

**CLASS SIZE AND THE LEARNING-TEACHING PROCESS IN UPPER CLASSES**

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**Abstract:** The primary goal of this study is to investigate the impact of big classrooms on student success throughout the world. The study seeks to answer three questions: What influence do big classrooms have on EFL students' achievement? What effect does class size have on the tactics utilized by instructors? How do pupils who study in large courses vary from those who study in small classes?

**Key words:** big class sizes, academic accomplishment, and classroom management

**INTRODUCTION**

Many academics believe that one of the factors affecting students' success is class size. Different language abilities, such as speaking and listening, are overlooked in big courses. In huge courses, student engagement is virtually completely ignored. This is due to a variety of factors, including the following: pupils in huge courses are anonymous and passive, which might lead to discipline issues. This is also referred to as "the logistic dilemma" by Hassan (2012), which includes taking attendance, giving and collecting tests, handouts, and assignments. Furthermore, students prefer to respond positively based on their degree of participation, which may be achieved by the number of articles they produce as well as the quantity of feedback and tests they receive, both of which are characteristics of small courses. With fifteen years of experience as an English teacher, the researcher discovered that teachers prefer small courses, which are seen to be more productive and better than bigger ones. Many variables present a challenge and put pressure on higher education institutions to offer a high-quality education. Large class size is one of the most significant issues that must be handled carefully and expertly. There are two approaches to dealing with huge groups. The first is to minimize class size, and the second is to be optimistic about improving one's own teaching skills by applying approaches that work well in big groups. According to Bader (2009), big courses are difficult, and many studies on approaches are aimed toward small ones. This suggests the significance of researching huge groups, their impacts, and what they require and lack. Many scholars, like Ning and Qiang (2011), Allam (2006), Brouwers and Tomis (2000) and Sakui (2007), believe that large classes are considered a big challenge to teachers in all levels. It is difficult for teachers in large classes to interact with students. Bamba (2012, p.8) compares between large and small classes building on her personal experience as a teacher and as a student. She says that there are

many disadvantages and difficulties that face students and teachers at the same time. She talks about exam taking and the limited number of exams taken in large classes compared with what she calls "scheduled tests" in smaller classes. She complains about the time teachers take to correct exams in large classes. She mentions the discipline problem and the inability to control large numbers or the difficulty of giving immediate feedback in large classes where teachers give "general whole class feedback". In addition, she talks about the difficulty to ask questions in large classes compared with small ones, where you can ask whenever you want and the individualized attention given to students in small classes which large classes lack.

Large classes are believed, by teachers in general and English teachers in particular, to be an obstacle that hinders the teaching learning process, which is in line with Horning (2007), Hornsby, Osman and Matos-Ala (2013) and Monks and Schmidt (2011). The teacher in the English language class is like the orchestra leader and as the number of musicians increases the burden on the orchestra leader increases in turn. Some scholars like Monks and Schmidt (2011, p.1) advocate this idea and claim that class size negatively affects students' outcomes and their assessment of the course and the instructors. They also noted that "large class sizes and high student numbers seem to encourage teachers to modify courses in ways that are harmful to students." is also endorsed by The US News and World College Report Ranking, which uses a formula that positively ranks small classes and negatively ranks large classes (Monks J. & Schmidt, 2011). The view of many teachers that classroom management can also be adversely affected by high enrollment is also consistent with some academics who view large classes as a limitation. Lewis (2002) argues that there are three perspectives by which the classroom can be managed: teacher role, student motivation, and external constraints. In these perspectives she, indirectly, points to large class size as a constraint.

Scholars such as Horning (2007) believes that class size affect the learning-teaching process. She believes that smaller classes especially in the courses of writing and reading are better than larger ones. She limited her study to the writing and reading skills for one reason that she believes that "writing and the critical reading include in their essential components underlies virtually all courses in college; success in college is tied to success in writing taught well in small classes" (Horning, 2007, P.13). She also believes that students respond positively according to the level of enrolment which can be achieved by the number of articles they write and how much feedback they get from their teachers. These are features of small writing classes.

Achilles (1999) studied large class in the 11th grade, and said that it will be fair to generalize the conclusions to the college context. He was the principal investigator on a major study of class size and student success in public schools in Tennessee (Project Star). His finding was that the smaller classes are, the better students achieve in the basic skill such as writing and reading. He also believes that small classes have a positive

effect on teachers. Arias and Walker (2004) and Fischer and Grant (1983) believe that public schools and colleges need smaller classes in all courses and they have a positive effect on improving students' performance as well as achievement. They also added that in a college context, classes are small. more likely to succeed. Horning (2007. p.17) believes that large classes have a negative impact on teachers in the context of higher education. She said that in large classes, teachers cannot give students individualized attention or give detailed answers. Hornsby, Osman, and Matos-Ala (2013) believe that large class sizes in higher education systems pose a threat to educational quality and educational environments. Hornsby et al. (2013) argue that large classes are a challenge not only for students but also for university teachers. This environment can be difficult for later students as we want to provide them with a meaningful learning experience. The former is also affected because their goal is not only to acquire knowledge, but also to develop critical thinking skills. Class size is very important in the teaching and learning process, especially in higher education. This is because "in higher education, educational goals go beyond simple knowledge acquisition to promote student engagement and higher cognitive functioning (a hallmark of deep learning). This is where class size can play a role and affect the quality of student learning." (Hornsby et al., 2013, p.8)

### METHOD

Taking into account class size, whether large or small, facilitates the learning process and may influence or even determine the teacher's choice of appropriate strategy. Locastro (2001) believes that large classes are not an educational disaster, but an environment that requires more demands and adapted methods of coping. Ur (1996), Hess (2001), Xu (2001) and others talk about the advantages of large classes. This perspective should inspire both educators and researchers to think about appropriate educational strategies to mitigate disadvantages, exploit advantages, and help students benefit from this environment. there is. Therefore, understanding the benefits and challenges of large classes helps teachers apply appropriate teaching methods to teach in such classes. This can have a positive effect on both, as it reduces the burden on both students and teachers. It is worth noting that implementing modern teaching methods such as Communicative Language Teaching CLT in a large class is not an easy task. It is an idea that many scholars and researchers agree with like Bamba (2012), Littlewood (2007), Widin (2010), and Mackay (2002). They all agree that limited resources and equipment as well as class size, make it very difficult for teachers to implement and prepare CLT activities (Graue, Oen, Hatch, Rao, & Fadali (2005); Achilles (1999); Biddle & Berliner (2002); and Molnar, Smith, Zajorik, Palmer, Halbach, & Ehrle (1999)). Additionally, Pedder (2006), cited in Kornfeld (2010), claims that it is very important to consider and deeply understand the strategies and methods teachers can apply to enhance the quality of education in different stages and in different class size.

It is asserted by Izzo (1981) that class size not only affects but also "determines" the amount of individual attention the teacher can give to each student. Yu Jianqiong (2004) studied problems and strategies of teaching English in large college classes and comes out with some problems that face the teaching of large classes which can be summarized as follows. Lack of individual attention from teachers and impairment of participation in oral English. The latter is very important because in the Palestinian context English classrooms are the only place where students can practice and speak English. This is because English is a foreign language in Palestine. And it is used only in an educational context.

Class size and student performance are controversial issues. The researchers noted that the public and teachers believed that students behaved better and were more engaged in small classes. It is also hypothesized that it may have an effect. After 15 years of teaching experience, this researcher noted that teachers viewed teaching in large classes negatively and its impact on student performance. Parents generally prefer to put their children in small classes. They also attribute the children's poor performance to the large number of students in their classes. In other words, they blame the environment. However, many researchers such as Stern (1967). Stern, Burstle, Clare, and Hairy (1975); and his Halpen (1976), cited in Izzo (1981), argue that class size does not significantly affect language performance. Although the literature on the long-term effects of class size is sparse (Fredriksson et al. (2012), Kruger and White More (2001), Hall et al. (2012) and Bingley et al. (2010)), Fredriksson et al. (2010) Al. (2012) completed a study on the long-term effects of class size by examining data from the Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) experiment and the Utvardering Genom Uppfoljning (UGU) project. You will get better grades in class and more likely to go to college. In addition, Ning and Qian (2011), Harmer (2000), and Allam (2006) point out that large classrooms pose a major challenge for teachers, with negative consequences for teachers and students. According to Bamba (2012), overcrowded classrooms adversely affect the quality of teaching and learning, resulting in low scores and adversely affecting student performance. Many scholars like Brouwers and Tomic (1999) and Sakui (2007) believe that classroom size is a main factor that affects classroom management badly and increases the burden on teachers in handling the learning-teaching process. Large classes also give trouble makers the chance to make troubles. Large classes create disciplinary problems for teachers and students, problems in individual attention, classroom management and strategy of learning (Hayes, 1997 and Ning and Qiang, 2011). Large classes are bad for class management in many ways. First of all, teachers face problems in dealing with discipline issues. This is especially true for freshmen who have recently moved to college, have an academic outlook, and are beginning to adapt to their new surroundings. Second, the difficulty of dealing with a large number of students with different attitudes and interests. Add to this the difficulty

of organizing effective activities. In addition, large classes make it difficult for teachers to give students equal opportunity to participate. More importantly, in large classes, teachers struggle to provide immediate feedback and assessment to students. As argued by Bamba (2012, p.11), large classes can have a negative impact on class management. She says it is very difficult to implement modern teaching methods such as the communicative approach. She adds that it is almost impossible for a teacher to go through a class to monitor "space matter" activity. It is difficult. This idea is supported by Littlewood (2007), who finds that teachers in large classrooms have difficulty performing communicative language teaching (CLT) tasks that "do not exist in small classrooms where technological innovations were first developed." claim.

Hayes (1997) believes that large classes cannot be defined quantitatively. He adds that the ideal size of a language class should be no more than 30, giving students enough time to participate in class activities. Determining the size of your class, whether large or not, should take into account many factors, including your situation and goals. Revising most of the relevant literature, it is clear that there is no clear cut of whether classes are large or not. "There can be no quantitative definition of what constitutes a 'great class' because perceptions of the 'great class' vary with context" (Hayes, 1997, p. 4). Moreover, as reported by Heever (2000, p. 38), large class decisions vary by country. For example, Japanese class sizes are considered very large if they consist of 40-50 students, whereas South African class sizes range from 45-109 students (Coughlan, 1993, pp. 29 -31). Tina, Bae, and Thu (2012) consider large classes in a university context to be classes with more than 100 students. Nevera and Greisamer (2011) believe that setting is essential in determining whether a class is small or large that they believe that in private schools between 10-15 class students may be considered large while in public ones a class over 40 is considered to be large. In the Palestinian context if we consider private schools, then the class which has more than twenty is a large class. By contrast, in public schools it is normal to see classes above thirty-five. In trying to define "large classes" it is important to consider setting. Concerning English language class, it is hypothesised that over twenty students may be considered large. This is due to the fact that English language classes need interaction and practice which could be hindered by a large number of students. Murphy (2000) defines large classes as those which contain 22-25 students or more. In light of the previous discussion, large classes cannot be defined numerically rather "it is probably thought of as a size that requires a conscious and suitable attention to approach." Dudley and St John (1998, p. 197) and Ming and Qiang (2011) state that "large class is one with more students than the teacher prefers to manage and available resources can support, from this point of view, large classes usually are considered to pose difficult problems for teachers." The researcher believes that the size of an ideal English language class is a controversial issue. All in

all, in this paper, "large classes" is referred to classes which range from 30 students or above.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student/teacher Achievement Ratio known as Tennessee STAR program which was conducted during 1986 to 1989 is considered the most eminent experiment in class size. Classes were classified into three categories and students were chosen randomly. The main criterion for classification was the size of the class. The classification was as follows 15- 17 students without teacher`s aid, 15- 17 students with teacher`s aid, 22-25 students without teacher`s aid or 22-25 students with teacher aid. Before returning them to regular classes, these students stayed in the reduced ones for the first three years of their scholastic era. Scholars have studied this experiment to examine its effects on students. Nye et al. (2000 and 2001), Word et al. (1990), and Finn et al. (1990) have found out that small classes students get better results in "standardized tests and reading in kindergarten through the third grade". Other studies like Mosteller (1995), Finn (1998), Nye and Hedge (2000) have found out that the effects of this reduction continues "at least in the seventh or eighth grade." These results are in line with the hypotheses that class size reduction has a positive effect on the students' achievement in the short and at least middle term. Achilles et al. (1995) con Nevera and Greisamer (2011) found that attitudes are essential in determining whether a class is small or large, with students in classes 10–15 considered large in private schools and students in over 40 in public schools. I believe one class of classes is considered tall. When looking at private schools in the context of Palestine, classes of 20 or more students are large classes. In contrast, grades above 35 are common in public schools. When trying to define a "big class" it's important to consider attitude. It has been hypothesized that 20 or more students can be considered large when it comes to teaching English. This is because teaching English requires interaction and practice. This can be hindered by a large number of students. Murphy (2000) defines a large class as one with more than 22-25 students. In the light of the discussion so far, the large class cannot be defined numerically, but "is more likely to be regarded as one requiring conscious and appropriate attention". Dudley and St. John (1998, p. 197) and Ming and Qiang (2011) state: Researchers believe that the ideal English class size is controversial. The student/teacher achievement rate known as the Tennessee STAR program, which ran from 1986 to 1989, is considered the best class-wide experiment. Classes were divided into three categories and students were randomly selected. The main criterion for classification was class size. The divisions were: 15-17 students without teacher help, 15-17 students with teacher help, 22-25 students without teacher help, or with teacher help 22-25 students. These students remained in reduced classes for her first three years of schooling before returning to regular classes. Scientists studied this experiment to study its effects on college students. Nye et al. (2000 and 2001), Ward et al. (1990) and Finn et al. (1990) found that elementary-grade students

perform better on "standardized tests and reading from kindergarten to her third grade. "Another field experiment because of the criticism to STAR program. In this study, students were divided into classes of 15 or 25 students from grades 1 to 3. This study shows that students in small classes perform better and outperform their counterparts in large classes. California CSR (Class Size Reduction) is considered her third largest reduction in class size. It originated in California in the late 1990s. In fact, this reduction was not made for research purposes or experiments, but researchers have made it the subject of much discussion in the literature. We found it to have the worst score, the lowest of the 39 states. This result raised concerns and the state decided to find out the reason and fix the problem. The idea of reducing class sizes is coming not only from teachers' unions, but also from parents. The class was gradually reduced to her 20 or fewer students over the course of four years. Bohrnstedt and Stecher (2002) conducted a study on CSR and found a positive effect on student performance.

A report by the SCR Research Consortium (2002) evaluated CSR experiments and some results can be summarized as follows: First of all, there is a positive correlation between reduced teaching and student performance. Second, it led to more personal attention. Additionally, teachers reported fewer behavioral problems in the classroom management area. The report found that parents of underperforming students were more satisfied with the type of education their children received compared to their non-performing peers. Regarding teacher quality, the report states that the reduction in class sizes that led to an increase in the number of classes led to the described "unfair distribution of qualified teachers" (SCR Research Consortium, 2002, p. .6) lead. A study entitled "The impact of Class Size and Number of Students on Outcomes in Higher Education" is conducted by Monks and Schmidt (2011). In their study, they examined the effect of large classes on the students` educational outcomes on higher education. They concluded some essential points concerning class size. First, class size negatively affects both students and instructors in many aspects including the outcomes of amount learned for students and instructors and course rating from the instructor side. Secondly, they found that reducing class size would play a crucial role on students` outcomes. Stecher, Barron, Chun and Ross (2000) conducted a study on reducing class size. In their study, they made a qualitative study to find out the effect of class size reduction on students` achievement. They found out that students on reduced classes performed better than unreduced. They also reported that teachers in reduced classes benefit more, that they had more time to devote to their students.

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Soledad and Grohs (2016) conducted a pilot study in which researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with various university professors. Interviewers in this study were self-selected by accepting interview invitations sent to them, but the invitations were of faculty meeting certain criteria, such as teaching large classes of 50 or more students. Sent to a specially selected group. Interviews emphasized teacher-student interactions in large classes. Here are the results of this survey: Most of the dialogue flowed from teacher to student and very little from student to teacher. We also found the



physical layout of the classroom and the presence of multimedia resources to be important. Additionally, large classes make some students anonymous to teachers, making it difficult for teachers to assess students. Also, active students in large classes are mostly the same and usually choose to sit in the front row. Class sizes make it difficult for instructors to monitor student performance. Finally, immediate feedback is almost impossible in large classes, so it is sent electronically, which faculty say is not effective. To examine what strategies college faculty use in teaching large classes, Shoop and Munz (2014) studied her large class of over 100 students at Virginia Tech. sent an online survey to teachers who teach The number of teachers who participated in the survey was he from various ranks and various class sizes, 98. The ranking was 17 lecturers, 11 assistant professors, 26 associate professors, and 23 full professors. Class sizes are 71 classes with 100-299 students, 18 classes with 300-599 students, and 2 classes with over 600 students. Teachers have 5 to 10 years of experience in the field of study. The research found that multimedia devices are the most common technique used by teachers in large classes. On the other hand, flipped classrooms, student presentations, social media interactions, peer-her learning, and blogs were the least utilized techniques and tools used in large classes. In talking about the challenges university instructors face in their large classes, they talked about classroom management. This is in line with the idea that teachers need to get training in how to manage large classes and how to apply new methods and techniques, they also need training programs about how to engage students of large classes in the learning-teaching process.

Chang and Brickman (2015) conducted a study titled "Collaborative Learning in the Great Lecture: Who Benefits?" The study found that group work did not benefit disadvantaged students, so they considered engaging students in collaborative learning. Her 245 non-science undergraduates enrolled in an introductory science course participated in the course's individual and group work. Her two scores of individual students and group students were used to measure student performance and the scores were collected and analyzed. The results of this study indicate that there is evidence that collaborative group work generally has a positive impact on student performance. Taher (2005) conducted a study examining the educational, psychological, and social effects of large class on EFL students at An-Najah University. Najah National University). She conducted questionnaires and interviews with 230 non-English speaking EFL students. The study found that despite the negative impact, large classes had some aspects of brilliance on the psychological and social fronts: Bahnashal (2013), King of Saudi Arabia she A qualitative study was conducted at Abdul Aziz University in She conducted semi-structured interviews with her six Saudi English teachers in two public schools. All of them taught large classes, and she had at least 15 years of experience teaching English in public schools, and we investigated attitudes and perceptions of

teaching in large classes. Their results indicate that all participants found teaching large classes difficult. Additionally, these teachers commented that their students' performance was unsatisfactory despite their efforts to raise their students' standards.

Basir (2003) conducted a qualitative study to investigate these barriers to successful EFL learning. His goal of investigating student, teacher and parent perceptions of these barriers uses targeted small group discussions as a data collection tool. A group discussion consists of 10 students, 4 teachers and 3 parents. The discussion was in the local language, and the researcher recorded, transcribed and translated it into English. The findings of this study reveal that there are many factors that hinder or form a barrier to successful EFL learning. The most important barrier, the researcher believes, is "large class size". The researcher commented in his conclusion that "the barriers to successful English as a foreign language learning found in this study, appear both interrelated and stemming from one major problem – that is, large class size."

In a study entitled "Seeking effective approaches to teaching large EFL classes in the Ivory Coast" done by Bamba (2012), the researcher first analyzed the effects of large classes on teachers and students. She then interviewed five Ivorian English teachers who teach large classes. The aim of this interview is to see the beliefs they hold in teaching large classes and the strategies they have used to enhance effective teaching and learning. The results of this interview show that large classes form an obstacle in the way of effective teaching and learning. They also show that teachers could play a crucial role in involving students in large classes by the technique they use and that "motivates them to learn more autonomously inside and outside the classroom." In investigating factors that affect students' low English achievement and proficiency in Laos, Souriyavongsa et al. (2013) conducted a study entitled "Factors Causes Students Low English Language: A case study in the National University of Laos" where he asked thirty students and English teachers a definite question, "Why are Lao students weak in English?" The study population was drawn from two classes of 15 boys and 15 girls, all in second grade. We asked all the participants individually the same question to find out why students thought they were not good at English. Students and teachers cited many factors that negatively impact students' learning of English, one of which she said was 'class size'. He said, "The classroom environment is crowded and noisy, and I am not satisfied with the classroom teaching method." This is consistent with the idea that English classes should not be crowded, as they require interaction. Even large classes provide plenty of room for troublemakers. This plays an important role in hindering learning and interaction. Gbeyonron (2012) conducted a study titled "Electronic-Driven Individualized Learning as a Catalyst for Learning English Communication in Large Classes of Universities in Nigeria." (ICT) to explore the feasibility of integrating it into large-class English courses. University of Nigeria students enroll in a course called 'Communication in English' which is a core course at the University of Nigeria and is

expected to be available to all students at any time. The author finds the course challenging as it takes place in a large class. As a compulsory subject for all students, majors and minors are studied, and each class has more than 200 students. The study found that learners in large classes made less "language progress" than their peers in small classes. In addition, large classes negatively impact student access to materials, participation, ability to use ICT, and teacher assessment.

Kornfeld (2010) examined the relationship between class size and student performance in two of her subjects, rural English and mathematics. The study was conducted over her six-year period from 2000 to her 2006. The focus of this work was on the degree of student motivation and educational outcomes. The primary goal of this study was to determine the link between class size and student accomplishment, as well as whether or not lowering class size affects student achievement. In terms of English language examinations, there was no significant difference in English/language arts achievement between big and small classes in either the fourth or eighth grades. Despite the fact that there was a significant difference in 10th grade performance between large and small schools. It is clear that the results of this study differ from the results of other studies for the following reasons: the large numbered classes had an average of 20 students, which is not a large number when compared to other schools and classes. Depending on their previous experience students tend to compare between large and small classes in terms of the ease or difficulty in doing certain exercises. Teachers also complain about the difficulty in applying certain strategies and giving individual attention in large classes. The study also blames teachers for not changing their styles while dealing with large classes. It also finds out that where the student sits in the class, whether in the front or at the back, plays an important role and affects students' interaction and participation negatively. Which in turn affects learners' interaction, behaviour and motivation of learning English based on their location in the classroom. In trying to understand large classes and the challenges facing English teachers who teach the English Language in the college context, Saejew (2012) conducted a study entitled "Opinions on English Teaching Large Classes as Perceived by English Teachers at Burapha University". In this study the subjects were thirty-five (11 men and 24 women) English teachers who teach classes with over 60 students at Burapha University, Thailand. The tool of this study was a questionnaire. The researcher divided his study into aspects and the results were as follow: Teaching in large classes isn't worrying for university instructors as they are prepared well and could deal with the teaching material smoothly. The results also show that one of the problems facing teachers in large classes are as follows: remembering students faces and names, classroom management applying different teaching techniques and assessment.

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the literature shows that there is no agreement on what constitutes a big class. However, it is clear that large classes pose a challenge for teachers in terms of manageability and teachability, because teachers perceive classes as large if they have difficulty dealing with all students and providing individualized attention to those students. It is also obvious that huge classrooms can inhibit learning and have a detrimental influence on classroom management. As a result, because huge classrooms pose insurmountable "logistic" challenges, several studies have suggested that class size be lowered in order to alleviate or even eliminate the effect of crowdedness in class. It is also clear from the papers examined that bigger classrooms require more resources, awareness and special methods to deal with.

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