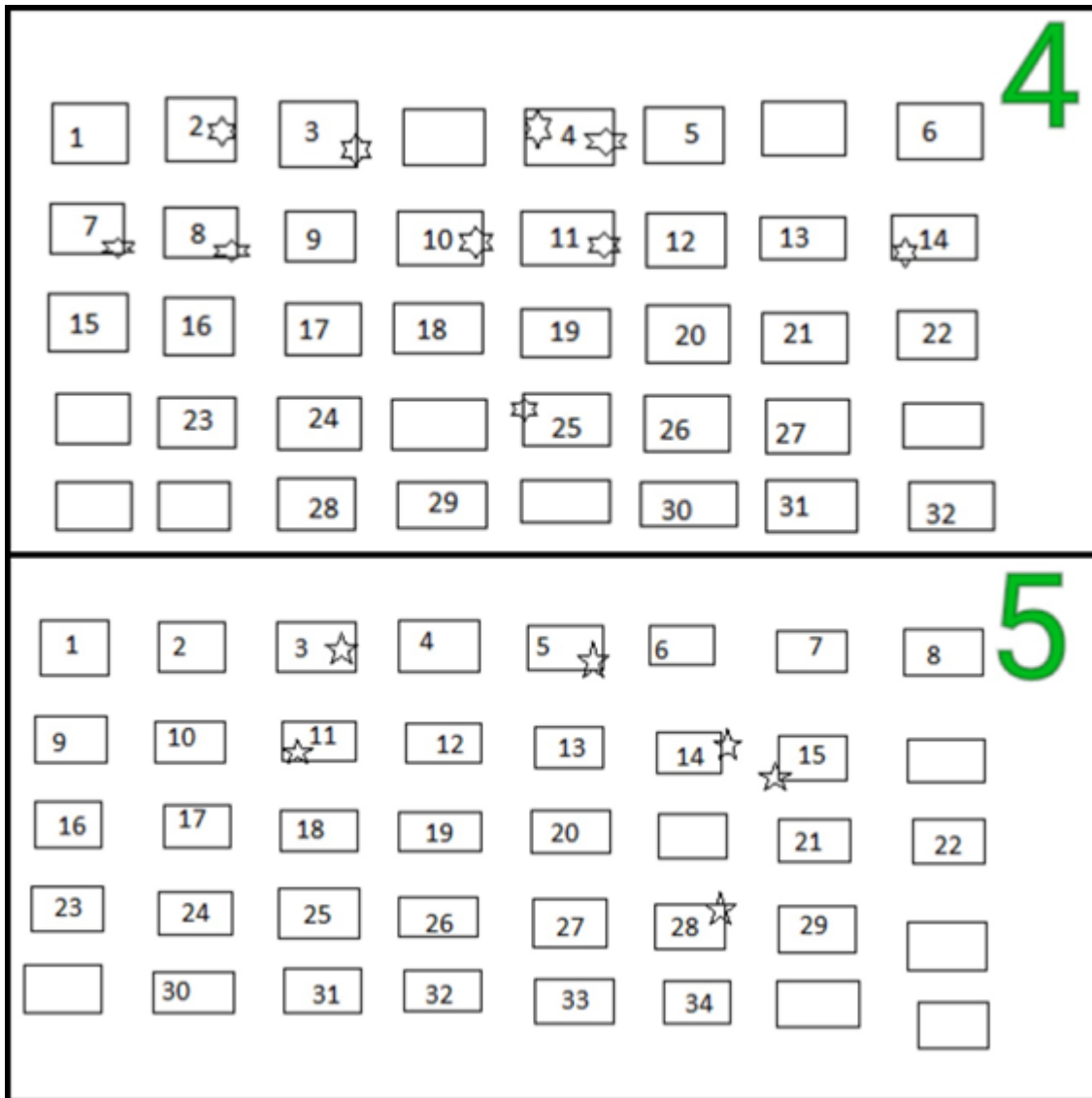


Figure 3.2 Shadowing Observation days 4 till 5

The fifth time that observation was done (see Figure 3.2). It was detected that students participated the least, the assignment was to answer some pages of the book. The times that pupils spoke were to ask for some words they did not understand.

3.7 Conclusion

To close this part of the study, all the sections related to the methodology was presented, by telling what kind of method this research is and what are the methodologies used in this paper. In addition, context, participants, and instruments were described genuinely. Additionally, the process of collecting and analyzing data was reported in detail.

Chapter IV

Results

4.0 Introduction

This part of the research shows the results of this qualitative study. The findings are presented in written and graphic ways in order to be simple and understandable. The results are a premise to solve the research questions established in Chapter one.

- What are students' perception of being in a large group when they learn English at a Public School?
- How is students' participation affected by the large size of the classroom?

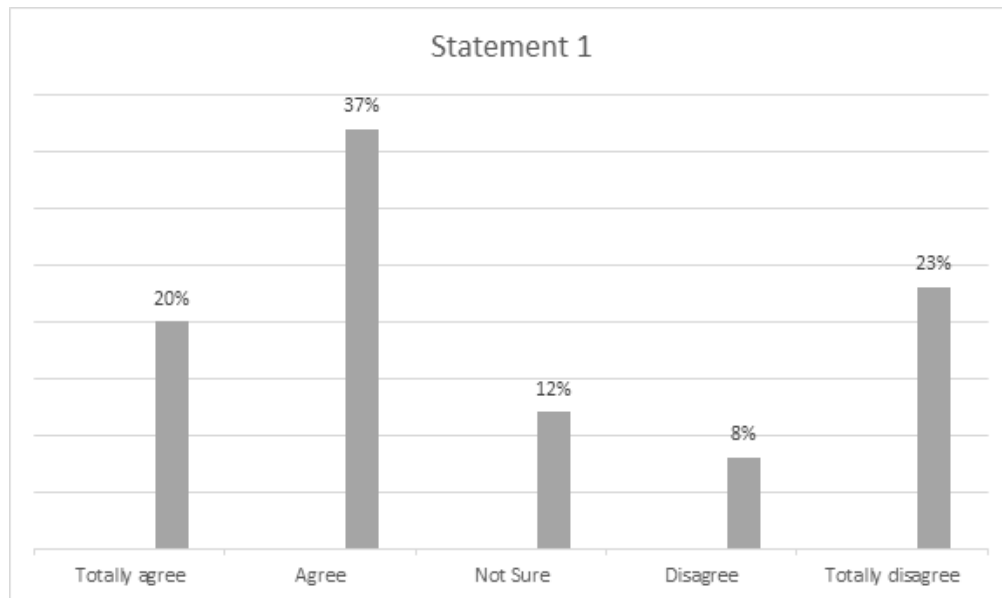
4.1 Obtained results

The following lines and illustrations will show what is found in the results as a product of the instruments applied and performed by the researcher. This information will give a deep view of what was established at the beginning of this project.

4.1.1 Survey

The purpose of the survey was to investigate what the learners' perceptions are about the teacher, the class and which zone of the class is more actively. The following graphics will show how participants have a perspective on different aspects that occur when they are learning English within an oversized class.

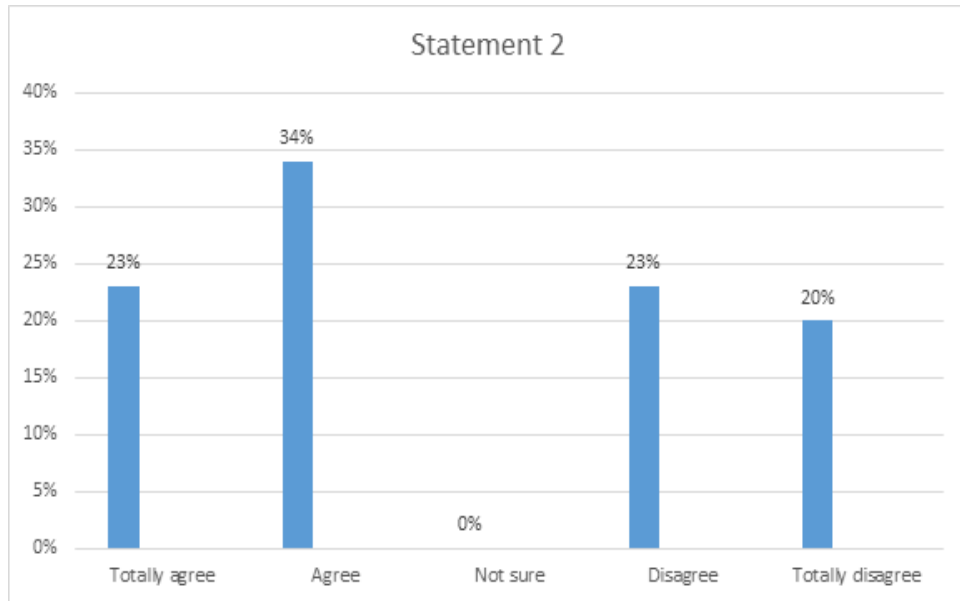
The next graphic shows what participants answered in the survey related to statement 1, which is about if the number of students affects their learning process based on their own perspective.



Graphic 4.1. Number of students.

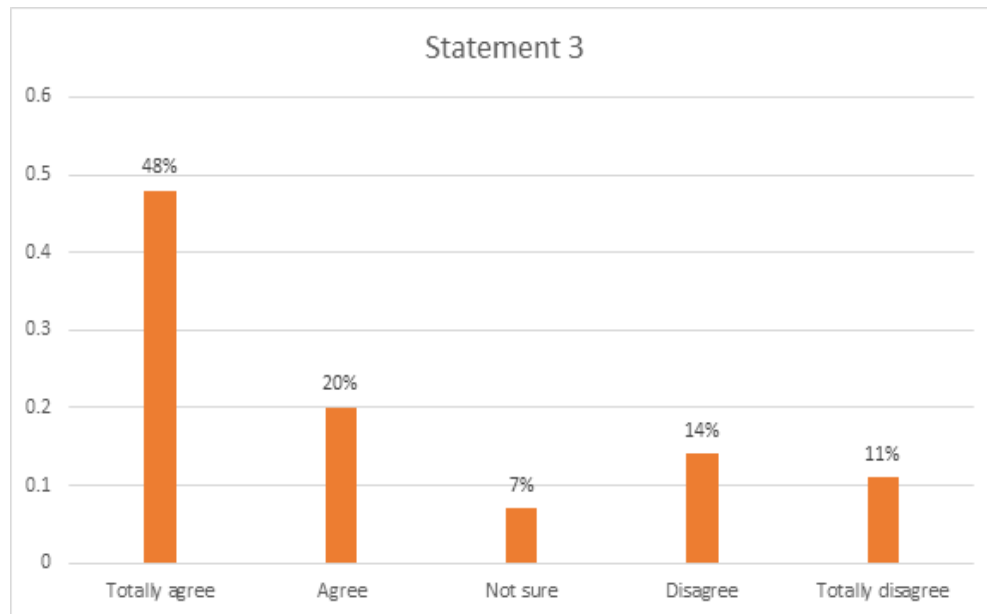
The most common answer to statement 1 was “Agree”. From the total of the participants, 35 students, 37% considered that the number of learners in the class affects their learning process. Pupils are conscious that their learning is affected by the number of students in their lesson.

Statement number 2 was related to how the number of students in the classroom affects the development of the class, the graphic below exhibits what participants ticked the most.



Graphic 4.2 Class affected by the number of learners.

It is visible that “Agree” was the most common reaction to the survey. 34% out of the total believed that the development of the class is affected by the overcrowded classroom. The utterance number 3 was about how the teacher has control over the whole group.



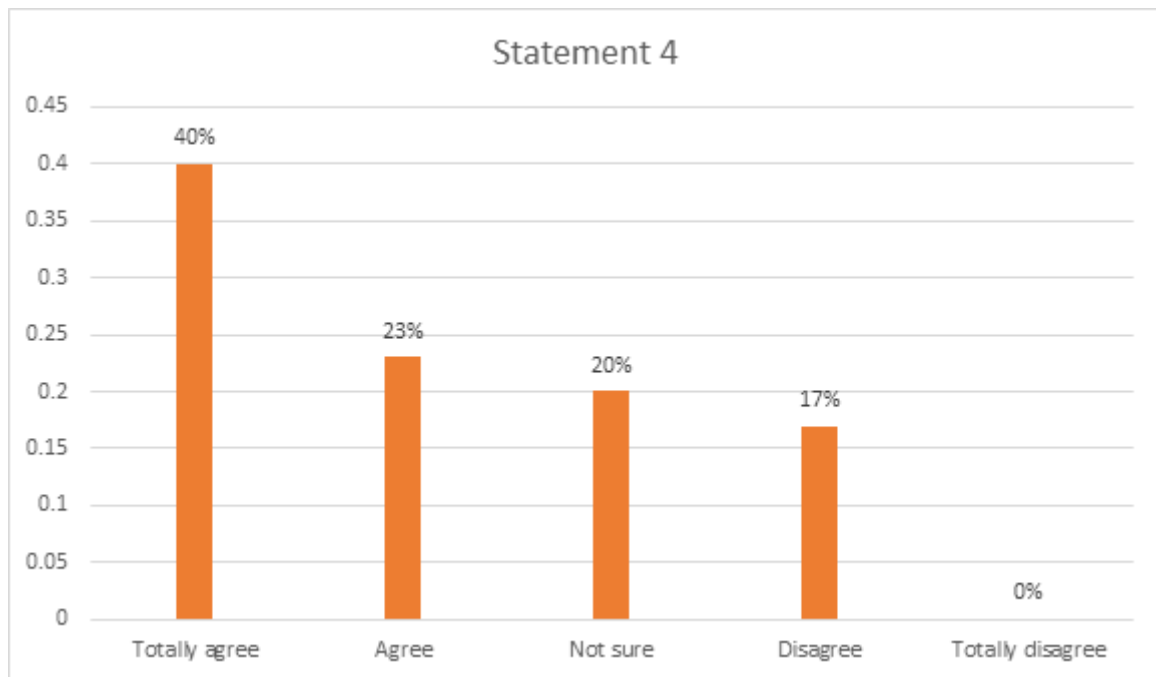
Graphic
Control

the group.

4.3
over

Most of the participants, 45% out of the total, marked the option “totally agree” and they assumed that the teacher has control over the class. Researcher sees this response as a contradiction, the reason is that he had expected not the same tendency. He anticipated that the teacher in charge was seen, by pupils, as she could not handle the class.

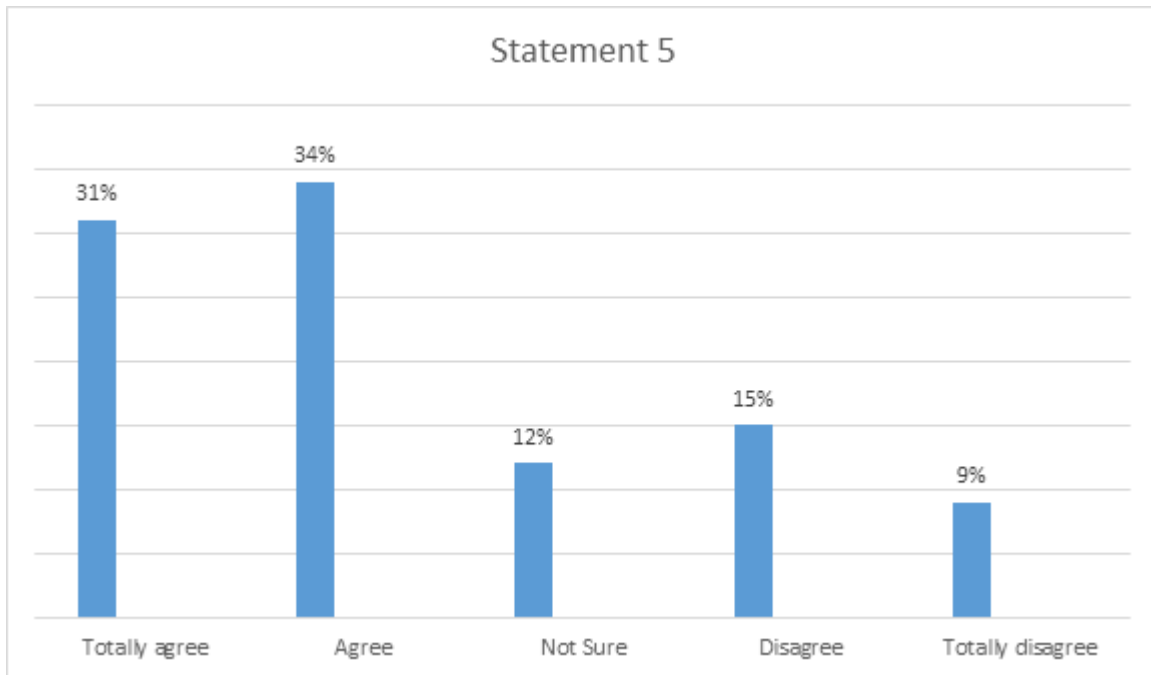
Statement number 4 was related to seeing if instructor motivates the whole class to work during the session.



Graphic 4.4 Students motivated by the teacher.

40% of students' opinion showed that they are motivated in the classroom by the teacher in charge, no matter the number of students in. On the other hand, 17% out of the total thought that they are not encouraged when the class occurs. This is probably because those participants are the ones who are not interested in the lesson or they do not like the instructor.

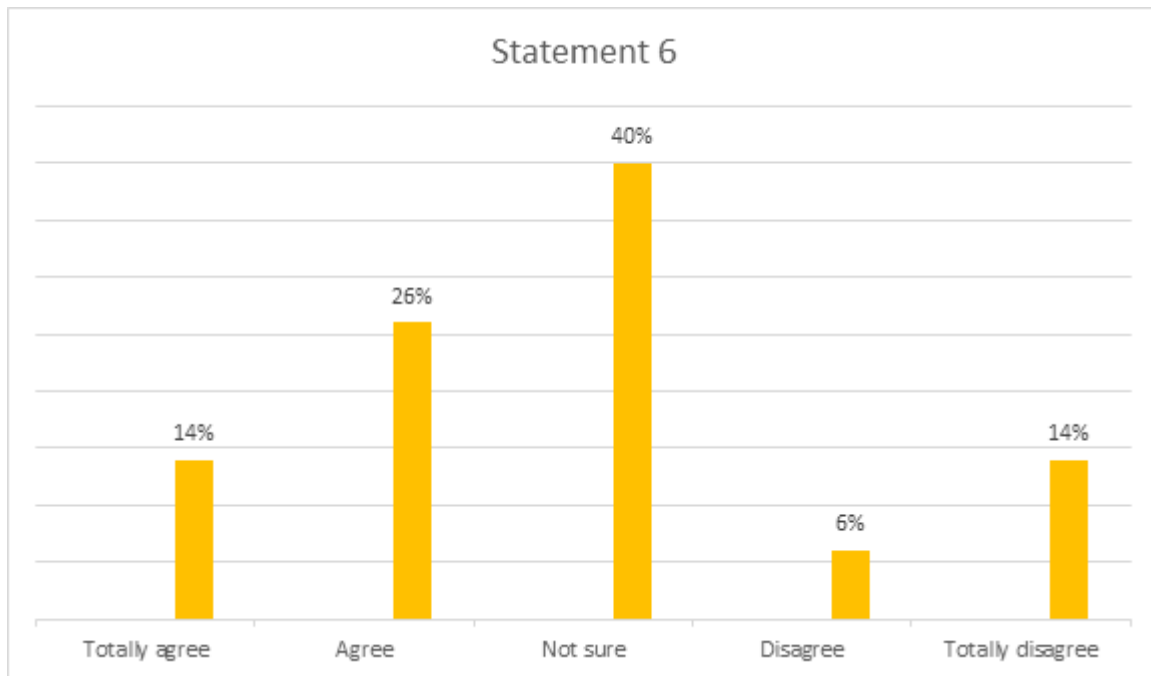
The teamwork is presented in statement 5, this is to see if it is more helpful when students work in small groups.



Graphic 4.5 Teamwork activity.

From all the participants, 34% of them agreed that teamwork is more helpful for the activities or tasks in classes. Perhaps students find this strategy more useful, teamwork because they can help each other with the assignments given.

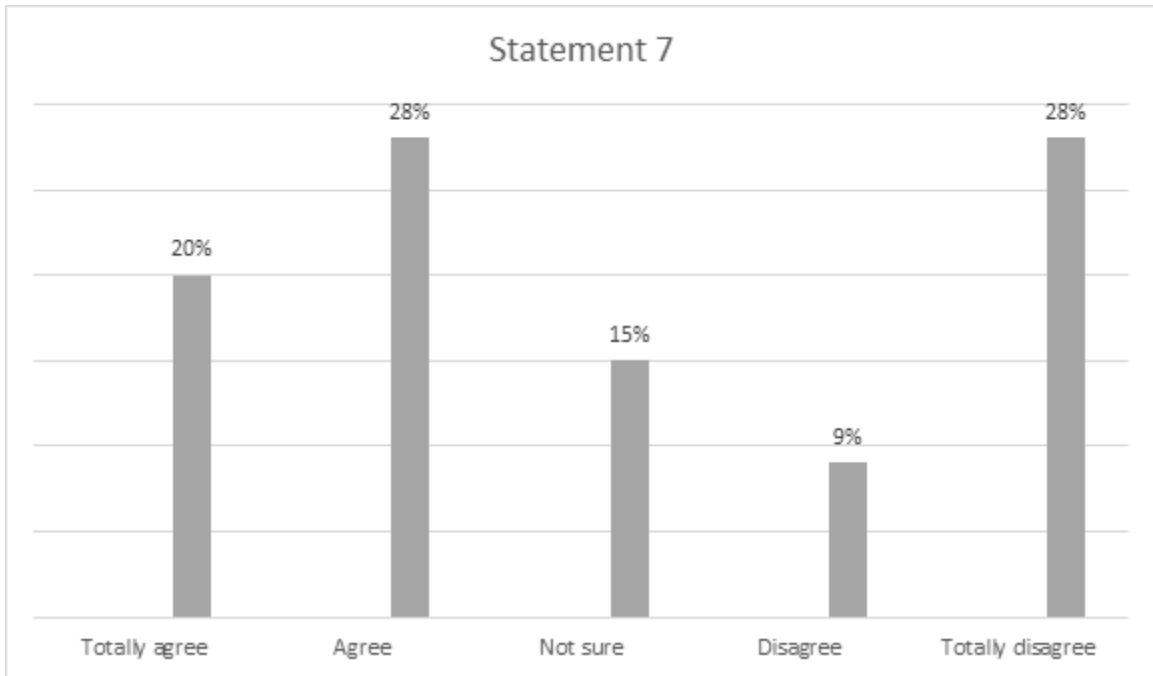
The expression number 6 was related to understanding if confidence is existing no matter the number of learners within the lesson.



Graphic 4.6 Students' confidence for learning.

Unexpectedly, “not sure” option was the most common response given, 40% thought that they do not feel confident to learn because there are many people in. there is a tie, 14% each, between those who answered “totally agree” and “totally disagree”. It is hard to interpret it, the possible reasons are that some of them like the lesson and some do not, they do not get on well with all the classmates and some of them do. Researcher mainly considered this hypothesis.

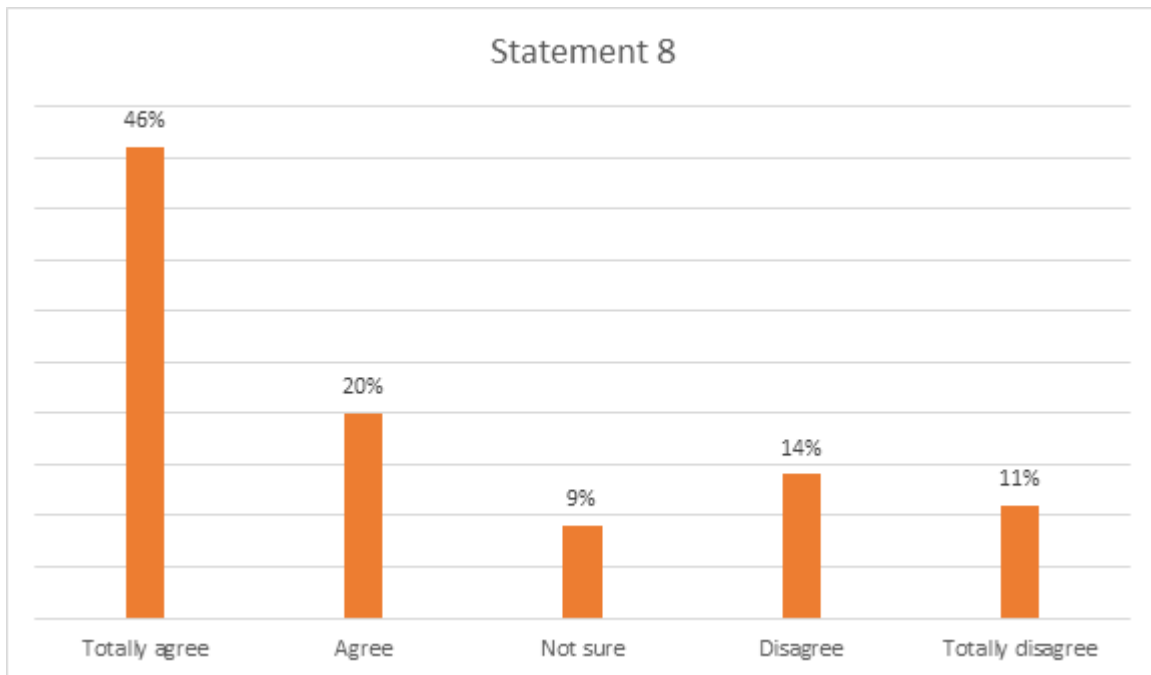
Statement 7 established that students who are in the back zone of the classroom received enough attention by the instructor.



Graphic 4.7 Attention received at the back zone.

There is a tie, 28% each, between those who considered that the back zone has enough attention and those who perceived that attention is not presented to the students who sit at the back. Probably, the ones who answered “agree” are sat at the front of the class and those who reacted to “totally disagree” are in the back zone, maybe this is the reason the tie.

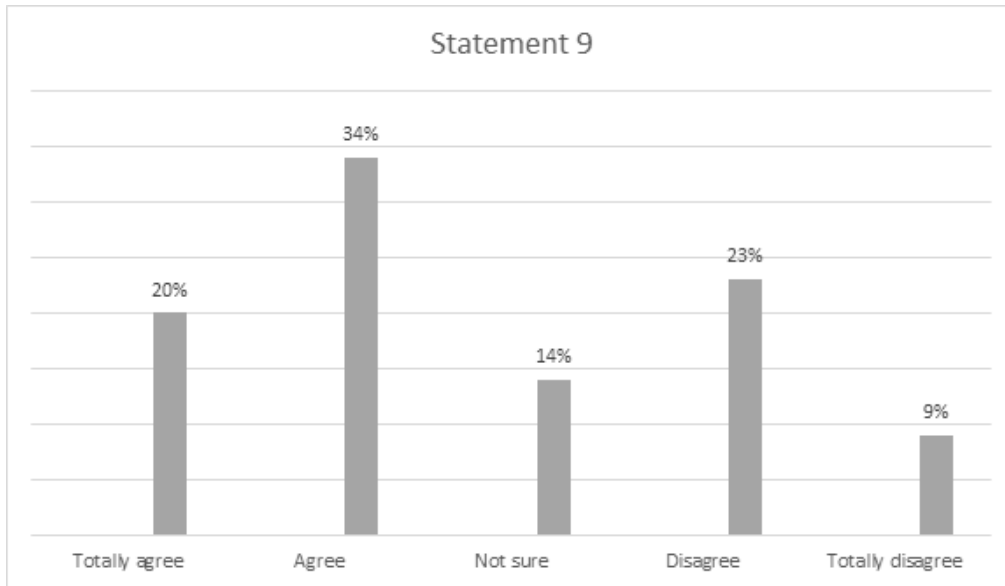
The utterance 8 established that students who sit in the front zone learn the most. The following graphic displays what participants responded.



Graphic 4.8 the front zone learns the most.

46% out of the total are conscious about students who are at the front zone learn the most, this response is evident on what Allwright and Bailey (1991) argued. They say that less distraction and noise in the front is perceived by students as an opportunity to own a better understanding of the lesson.

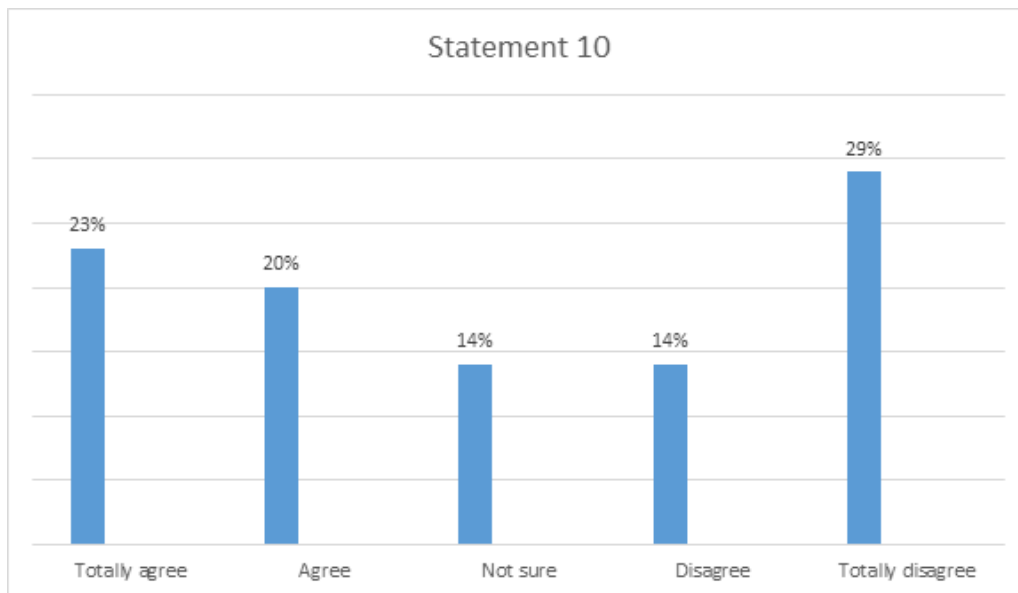
Utterance 9 was set to recognize if students prefer to work individually in their class.



Graphic 4.9 Individual work.

34% out of total participants answered that they “Agree” working individually is better for their language acquisition in their lessons.

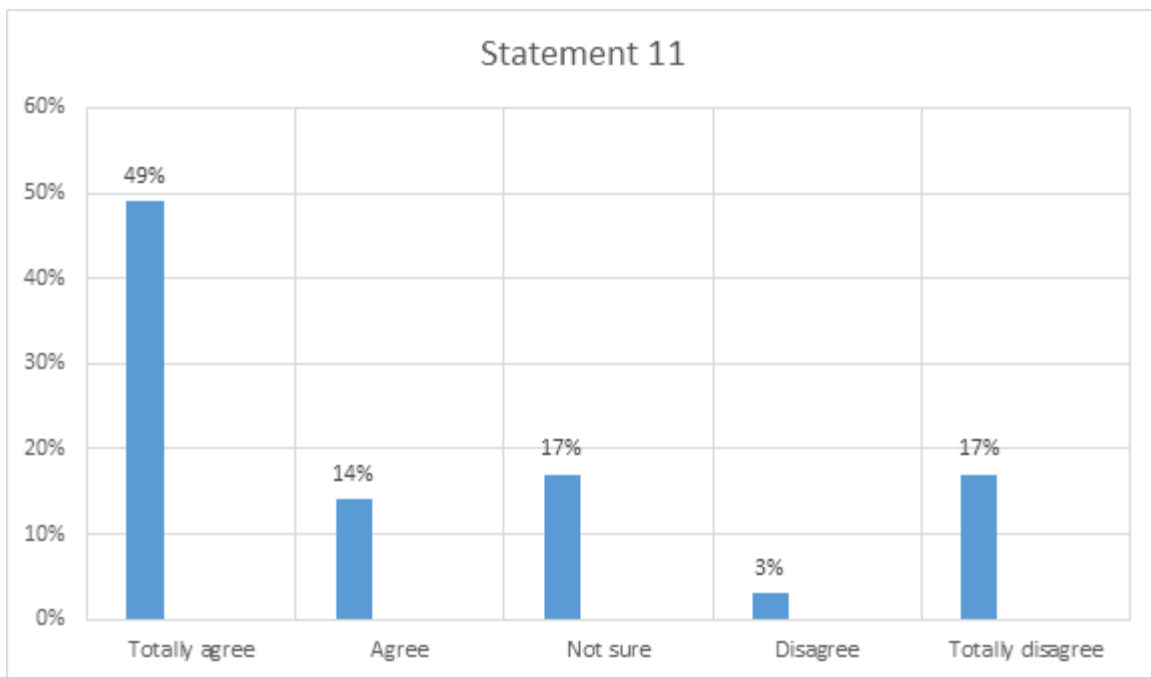
The teacher’s attention focuses on pupils who sit at the front; that is what was proposed in statement 10.



Graphic 4.10 Attention received at the front zone.

The option that most of the learners ticked was “Totally disagree”, 29% of the participants maintained that the instructor’s attention is not only focused on the students at the front of the classroom. On the opposite side, 23% perceived that the front zone receives more attention than the back one. This can be illustrated by what Oliveira and Farrell (1993) said, they argued that when a teacher is in front of an outsized lesson, he/she only keeps his/her attention to those pupils who are within his/her surveillance zone leaving the back zone outside of his/her supervision.

The last statement was written to verify if learners would like to be fewer people in the class. The following graphic demonstrates what it was found.



Graphic 4.11 Fewer people

The researcher got what he expected, about a half of the total of the learners, 49%, marked “Totally agree” response. Their perspective about the number of students that are in

the class is that they would prefer to be fewer pupils in order to get a better understanding of English lessons.

By this point, all data was analyzed. Some relevant features will be highlighted by the researcher.

- Students are conscious that the number of learners in their class affects their learning.
- Learners consider that students sit in the front zone learn the most.
- Pupils would like to be fewer in order to learn better.

4.1.2 Observations

The following lines are about what the researcher found in the observation done. It was visible that teacher lost control over the group for short periods, students were distracted doing something else. And it made the lesson not flowing perfectly. That class showed that tasks were not appropriated to the number of people in the class, for instance, all learners were not encouraged. Another aspect detected was that the instructor's attention was centered on the students at the front of the classroom; unfortunately, she left the back zone. As it was expected, the interaction between teacher and learners was not perceptible. Students tried to build a relationship with the teacher but it did not happen, but students showed respect towards their teacher, which is something to highlight. Instructor rarely praised her students, for instance, they did not want to participate at all; and their confidence was absent. If they do not get motivation from their teacher, they do not take an active role during classes. And participants do not get confident about the understanding they acquire in the lesson.

It was visible that the front zone was participating the most, eight students participated

once and two did it twice, they were located at the front, on the other hand, the back zone had two pupils who participated one time in the class. Unfortunately, the teacher was focused on the front zone as those students were more active than the ones at back. The instructor should pay the same attention to both zones when students realize they are not left by the teacher all of them become more active, and the learning process can be achieved successfully.

4.2 Answer to Research Questions

These following lines will try to give possible answers to the questions established at the beginning of this project.

4.2.1 What are the students' perceptions of being in a large group when they learn English at a public elementary school?

As the results have shown that the students' perceptions are that most of them would like to be fewer people in the classroom, in that way, students could get a better understanding that they have got so far. It is important to consider what learners think of their classes. It was observed that the teamwork technique worked appropriately. And students liked to work in small groups to help each other.

In this project it has been proved that students do not get enough attention, all of them are not involved in the activities or tasks. That is one of the reasons pupils considered that the learners sat in the front learned the most. It is crucial to take into account involving all students with suitable activities according to the number of people in the classroom.

4.2.2 How is the students' participation affected by the large size of the classroom?

Evidently, when students are in an oversized class all of them do not participate because they do not get attention properly. The activities are not well designed according to the number of students in the classroom, the teacher is mainly focused in the front zone, and unfortunately, students are not interested in learning English.

Well-designed activities for the number of learners would increase the pupils' participation, teamwork technique gave excellent results to make students more active, and if the teacher would take into account what students like or what things are interesting for them, probably, they, learners, would show more interest on acquiring the language.

4.3 Conclusion

To close this chapter, the results have evidenced that it is important to take into account the students' perceptions in order to achieve the goals set for the course of English. In this way, students would be able to get a better understanding, no matter the size of the class, and they would be more active during the classes.

When teachers understand that effective teaching could be achieved no matter how many students in their class are, their students would be more active and willing to participate in the classroom, providing well-designed activities, interesting topics, giving appropriate attention to all learners. Nevertheless, teachers are not the only ones who have troubles while teaching, students do when they learn. It is relevant to be part of the both sides, not only the teacher's.

Chapter V

Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

These lines will deal with the conclusion section. The subsections that are going to be described in this part are the findings, limitation of the research, further research, and the final conclusion of this chapter.

5.1 Findings

The perception that learners have when they are learning English is that they unconsciously know that the group where they are in is a large class because it is constituted by a huge number of students. They clearly perceive they face a learning problem with that particular factor. It is important to highlight that the back-zone students are left by their teacher, she was mainly focused on the front-zone learners. Another aspect that should be marked is that all activities should be designed according to the number of pupils in the classroom, in that way the student will get more involved and probably, their participation will increase.

5.2 Limitation of the research

The difficulties that researcher had to carry out with this Project were mainly the short time to finish it, five months were spent to complete this study, And another thing against the researcher was inexperience because this was the very first serious project held by him, but this involvement will help him in a near future for his professional training.

Another aspect that limited this project was the organization to apply the instruments and the way to analyze data, but researcher looked for help in his thesis director and readers,

all of them solved the obstacles presented and the investigator could keep continuing on the project.

5.3 Further Research

For people who want to do a similar project, it is recommended to make a comparison between teachers who are in charge of small and large groups., but most important to compare students who are learning English in small groups and learners who are taught in an oversized class, in order to examine the learning effectiveness.

It is important that people consider seeking better instruments than the ones applied in this study. Perhaps, future researchers could use the ones designed as a model in order to perfect them.

5.4 Conclusion

By this time this project has been finished, to close this research showed what it was expected at the beginning, the students exhibited what they think about the way they learn English in an overcrowded class, and the reason their participation is affected by the factor of belonging to a large group.

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Appendix A

Sexo: _____

Edad: _____

Cuestionario

Propósito: El objetivo de este cuestionario es investigar la percepción que tienen los alumnos sobre sus clases, así de como el profesor(a) lleva acabo su clase, e identificar qué zona del salón es la más activa durante la clase.

	Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro	Desacuerdo	Totalmente desacuerdo
El número de alumnos afecta mi aprendizaje.					
El número de alumnos afecta el desarrollo de la clase.					
El profesor(a) tiene control sobre el grupo durante la clase.					
El profesor(a) motiva a TODOS los alumnos a trabajar en clase.					
Las actividades en clase me ayudan más cuando se realizan en equipo.					
La clase me da confianza para aprender porque somos muchos.					
Los alumnos que se sientan en la parte de atrás del salón no tienen suficiente atención por parte del profesor(a).					
Los alumnos que se sientan adelante aprenden más.					
Trabajar individualmente en mi grupo es mejor para aprender.					

El profesor(a) muestra mayor atención a los alumnos que se sientan en la parte de adelante del salón.					
Preferiría que fuéramos menos alumnos para aprender mejor					

Genre: _____

Age: _____

Questionnaire

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate what the students' perceptions are about their classes as well as how teacher develops the lesson, and identify the most active zone in the classroom.

	Totally agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Totally disagree
The number of students in class affects my learning process.					
The number of learners affects the development of the lesson.					
The teacher has control over the group.					
The instructor motivates ALL pupils to work in class.					
The activities are better when they are made in small groups.					
Class provides confidence to learn because there are many people.					
Students who sit at the back of the classroom do not have enough attention by the teacher.					
Students who are at the front of the class learn the most.					
Individual work in class is better.					
Pupils sat at the front receive more attention by the teacher.					

I would like to be fewer students in class to get a better understanding.

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Appendix B

School: _____

Level: _____ Number of students: _____

Purpose: The objective of this observation is to identify the arrangement of the classroom in a large class.

Classroom management

Tick each statement and use the scale given

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
Teacher adapts himself/herself to the students' interests and needs.				
Lesson flows properly.				
Different learners are involved into activities during the class.				
All students interact each other while class occurs.				
Proper activities for the number of students within the class.				
Proper management and control over the group.				
Monitoring on the students' work.				
Proper attention for all learners.				
All pupils are interested on learning English.				
Instructor gives feedback to students.				

School: _____

Level: _____

Number of students: _____

Purpose: The purpose of this instrument is to observe how the interaction is between the teacher and students.

Interaction

Mark each utterance according to your opinion using the scale assigned.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
Learners show a positive attitude to learn during the class.				
Pupils show respect towards their teacher when lesson occurs.				
Students are capable to build a positive relation with their teacher				
Learners are motivated to learn in class.				
Student show confidence to acquire the language.				
Teacher provides individual communication to students.				
Teacher praises his/her students when they participate in class.				
Learners are confident on their knowledge and skills.				

Appendix C

School: _____

Level: _____ Number of students: _____

Purpose: The purpose of this observation sheet is to examine how students are sat and if it has effects on their learning process of English language, as well as the student-teacher interaction

Students' action zone

Draw the classroom arrangement, then, assign a number to an every student in the class, draw a sign next to the number assigned every time the student participates during the class.



Answer the questions below after the class finishes.

Which zone of the classroom showed more participation?

Did classroom arrangement affect the development of the lesson?