



Teachers' Perception of the Influence of Large Classes on the Teaching and Learning of English Language in Ado Ekiti Metropolis

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Abstract: The study investigated teachers' perception of the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning of English language in Ado Ekiti metropolis. The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted as the Research Design for the study. The Population consisted of all English language teachers teaching English language in all the public secondary schools in the metropolis. The sample comprised eight public secondary schools randomly selected from the population and all the thirty teachers teaching English language in the selected schools were the respondents. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher titled 'Teachers' Perception of the Influence of Large Classes on the Teaching and Learning of English Language'. The instrument was subjected to validity and reliability tests and the reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. The researcher personally visited the selected schools to administer the instrument. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The result showed that teachers perceived the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning of English language in terms of difficulty in teaching and learning; which include: difficulty in knowing all the students in the class, frustration on the part of the teacher, inadequate teaching resources, poor classroom interaction, poor classroom arrangement and above all, poor academic performance on the part of the students. Also, teachers perceived that large classes can be managed using appropriate methods. Based on the findings, it is recommended that government at all levels should make provision to improve on existing school facilities in order to make more classrooms and other facilities available to accommodate smaller classes and where large classes exist presently, the English language teachers should be trained on how to effectively manage large classes for more effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: Large classes, teachers' perception; teaching and learning of English Language; influence of large classes.

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INTRODUCTION

Many factors are believed to influence learning among which large classes is one. Researchers over time have researched into the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning process and the findings have given a lot of insight on the extent to which large classes can impact on learning even though the findings varied

(Colman, 1989; Adeyemi, 2008; Owoeye & Yara, 2011, Todd, 2012; Aoumeur, 2017; Mukhtar, 2019). Large classes have become rife in recent years as a result of increase in the number of students' enrolment in schools. Many teachers now feel their classes are larger than they would like it to be. The increase in enrolment might be due to the fact that many countries now set education development

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goals as a result of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. Scholars are of the opinion that what we term “large classes” depends on context and expectations. That is, it is a relative term in that the class that is termed large in a particular context might not be seen as large in some other context. For instance in schools where students are not more than twenty students in a class, they may see a class of twenty five as large, whereas, schools where students in a class are between thirty and forty students, a class of twenty five may not be considered as a large class. In the context of this present study therefore, large classes is conceived as classes that are more than forty students.

However, the existence of large classes are realities in many countries of the world, especially English language classes in countries where English language is a compulsory subject offered by all students. Anderson (2016) commented that, the two continents where teachers most commonly work in large classes are Africa (sub-Saharan Africa) and Asia (especially India and China). English language teachers tend to perceive such large classes in different ways and most importantly perceived as difficult to teach. This is because large classes include students of different academic abilities. Other perceived problems of teaching English language in large classes include: classroom management wherein the teacher will have to organize learning and the learner, maintain control and discipline in a more challenging way than when managing small or moderate classes; managing limited resources because large classes are often found in low-income countries (Anderson, 2016). It is important for teachers to develop efficient ways of managing large classes.

In many countries where the problems of large classes exist is also the problem of inadequate resources and this worsens the situation for the teachers. He/she will also have to cope with how to manage the limited resources among the large members of class. This can be an extremely difficult situation in an English language classroom where resources are to be employed for effective teaching. It is not uncommon to find out that not quite ten out of the over forty students in a large class are having the recommended texts. Sometimes also, there are no enough seats and desks that will go round the whole class and this will warrant some students to either pair with another student or sit on the floor. This situation makes classroom management very difficult and this is why some experts are of the opinion that large English classes do not offer ideal setting where effective teaching and learning could take place.

Based on these perceptions, English Language teachers seem to see large classes as impediment to effective English Language teaching. Managing large classes may not be too easy a task for many teachers even though it is a necessity to accomplish. Perception is usually a significant factor that can influence a teachers’ attitude towards his/her job. Teachers’ perception relates to the thoughts or mental images teachers have about a particular thing or person. This is usually shaped or influenced by their background knowledge and life experiences. When an individual looks at an object or target and attempts to interpret what it stands for, that interpretation is heavily influenced by the personal characteristics of the individual perceiver. Anusha and Pratima (2018) submits that the major characteristics of the perceiver influencing perception are attitudes, motives, interests, past experiences, cognitive structure and expectations. It is also believed that occupation, location, gender, culture, socio economic status, religion, education, family background can influence perception. These experiences might include education, work, culture or community. Perception can both be negative and positive and each has its own effects (Chikwendu & Dada, 2016). It is therefore imperative to investigate English Language teachers’ perceptions about large classes.

Many researchers have investigated the influence of large classes. Dalal (2013) investigated the influence of large classes on English teaching and learning in Saudi secondary schools and found that many of the teachers found it daunting to teach in large classes and their students’ learning outcomes were found to be unsatisfactory. Some of the perceived challenges of large classes by English Language teachers include but not limited to the following:

1. Problem practising the language skills- This has to do with the teacher not being able to allow all the students to have enough time to practise the language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
2. Working with mixed ability group- It is definite that a large class will comprise students of mixed ability who will not be able to learn at the same pace.
3. Managing limited resources- This is especially true in developing countries where the teachers have limited resources to work with.
4. Providing feedback to learners- The opportunity to assess students and give them immediate feedback becomes difficult with large classes.
5. Classroom management- Teachers may find it difficult to maintain discipline in large classes and also find it hard to take care of individual differences.

Dalal (2013) further commented that large classes have negative influence on teachers and students which in the long run reflects on the teaching and learning outcomes. Mukhtar (2019) studied the effect of class size on students' achievement in English language class with emphasis on teachers' perspective and found that it is intricate to handle a large class and that large class size did not have a visible impact on students' achievement. The impact of large classes can lead to very challenging and ineffective teaching environment. Large classes can bring about different challenges in different situations. These challenges may be problematic when they generate a lot of stress, lead to increase workload and it becomes impossible to treat all learners equally. It is equally possible for students, especially the unserious ones to take advantage to do other things rather than learning in the classroom.

However, scholars have also conceived different ways through which large classes can be managed. Classroom management is what every teacher strives to achieve irrespective of whatever the condition of the class is in terms of capacity. Pungki and Suwartono (2019) from their findings put forth ten strategies by which large classes can be managed among which are: arrangement of the seats to suitability, grouping the students, teacher controls the students using appropriate rules and use of media among others.

The need to investigate further on the influence of large classes is in a place like Ekiti state is obvious. It is one of the educationally advantaged states in Nigeria and this makes students' enrolment to be high. It seems that over time there has not been a proportional increase in school facilities as there has been in school enrolment. It is therefore obvious that there is the likelihood of having large English language classes because English language is a compulsory subject at all levels of education in the state. Many English language teachers seem to be having large classes to handle and this may have affected their level of efficiency and productivity in terms of students' learning outcomes. It is therefore imperative to investigate how they perceive large classes because many teachers seem to see large classes as impediment to effective teaching.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching English language in Ekiti State secondary schools seems to present many problems to many English language teachers prominent among which is the concern about large classes. A lot of problems are believed to be associated with teaching in large classes which range from classroom management, engaging individual student, utilising the limited learning resources to

handling classroom assessment. The anticipation that large English classes may not offer ideal settings for effective teaching and learning could hinder teaching effectiveness. For instance, student-centred teaching strategies are perceived almost impossible in large classes. Also, it is difficult to get the desirable knowledge of students' needs, intimacy with students and remembering the names of students are perceived to be difficult in large classes. All these perceived problems could hinder the process of teaching and learning and make it ineffective and in the long run hamper the achievement of the overall objective of education.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- 1 How do teachers perceive the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning of English language?
- 2 What is the perception of teachers on how large classes can be managed?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of teachers based on their qualification.
2. There will be no significant difference in the perception of teachers based on their years of experience.
3. Male and female teachers will not significantly perceive the influence of large classes differently.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive research of the survey type because the study was only interested in studying an existing situation and report on the findings without any manipulation of variables. The population for the study comprised all English language teachers teaching English language in all public secondary schools in Ado metropolis. Eight public schools were randomly selected among the fourteen public secondary schools in the metropolis as at the time of this study. The sample was all the English language teachers on ground in each of the selected schools; they all numbered thirty (30). The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher titled 'Teachers' Perception of the Influence of Large Classes on the Teaching of English Language'. The instrument contained two sections, A and B. Section A contained question items on the demographic information of the respondents while section B was on question items to elicit responses on teachers' perception on the influence of large classes. The instrument was subjected to validity and reliability tests and the reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. The researcher personally visited the

selected schools to administer the instrument. Data collected were analysed and the results are presented.

RESULTS

Table-I: Respondents' Demographic Data

Demographic Variables	Groupings	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	14	46.7
	Female	16	53.3
Qualifications	NCE	8	26.7
	B.Ed	16	53.3
	M.Ed	1	3.3
	Others	5	16.7
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5	12	40
	6-10	13	43.3
	11-15	2	6.7
	16-20	2	6.7
	21 and above	1	3.3

Table I shows that 14(6.7) respondents are males and 16(53.3%) are females while their qualifications indicate that 8(26.7%) are NCE holders, 16(53.3%) hold B.Ed Degree, 1(3.3%) holds Masters Degree and 5(16.6%) hold other Degrees. The years of experience indicate that, 12(40%) have spent 1-5 years in teaching, 13(43.3%) have spent 1-

6 years, 2(6.7%) represent those who have spent 11-15 and 16-20 years respectively and only 1(3.3%) has spent 21 years and above.

Research Question 1: How do teachers perceive the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning of English language?

Table II: Frequency and Percentage Distribution Showing Teachers' Perception of the Influence of Large Classes on the Teaching of English Language

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		F	%	F	%
1.	Large classes are very difficult to teach.	27	90	3	10
2.	Large classes can be frustrating.	27	90	3	10
3.	I always feel worn out after teaching a large class.	24	80	6	20
4.	It is difficult to know all students in a large class.	24	80	6	20
5.	Most students find it difficult to learn in a large class.	23	76.7	7	23.3
6.	It is easy to achieve specific objectives of English language teaching in large classes.	4	13.3	26	86.7
7.	Teachers' questions are promptly responded to in large classes.	8	26.7	22	73.3
8.	The responses of students are inhibited in large classes.	18	60	12	40
9.	In a large English language class, students pay more attention to the teacher.	2	6.7	28	96.3
10.	Large classes cause constant distraction for the teacher.	20	66.7	10	33.3
11.	Materials for teaching English language are grossly inadequate in large classes.	20	66.7	10	33.3
12.	In large classes, students do not have enough chances to interact with instructional materials.	15	50	15	50
13.	Students do not have enough spaces in large classes	22	73.4	8	26.6
14.	Arrangement of seats is not conducive for teacher's movement in a large class.	22	73.4	8	26.6
15.	It is not usually easy to have class interaction between teacher and students in a large English class.	18	60	12	40
16.	It is more difficult to control a large class than a smaller one.	27	90	3	10
17.	Teachers are faced with a lot of difficulty in marking class work in and student assignment in a large class.	21	70	9	30
18.	Poor ventilation which causes discomfort for the teacher and students is common in large classes.	24	80	60	20
19.	Students interact better among themselves in a large English language class.	16	53.4	14	46.6
20.	Large classes promote students' academic performance.	15	50	15	50

Table II shows the responses of respondents wherein 27(90%) of them agree that large classes are very difficult to teach while 3(10%) disagree.

Also, 27(90%) agree that large classes cause frustration and 3(10%) disagree. 24(80%) agree that they feel worn out after teaching a large class

while 6(20%) do not feel worn out. 24(80%) of the respondents agree that it is difficult to know all the students in a large class and 6(20%) disagree. On whether students find it difficult to learn in large classes, 23(76.7%) perceived that to be true while 7(23.3%) perceived that not to be true. Only 4(13.3%) among the respondents agree that it easy to achieve specific objectives in large classes and 26(86.7%) disagree with that statement. Many of the respondents, 22(73.3%) disagree that teacher’s questions are easily responded to in large classes while few of them agree. 18(60%) agree that students’ responses are inhibited in large classes and 12(40%) disagree. Just 2(6.7%) agree that students pay more attention in large classes while 28(96.3%) disagree. On whether large classes cause constant distraction for the teacher, 20(66.7%) agree and 10(33.3%) disagree. 20(66.7%) agree that material resources for teaching English language are grossly inadequate in large classes and 10(33.3%) disagree. On classroom interaction, 15(50%) agree that students have enough chances to interact the instructional resources and 15(50%) disagree. 22(73.4%) agree that students do not have enough spaces and 8(26.6%) disagree. On classroom arrangement, 22(73.4%) agree that arrangement of seats is not conducive for teacher’s easy movement while 8(26.6%) disagree and 18(60%) agree that

interaction between teacher and students is not usually easy while 12(40%) disagree. Also, 27(90%) agree that it is more difficult for teachers to control large classes than smaller ones and 3(10%) disagree. 21(70%) agree that teachers are faced with a lot of difficulty in marking class work and assignments in large classes and 9(30%) disagree. 24(80%) agree that poor ventilation which causes discomfort or the teacher and the student is common in large classes and 6(20%) disagree. More than half of the participants 16(53.4%) perceived that students interact better among themselves in large classes while 14(46.7%) did not. 15(50%) agree that large classes promote students’ academic performance and 15(50%) disagree. The responses on table I imply that what English language teachers under the study perceived to be the influence of large classes on the teaching of English language include: difficulty in teaching and learning, frustration on the part of the teacher, poor student-teacher interaction classroom, distraction on the part of the students, inadequate teaching resources, poor ventilation, lack of classroom control and management and poor academic performance among the students.

Research Question 2: What is the perception of teachers on how large classes can be managed?

Table III: Frequency and Percentage Distribution Showing Perceived Methods on How Large Classes Can Be Managed

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		f	%	f	%
21.	Large classes can be managed using peer tutoring approach.	19	63.3	11	36.7
22.	Large classes can be managed by using grouping approach, i.e, dividing the class into small groups.	20	66.7	10	33.3
23.	Rearranging classroom furniture for suitability is a good way of managing large classes.	27	90	3	10
24.	Establishing classroom rules for certain behaviour can be used in maintaining discipline in large classes.	25	83.3	5	16.7
25.	Student oriented practices can be used to enhance teaching in large classes.	24	80	6	20

Table III presents the perception of teachers on how large English language classes can be managed in schools. 19(63.3%) agree that large classes can be managed using peer tutoring approach while 11(36.7%) disagree. Also, 20(66.7%) perceived that large classes can be managed by dividing the class into small groups and 10(33.3%) did not. On whether rearranging classroom furniture for suitability is a good way of managing large classes, 27(90%) agrees while 3(10%) disagree. 25(83.3%) agree that establishing classroom rules for certain behaviour can be used to maintain discipline in large classes and 5(16.7%) disagree. On whether student oriented practices can

be used to enhance teaching in large classes, 24(80%) perceived that to be true and 6(20%) did not. The responses on table 2 implies that English language teachers in the study area perceived that large classes can be managed using peer tutoring method, grouping method, rearranging classroom furniture for suitability, establishing classroom rules for certain behaviour and using student oriented practices.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the perception of teachers based on their qualification.

Table IV: ANOVA Showing Teachers' Perception of Large Classes Based on Qualification

Source	SS	Df	MS	F _{cal}	F _{table}
Between Groups	212.917	3	70.972	0.331	2.71
Within Groups	5580.050	26	214.617		
Total	5792.967	29			

p>0.05

Table IV shows that F_{cal}(0.331) is less than F_{table}(2.95) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore upheld. This implies that there is no significant difference in the perception of teachers based on their qualifications.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in the perception of teachers based on their years of experience.

Table V: ANOVA Showing Teachers' Perception of Large Classes Based on Years of Experience

Source	SS	Df	MS	F _{cal}	F _{table}
Between Groups	262.627	4	65.657	0.297	2.71
Within Groups	5530.340	25	221.214		
Total	5792.967	29			

p>0.05

Table V shows that F_{cal}(0.297) is less than F_{table}(2.71) at 0.05 level of significance, therefore, the hypothesis is not rejected. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of teachers based on their years of experience.

Hypothesis 3: Male and female teachers will not significantly perceive the influence of large classes differently.

Table VI: t-test Showing Teachers' Perception of the Influence of large Classes Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t _{cal}	t _{table}
Male	14	81.64	5.53	28	0.969	2.048
Female	16	76.63	18.63			

p>0.05

The result on Table VI shows that t_{cal}(0.969) is less than t_{table}(2.048) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is upheld. This implies that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female teachers on the influence of large classes on the teaching of English language.

the long run reflects on the teaching and learning outcomes. The study also showed how teachers perceived large classes can be managed to include using peer tutoring approach, rearranging classroom furniture for suitability, establishing classroom rules for certain behaviour, dividing the class into small groups among others. This finding corroborates the submission of Pungki and Suwartono (2019) that put forth these methods on how large classes can be managed. On the influence of the variables that influence perception, the study found that there was no significant influence of teachers' gender, qualification and years of teaching experience on their perception of the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning of English language. This finding is contrary to the submission of Anusha and Pratima (2018) that the characteristics of the perceiver influence perception. The reason for this might not be far from the fact that the issue of large classes is seen as a major problem where they exist, personal characteristics may not change or influence the way the problem is perceived.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that teachers perceived the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning of English language in terms of difficulty in teaching and learning. Such problems include: difficulty in knowing all the students in the class, frustration on the part of the teacher, distraction during teaching, inadequate teaching resources, poor classroom interaction, poor ventilation, poor classroom arrangement and above all, poor academic performance on the part of the students. This finding is in line with the findings of Dalal (2013) who investigated the influence of large classes on English teaching and learning in Saudi secondary schools and found that many of the teachers found it daunting to teach in large classes and their students' learning outcomes were found to be unsatisfactory and that large classes have negative influence on teachers and students which in

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that large English language classes are

perceived to influence the teaching and learning of English language in quite a number of ways in terms of difficulty in teaching and learning; which include: difficulty in knowing all the students in the class, frustration on the part of the teacher, inadequate teaching resources, poor classroom interaction, poor classroom arrangement and above all, poor academic performance on the part of the students. English language teachers' characteristics (variables) of sex, teaching qualification and years of experience did not significantly influence their perception of the influence of large classes on the teaching and learning of English Language. Even though the study also reveals that teachers perceive that large classes can be managed, it is recommended that government at all levels should make provision to improve on existing school facilities in order to make more classrooms and other facilities available to accommodate smaller classes. Where large classes exist presently, the English language teachers should be trained on how to effectively manage large classes for more effective teaching and learning.

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