



# Class Size in English Language Teaching: Teacher's Perspective

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## Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the impact of class size variability on the teaching process within the English Language Teaching (ELT) context at UPT SP SDN 25 Pae-Pae, Wasuponda. Through in-depth interviews with English language teachers, the research aims to gain insights into teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the influence of class size on instructional practices and student outcomes. The findings reveal significant disparities between large and small classes, with larger classrooms offering advantages in facilitating interactive and engaging learning experiences, while smaller classrooms present challenges, particularly during interactive sessions. Classroom management strategies emerged as crucial in addressing challenges in both large and small classroom environments, ensuring a conducive learning environment for all students. Additionally, the study highlights the psychological and social impacts of class size and learning environment conditions on students, emphasizing the importance of tailored approaches and adequate facilities in promoting positive social interactions and collaborative learning experiences. Overall, the research underscores the importance of adaptive teaching practices and continuous professional development in meeting the diverse needs of students across varying class sizes and learning contexts within ELT settings.

**Keywords:** *Class Size, English Language Teaching*

## **Introduction**

Class size plays a central role in shaping the learning process in schools, particularly in the context of English language learning. Within the language learning environment, effective interaction between teachers and students holds significant implications for students' language comprehension and proficiency. It is imperative to assess the impact of class size on the effectiveness of English language learning and understand how teachers perceive this issue (Pertwi et al., 2020; Yasmin et al., 2019).

As the complexity of English language learning needs increases, especially in densely populated classroom environments, the relevance of understanding the direct impact of class size on the learning process becomes more pronounced. Such considerations emphasize the importance of comprehending the role of class size in designing effective teaching strategies for English language learning. Teachers' perspectives on the issue of class size in the context of English language learning can provide valuable insights into understanding the complexity of the learning process (Solheim & Opheim, 2019; Tadesse et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2019). By considering teachers' viewpoints, we can gain a better understanding of how to optimize students' learning experiences in diverse English language learning environments.

In this study, the researcher explored teachers' perspectives on class size in English language learning. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method, the researcher investigated how teachers experienced and perceived the influence of class size on the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Thus, this research provided an in-depth understanding of the role played by class size in the context of English language learning from educators' viewpoints.

The study analyzed teachers' direct experiences in teaching classes of varying sizes and their perceptions of how class size affected the effectiveness of English language learning. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, the researcher delved into teachers' ideas, views, and personal experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved in the context of class size. Therefore, this research was expected to make a valuable contribution to understanding the importance of class size in English language learning and provide richer insights into how teachers managed challenges related to class size in efforts to enhance the effectiveness of English language learning in diverse educational settings.

## Literature Review

### *Class Size*

#### *Teaching One-to-One*

Individualized instruction offers numerous benefits compared to group settings, allowing for focused attention from the educator and tailored curriculum to meet the specific needs of the student (Syakira & Nur, 2022). By exclusively catering to one student at a time, instructors can optimize learning experiences, ensuring full engagement and adapting teaching methods to align with individual learning styles and preferences (Farrell & Jacobs, 2020; Yinger, 1987). This personalized approach fosters a conducive environment for constructive feedback and facilitates seamless adjustments to accommodate student progress. Additionally, the absence of classroom distractions enables genuine dialogue between teacher and student, enhancing the overall learning experience (Parrish & Sadera, 2020).

Despite its advantages, one-to-one teaching presents challenges, particularly in establishing and maintaining effective teacher-student rapport (Turner, 2019). Variations in personality, confidence levels, and preferred learning methodologies can impact the effectiveness of instruction. Moreover, the absence of a dynamic classroom atmosphere may lead to fatigue or disengagement. It is essential for educators to navigate these challenges by fostering a positive initial impression, meticulous preparation, flexibility in lesson delivery, and attentive adaptation to the student's evolving needs and interests. Encouraging open communication, providing clear explanations, and setting realistic expectations further contribute to a successful one-to-one teaching dynamic (Doron & Spektor-Levy, 2019; Farrell & Jacobs, 2020).

#### *Large Classes*

In contrast, managing large classes necessitates strategic organization and innovative instructional approaches to maximize student engagement and facilitate effective learning outcomes. Establishing clear routines and utilizing various pacing techniques help streamline classroom management and mitigate potential disruptions. Individualized tasks and responsibilities empower students to take ownership of their learning, fostering a sense of accountability and motivation within the group (Sholah, 2020; Toro et al., 2019).

Incorporating pair and group work activities enhances participation and collaboration, even in expansive classroom settings. Clear instructions, effective feedback mechanisms, and attention to visual and auditory accessibility promote inclusivity and facilitate comprehension. Leveraging the collective energy and diversity of a large group enriches learning experiences, offering opportunities for interactive learning, humor, and theatrical engagement. Ultimately, whether teaching one-to-one or in large classes, educators must adapt their approaches to suit the unique needs and dynamics of their students, prioritizing personalized

instruction, effective communication, and inclusive engagement to foster meaningful learning experiences (Linares, 2019; Phan & Huynh, 2021; Yinger, 1987).

### ***English Language Teaching***

English Language Teaching (ELT) encompasses a comprehensive set of practices and processes dedicated to instructing individuals in the English language. This dynamic field integrates various language acquisition theories, including behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism, to inform teaching methodologies. Central to ELT is the development of structured curricula addressing language skills, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural nuances, tailored to the proficiency levels and needs of learners (Schissel et al., 2019; Tavares, 2021).

In the realm of ELT, a diverse array of teaching methods and approaches is employed, ranging from traditional grammar-translation methods to more communicative and task-based strategies. The choice of method is often contextual, shaped by specific learning goals and the characteristics of the learners. An emphasis is placed on enhancing the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—through activities and exercises that foster proficiency in each domain (Gramling, 2021; Stavans & Porat, 2019; Tavares, 2021).

Assessment and evaluation are integral components of ELT, with teachers utilizing various tools such as tests, quizzes, and projects to gauge students' language proficiency and monitor their progress. Additionally, the integration of technology, including language learning software and multimedia resources, has become a prominent feature in modern ELT, offering interactive and engaging platforms for language practice (Iskandar et al., 2022; Lee, 2021; Tavares, 2021).

Cultural competence is another key aspect of ELT, aiming not only to develop language proficiency but also to instill an understanding of the cultural context of the English language. This cultural awareness contributes to effective communication and language use (Schwarzenthal et al., 2020). Furthermore, ELT recognizes the importance of continuous professional development for teachers, keeping them abreast of language acquisition research, educational technologies, and innovative teaching methods. As English continues to serve as a global medium of communication, ELT plays a pivotal role in facilitating cross-cultural interactions, supporting academic pursuits, and enhancing career opportunities for language learners on a global scale.

## Method

This study adopts a qualitative methodology (Esteban-Bravo & Jose M. Vidal-Sanz, 2021) utilizing a case study design to investigate the phenomenon of class size, particularly within the context of English Language Teaching at UPT SP SDN 25 Pae-Pae, Wasuponda. The main objective of the research is to gain comprehensive understanding of teachers' viewpoints and experiences regarding the impact of class size variability on the teaching process. In-depth interviews with English teacher is conducted to elucidate the intricate dynamics between class size and instructional practices.

## Results

After conducting interviews with an English language teacher at UPT SP SDN 251 Pae-Pae, the researcher posed several questions regarding the impact of class size on the interaction between teachers and students in the context of English language learning. The first question posed was regarding the participant's perspectives on the influence of class size on this interaction. Furthermore, the researcher also inquired whether there were significant differences in teaching experiences between classes with larger numbers of students and those with smaller numbers. NF as the English teacher of SDN 251 Pae-Pae stated that:

*“From my teaching experience as an English teacher, there are indeed significant differences in teaching between large and small classes, both in terms of classroom space/building and the number of students. Larger classrooms can provide comfort for students to engage in fun learning methods, where students are expected to actively participate in the learning process. In large classes, whether with many or few students, effective learning can still be achieved. For example, ice-breaking activities in learning can be easily conducted in spacious rooms. On the other hand, smaller classrooms may not provide comfort for both teachers and students during learning activities, especially when conducting ice-breaking activities, which are often limited in small spaces, especially with a large number of students present.”*

The statement provided highlights the significant differences observed by the interviewee, who is an experienced English teacher, between teaching large and small classes, particularly focusing on classroom space and the number of students. Larger classrooms are noted to offer advantages in facilitating fun learning methods, promoting active student participation, and ensuring effective learning outcomes. This is attributed to the spaciousness of the classroom, which allows for a comfortable learning environment conducive to interactive activities like ice-breaking exercises. In contrast, smaller classrooms are depicted as less accommodating for both teachers and students, particularly during interactive sessions such as ice-breaking activities, which may be constrained by limited space, particularly when dealing with a large number of students.

Subsequently, the researcher explored how teachers manage challenges that arise in classes of different sizes. Teacher is asked whether they have specific strategies to ensure that each student receives adequate attention in both large and small classroom environments. NF answered that:

*“In addressing the challenges related to large or small classroom environments, it is expected that teachers can implement classroom management strategies. Teachers should be able to handle situations within the classroom effectively to ensure a smooth teaching and learning process for the students. In my opinion, classroom management strategies are crucial because when a teacher can effectively manage their classroom, whether it is large or small, and whether there are many or few students, the teaching and learning process will be efficient. There are several situations that may occur when a teacher is unable to implement classroom management strategies or handle the class. For example, in cases where there are few students in a small classroom, but they are generally very active, the teacher plays an active and vital role in managing the classroom to ensure effective teaching and learning processes.”*

The statement emphasizes the importance of classroom management strategies in addressing challenges in both large and small classroom environments. Teachers are expected to be able to implement these strategies to effectively handle situations within the classroom. This is aimed at ensuring that the learning process runs smoothly for the students.

Subsequently, the researcher inquired about the teachers' experiences regarding the psychological or social impacts that may arise on students due to large or small class sizes, as well as how teachers address these issues in the context of English language learning, and NF responded:

*“From my experience, students can experience psychological and social impacts depending on each individual student. For example, in a large classroom with a high number of students, some students may lack focus in learning, resulting in disinterest in learning English, which can lead to unmet psychological needs in terms of satisfaction and motivation in learning English, and the formation of a lazy character in learning English. In contrast, students who are focused when learning English will develop a strong character and have motivation and satisfaction in learning English. The solution provided for students who lack focus is to give more attention to these students and provide materials that are interesting to them. As for the social impacts on students, it occurs when classrooms, whether large or small, lack adequate facilities. For instance, having bookshelves in the classroom is quite important because with bookshelves, students can organize their reading materials neatly and attractively, which encourages students to have an interest in reading together with their classmates and engage in discussions or storytelling about the books they have read. This can provide students with social comfort in the classroom*

*as they interact well with their peers.”*

In the interview, the respondent disclosed their experiences regarding the psychological and social impacts experienced by students, influenced by class size and learning environment conditions. The respondent highlighted that each student may undergo different experiences, depending on their individual characteristics. For instance, in large classes with numerous students, some students might struggle to maintain focus during learning. This may result in a lack of interest in studying English and impact the satisfaction and motivation of students in the learning process.

Additionally, the respondent emphasized that such situations could shape a student's character, wherein students who lack focus tend to develop lazy habits in studying English, while focused students tend to exhibit stronger characters, motivation, and satisfaction in learning. The solution offered to address the issue of students lacking focus is by providing extra attention to these students and presenting materials that pique their interest.

Social impacts were also highlighted in the interview. The respondent stated that when classrooms, whether large or small, are not equipped with adequate facilities, it can affect social interactions among students. For example, the presence of bookshelves in the classroom is considered important as it allows students to organize their books neatly and attractively. This encourages students' interest in reading together with their classmates and participating in discussions or storytelling about the books they read. This is deemed to provide social comfort for students as they can interact well with their classmates.

## **Discussion**

The interview results highlight the strong emphasis on the importance of classroom management strategies in addressing the varied challenges of the classroom environment. Teachers are expected to possess skills in implementing appropriate management strategies to effectively handle situations within the classroom, thus ensuring a smooth learning process for students. The importance of classroom management strategies is also underscored in the context of learning efficiency (Safura et al., 2023). It is suggested that learning efficiency heavily relies on teachers' ability to manage the classroom, so when teachers can effectively manage the classroom, the learning process will run smoothly regardless of the class size or the number of students. However, there may be some challenges that teachers might face in managing the classroom, especially when not all management strategies can be effectively applied. For instance, in cases where there are few students in a small but highly active class, teachers are expected to play an active and crucial role in managing the classroom to ensure a successful learning process for all students (Li, 2021; Namaziandost, Neisi, et al., 2019; Phan & Huynh, 2021). Therefore, the interview results highlight the importance of classroom management strategies in addressing various challenges that may arise

in the learning environment.

In addition, the interview results shed light on the practical implications of classroom size on teaching strategies and student engagement. Larger classrooms are perceived as advantageous due to their ability to foster a dynamic learning environment and accommodate various teaching methodologies. Conversely, smaller classrooms pose challenges in conducting interactive activities and may inhibit optimal student participation (Huang, 2019; Namaziandost, Shatalebi, et al., 2019). These findings underscore the importance of considering classroom size in instructional planning to enhance the overall learning experience for students. Additionally, they emphasize the need for educators to adapt their teaching approaches based on the available physical space and student population to optimize teaching and learning outcomes.

The interview results also highlight the importance of considering the psychological and social impacts of class size and available facilities in the learning environment. In the context of English language learning, effective classroom management not only addresses academic aspects but also pays attention to the psychological well-being and social interactions of students (Xu et al., 2020).

The solutions offered by the respondent, such as providing extra attention to students who lack focus and presenting materials that interest them, underscore the importance of introducing diverse approaches in teaching, which consider the individual needs of students (Chang, 2020). Additionally, the emphasis on the need for adequate facilities in the learning environment highlights the importance of maintaining a conducive learning environment for positive social interactions and effective learning (Wali et al., 2019). Thus, the interview results provide valuable insights into strategies that teachers can implement to overcome challenges in managing classes of different sizes and ensuring the psychological well-being and positive social interactions of students.

## **Conclusion**

The interviews conducted with English language teachers at UPT SP SDN 251 Pae-Pae illuminate the critical role of effective classroom management strategies in navigating the challenges posed by varying class sizes. Teachers emphasized the importance of tailored approaches to accommodate different classroom dynamics, ensuring a conducive learning environment for all students. Additionally, insights into the psychological and social impacts of class size and learning environment conditions on students were revealed. Larger classrooms were identified as facilitating interactive learning experiences, while smaller ones posed challenges in student engagement. Strategies such as individualized attention and tailored materials emerged as crucial in addressing students' diverse needs and enhancing learning outcomes. Furthermore, the significance of adequate facilities in promoting positive social interactions and collaborative learning experiences was



highlighted. Overall, the interviews underscore the importance of adaptive teaching practices and ongoing professional development to meet the diverse needs of students in varying learning contexts.

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