



THE IMPACT OF CLASS SIZE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT PRIMARY AND SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FAGGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, KANO STATE

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Abstract

Some researchers, educationist and languages scholars' assume that there is low-level achievement in the English language teaching and learning among Nigerian secondary school students. Some of the factors that this situation is classroom characteristic of which large class size is fundamental. The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of class size on learning English language at primary and secondary school levels in Fagge local government area of Kano State. To achieve this, Richards (1949) four-group experimental design was used. 269 respondents were divided into four groups and taught English for thirteen weeks. 239 respondents wrote the post-test. Data from the post-test were analyzed using chi square and ANOVA. Results show that linguistically no improvement in the achievement of learners in large classes compared to those classes with small number of learners. Likewise, classes with less number of students give ease to teacher assessment and learners contribute actively in classroom discourse than classes with high number of students. In sum, large classes have adverse effects on learning English in Fagge local government. The proficiency, competence and standard of English are fallen given that each learner has individual peculiarity within each class. Part of the recommendations is that approaches that show preference on individualization, grouping, and use of language teaching supports and theorization of innovative models in respect of class size be considered.

Keywords: size, teaching, learning, coefficient, proficiency.

Introduction

Nigeria, as the leading country in Africa, class size has become its major obstacle in all institutions of learning and something unavoidable due to the population boom of 237.136,277 million as the reality in the majority of developing countries in Africa. The estimate population of Kano State is 16,253,549 million; the state population has seen a significant growth of 64.5% since the 2006 census while. Fagge local government population is 335,200, it is obvious that a lot of Englishes abound (Kachru, 1995 Minzali 2003 & Bamgose 2022). "One of such is English as second language (Graddol, 2006). However, English is not indigenous in Nigeria. Then it has an official status in the country thus as second language in the context (Richards, 1985). In addition, most learners of the English language in Kano State, Nigeria begin to adopt declarative and practical knowledge in respect of English outside the home setting precisely in school. Therefore, the English language is viewed as second language to the majority, in Kano State apart from Arabic language. An assessment of the English language learned in generality of Kano State Primary and Secondary Schools particularly Fagge Local government shows some rudiments that are not in line with those in the native-like English. Despite that, this category of English is closer to that of the native English in comparison with other varieties of Englishes in Nigeria (Jibril, 2000).

Despite, the English language is regarded as second language in Nigerian context, and achieve official status as stated in the fourth edition of the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE)



being language of education serving as medium for instructions at different levels of the Nigerian educational enterprises (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended recognizes it as the official language of different domains. In addition, an instrument that serves as unifying factor amongst the diverse ethnic and multilingual people from divergent ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Conversely, the status of English in a dynamic world justifies learning English with the ambition of attaining a native-like or near native like competence and proficiency that will help one to become invaluable to humanity, the society and self.

Since English is a core subject at both primary and secondary schools levels of the Nigerian educational enterprise, it is anticipated that all the learners registered into various categories of education learn the English language as a prerequisite for their academic excellence, business prestige and progress. However, a good number of the learners of English in Nigerian schools learn the language virtually in large classes (Muhammad 2021). In one of the surveys reported on the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in some parts of the Northeastern Nigeria, the teacher-student ratio is 1:135 (Bukar 2020). Another finding submits a teacher-student ratio of 1:200 for English in the urban secondary schools in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (Jibril 2010). In another study by Chapman (2010), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2010) among others indicate the existence of large classes for English studies in many countries of the world.

Large Class

'Large' can be: the class is significantly larger than expected in which the available teaching and learning resources, human and material can no longer be equal the number of pupils/ students if you desire individual attention for the students." (Charalampos, 2019:83). In addition, a large class can vary from 22 in US elementary schools to up to 150 in an African classroom." Conversely, in Nigeria, sections 2:14(d), 4:19(g) and 5:27 of the NPE stipulate a teacher-student ratio of 1:25, 1:35 and 1:40 for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, respectively (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Therefore, this study anchored on the provisions in the NPE defining a large class at all levels of education to be a class with a size of 1: 40 students.

It is interesting to note that, large classes are the most common problems in most educational enterprises in developing countries, particularly Nigeria, which is no exception. It has been area of concern posing numerous glitches for lecturers/ teachers at various levels of education (i.e Primary, Secondary and higher institutions of learning). Although, there have been a number of opposing views regarding the impacts of class sizes. McDonald (2013) states that, "less number of students in class have slight or no influence on student achievement in elementary school". In line with Krueger (2003) "there is no much or reliable correlation between number of students in class and student performance". In the contrary for Mueller (2011) "a reduction in class size has no effect when a half-baked or inexperienced teacher is present." There is also the assumption that less number of students/pupils in a class provides healthier learning environment also highlights that large classes yield a negative effect on student retention. Conclusively, McDonald and Shaw (2013) emphasize that student-teacher ratio in ordinary level of education have a significant influence on teaching and learning; while, Arzt, (2011) "demonstrates that rising enrollment has detrimental and weighty consequences on student satisfaction in school".

It is interesting to note that both class size and student enrolment have a negative impact on students' summative and formative assessments of courses and instructors. In addition, "class size seems to be detrimental to pupils/students' insights of the writing process, consequent to the instructional variation teachers make when the number of students/pupils in the class increases; while class size has long been known to have an impact on students' performance in face-to-face settings, (Schmidt 2011: 5)



Negative Impacts of Large Class on Students' Learning Situation

Class sizes affect quality teaching and learning. As overcrowded classroom situations deter teachers' consideration to individual learner and reduce the progress in the teaching and learning activities. However, period allotted to teachers is meant to cover the rudimentary trainings only but no extra time to attend to special learners as expected in learning situation. Subsequently, in large classes, the time teachers spend with special children is very limited, invariably they consciously or unconsciously neglect them because of little time allocated for each lesson would not be enough to cater for their need..

Teaching in large classes appears to be problematic because of the propensity of the teachers to pay attention on centered instructions alone. Ibrahim (2020) "points out that number of learners in the class can result in teachers to leaving student/pupils centered learning strategy to focusing more on teacher centered activities". For of this, instruction approach becomes the philosophy of teaching. Class sizes impact students/pupils to demonstrate some learning attitude such as not responding to some questions posed by the teacher in the class rather expecting the teacher to spoon-feed them with the required response to questions during test or class exercises. In addition, Earthman (2002) reveals, "large classes are obstruction to achievement of learning objectives and they also reduce the completion of learning activities. In such situations, achieving quality lesson delivery may be difficult for the teachers and quality learning may not take place".

Positive Impacts of Small Class on Students' Learning activities

Richard (2006) "small class was found to have enhanced students' effective learning and academic success, and there is a relationship between the number of students in a class and their academic success." Added "teaching and learning quality, academic success is very much higher in small classes than in large classes and that small class can also enhance the quality of support for individual students. This can have a positive impact on their teaching and learning performance. Green (2000) indicates that the lessening of class size especially in the early primary schools could improve students' academic performance. In addition, some factors identified by Stoffels (2005) affecting teaching and learning in large classes, include

Insufficient space in the class because of overpopulation. In addition, lack of chances for all students/pupils to become active members in the class instead of being passive.

Glitches of Teaching Large Classes in Fagge Local Government Schools

Some of the glitches associated with teaching large number of pupils/students in a class in Nigeria with particular reference to Fagge local government schools, Kano State are numerous, despite efforts made by the teacher to enhancing teaching and learning materials by improvisation are with number of difficulties. There is the issue of lack of conducive classroom environment, which provides the avenue to classroom structure of interactional discourse approach between teacher/student is highly inadequate.

Some of these glitches in teaching large number of pupils/students in class are;

- I. The inability to organize quizzes exercises or tests on weekly or monthly basis.
 - II. The inability to mark pupils' /students' scripts and provide feedback in a timely manner
- ; The difficulty of identifying truant pupils/students during teaching and learning activities;
The problem of the appropriate use of teaching and learning materials.
Lack of public address system to cater for the number of pupils/students in the class



In addition, where there was issue of constant electric power supply constitute another problem. There is the difficulty of marking assignments, class work and test scripts to provide formative and summative result on timely basis.

It is very difficult for the teacher to identify those special pupils/students with different challenges to provide the needed assistance especially low learners. In addition, identify introverts or extroverts. Also those pupils/students in the habit of absenteeism regular attenders in the class, (Aransi 2017).

Furthermore, Todd (2006:2) other factors, which can also impact the discernment of the size of large classes include “the students’ age, the level of their educations, their motivation factors and class size in which teaching and learning is conducted.”. There is relativism in class size as policy differs from one country to the other. However, according to some literature on large classroom in North America and Western Europe there is ambiguousness on the issue of which class become too large and adversely affects the quality, proficiency and standard of education, as in some cases, classes of 30 are define as large and necessitate reduction (Benbow et al. 2007:5):

Quite a number of studies have been conducted examining the influence of class size in order to ascertain their effects or otherwise on teaching and learning of the English language, which will invariably lead to decision making by the stake holders both Ministry of education and State Basic Education Board. Interestingly, “Large classes are reality for most English language teachers in most developing countries like Nigeria. “Teachers encounter problems of class size more than number that facilitates language teaching and learning.” (Todd 2006:1).

The Problem

The problem of the study is premised on the assumption that there seems not to be any significant improvement in the performance of students in practical declarative knowledge as far intellectual capability, assertiveness and drive, linguistic background, teachers, peer influence as far as teaching and learning of the English language is concerned in Fagge local government schools, Kano State, Nigeria. Students/pupils communicative competence, proficiency in primary/secondary schools in most of the local governments in Kano state in learning the English language would provide information that teaching of English language standard is falling drastically. Therefore, the present study assumes that one of the major reasons of this dropping in terms of language competence/performance is rooted in the class size. The study was design to investigate the impact of large classes on the teaching and learning of the English language. It is anticipated that, the findings of the study will not only contribute to existing debate on the impact of large classes on language teaching and learning but also provide suggestions that will improve learning teaching and learning of language at Fagge local government, Kano State Nigeria.

Hypotheses:

1. There is no substantial improvement/ change in students’ /pupil’s language proficiency development amongst the students/pupils taught in big classes and those taught in small classes;
2. There is no substantial change/transformation in students’ /pupil’s contribution in the formal classroom structure of interactional discourse amid students learning of the language between those in big classes and their counterparts in small classes.

Methodology

The research design of this study is anchored on the four-group design of Richard Solomon (1949) research approach. The population of the study is the 300 students/pupils in Fagge local government. Kano State. However, 269 respondents were selected to serve as sample size of the study according to Kreicy and Morgan (2006) statistical procedure of population and sample. The pupils and students were divided into four groups: Government Secondary School, Kuka and Fagge Special Primary School to serve as experimental group and control group (1) while Maman Vice Adamu



Secondary School, and Kwaciri Primary School as control group (2) lastly, Maryam Abacha Girls' Secondary School as control group (3). However, respondents in the first experimental and control group were made to partake in the pre-test. Conversely, substantial part of the study made all respondents of the study involved in the post-test, which serve as summative. Language test and observation form part of the instrument for data collection. The instruments used in collecting data for the research work fully subjected to validation and therefore achieve reliability. Correlation coefficients of 0.66 and 0.79 via Pearson product correlation coefficient statistical procedure analysis.

Table 1: Mean Scores for Pre-test

Group	Total score	N	\bar{X}	SD
EG	6580	105	49.26	2.51
CG1	1030	30	475	2.56

Some key topics on basic writing skills and listening skills were taught to the respondents in each group for a period of 35 minutes five times a week. While respondents as per experimental and control group were taught listening skills via whole class approach, also those in control groups 2 and 3 were also examine. However, two hundred and (249) forty nine respondents sat for the post-test. Simple percentile, chi square and analysis of variance were used in analyzing the outcomes of the post-test.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no substantial improvement/ change in students'/pupil's language proficiency development amongst the students/pupils taught in big classes and those taught in small classes

Table 2: Mean Scores for Post-test

Group	Total score	N	\bar{X}
EG	6509	102	37.74
CG1	1121	29	44.38
CG2	5326	115	41.21
CG3	1665	30	59.37

Table 2 result indicates that the mean score for the experimental group in the post-test is 37.74. and those in control group one (1), a mean score of 44.38 while those in control group two (2) had mean score of 41.21. However, those in control group 3 scored mean score of 59.37.

Table 3: Class Size and Learners' proficiency in learning the English language

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P	F _{crit}
Between groups	20712	5	7581	57	0.02	2.6049
Within groups	24576	242	99			
Total	45288	247				

F value 57 > F_{crit} 2.5048 at α 0.01

Table 3 is a strong indications that the F Value (57) is greater than the F critical at P = 0.02 (2.5048). So, the statement that there is no significant variation as per students/pupils' linguistic development between those students/pupils taught in the large classes and those taught in smaller classes countered by the study.



Hypothesis 2: There is no substantial change/transformation in students'/pupil's contribution in the formal classroom structure of interactional discourse amid students learning of the language between those in big classes and their counterparts in small classes.

Table 4: Differences in respect of active participation in classroom discourse between students in the two categories (large and small classes)

Group	Participated%	No Participation %	Row sub-total
EG	31(57.25)	69 (42.75)	100
CG 1	58 (57.25)	42 (42.75)	100
CG 2	42 (57.25)	58 (42.75)	100
CG 3	77 (57.25)	30 (42.75)	100
Column sub-total	205	195	400

$$\chi^2_{\text{cal}} = 90.85 > \chi^2_{\text{crit}} \text{ at } \alpha 0.04 = 6.82$$

Based on the result obtained χ^2_{cal} of 90.85.02 that is greater than χ^2_{crit} of 6.82 at $p = 0.05$, therefore the assumption that there is no substantial variation as per students/pupils involvement in classroom discourse among the classes with more than required number of learners and those with less number is rejected based on the statistics above.

Discussion

Ineffective teaching and learning are negatively impacted by excessive class sizes in most primary and secondary schools in Kano state with particular reference to Fagge local government. Therefore, the study found that there is major differences in language development between students/pupils taught in class with higher number of learners using whole class method with their counterparts with small number of students in the class using the same strategy. Furthermore, there is substantial change in the communicative proficiency development amongst students taught in large classes using whole class method and those taught in class with less number of students with the assistance of language teaching aids, grouping and pairing. This finding is consistent with those of Earthman (2002), who found a significant negative correlation in the class size.

In addition, Earthman and Thiele (2016), found that class size had a negative impact on students' participation in class. This also is very consistent with the findings of Benbow et al. (2007) and Blatchford et al. (2007.)

Blatchford et al. (2007: 162) add "... as the class increased, the number of interactions with individual pupils decreased, and this adversely affected pupils' progress." One of the findings of this study indicate that there is a little variation in academic progress amongst those students in large classes with those in small classes in respect of quasi-communicative language skills.

Taking a cursory look at the result on table 4, indicates that classes with large number of students have negative consequence on students'/pupils' appraisal and active participation in the class discourse. This agrees with Toth. and Montagiga (2002:14) who assert that: "Similarly, to McLoed, he found that English teachers in Nigeria who taught in classes of 100-200 students/pupils encountered a range of problems in teaching".

Shamin et al. (2007:14), state that "large classes serve as challenge in respect of assessing learning and providing feedback to learners. Added, resulted in the "inability to recognize difficulties of learners, failure to recognize the progress learners make, failure to measure students individually, inability to provide a remedy based on the feedback loft from the valuation. This suffice to say that the skill in question and the goal of a lesson or English studies learning unit play a crucial role in the impact of class size in assessing learner in ESL classrooms. When the goal is listing items or providing short answers, large classes portend fewer problems.



Ur (1983:12) asserts that “ Class size could impede respective learners’ chances of participating actively in classroom discourse because of distraction as a result of the number of the pupils’/students.” “ added, in a class of twenty to thirty students, even if every student speaks, he will only do so for an average of a minute or two, and will be a silent listener for the rest of the lesson.” Markee (1997:38) states that, “For example, in a teacher-fronted class of sixty learners, a teacher who gave equal time to all students could not allow any one individual to speak for more than 1 minute during a 1-hour class period.” Conclusively, there is a strong relation between the findings of the two researches above, that the time allotted to learners could not offer much opportunities using whole-class methodology in teaching those classes with high number of students’ a better chance to contribute actively in the class discourse.

Conclusions

It was concluded that larger classes reveal detrimental effects, with a decline in the number and worth of student-teacher class interactional discourse, lower levels of student involvement as per the subject matter. Conversely, there is a decrease in student’s motivation and participation in class, all of which eventually result in a lesser value of education for both the teachers and students. However, this could be deduced that if urgent measure were not taken, the standard of education in Nigeria would continue to experience downfall or suffer a complete failure.

It is clear statistically that the current situation reveals learners’ would experience a very gloomy communicative competence in the English language there by turning the students into a half-baked, semi-lingual in the English language. Finally, the study unveils that most secondary and primary schools learners of English studies in Kano State do learn it in classes that are more than 70 students, that ranging from 70-80 up to 120 to 150 per class.

Recommendations

The following are recommendation to the findings of this study:

- I. The government should employ qualified teachers via states ministries of education. In addition, more classrooms should be built for both primary and secondary schools with equivalent financial support, teachers and enough resources.
- II. In addition, the number of students/pupils enrolment should be equal to the classes and resources on ground.
- III. Student-to-teacher ratio should be encouraged to reduce additional hardship to teachers and overcrowded classes.
- IV. The government should join forces with other non-governmental bodies, community development associations such as parent-teacher associations, philanthropists, banks and companies to assist in providing enough classes that would cater for the number of students.
- V. teacher should be encouraged to go for training programmes that would add to professional and pedagogical skills of teaching learners to maintain large classes.
- VI. Teachers should encourage language learners to develop the culture of self-reading extensively or intensively and attaining extra mural lessons.
- VII. There is need for teachers to develop techniques and theorizing methods that would cater for the teaching instruction in large classes.
- VIII. Periods allotted to teaching and learning time for large classes should be changed to a maximum of 90 minutes and/or 60 minutes per period.



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