

CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECT OF LARGE POPULATION ON THE TEACHERS AND THE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR CLASSES OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYO STATE

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated the critical review of the effect of large population on the teachers and students in English grammar classes of senior secondary schools in Oyo State. Teaching and learning of grammar in our secondary schools have been largely affected by large population and this is a pointer to poor performance of students in English Language both in internal and external examinations. Teaching grammar especially a foreign language comes with adhering strictly to rules of the language but when the issue of large population is added, the situation becomes cumbersome. The study was a descriptive type using survey method. Two types of structured questionnaire were used to elicit information from the respondents. These were students' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaire. Information collated were analysed with percentage distribution. Some of the recommendations offered in this study are: the need to have between 30 and 45 students in the class; re-training of teachers; appointment of well qualified English teachers, provision of adequate facilities among others.

Keywords: *Large population, Grammar, Large class, Interaction theory and Communication*

Introduction

Language is a vehicle of communication, an interaction of exchange of views and enterprise. Although language is often taken for granted by human being, it is nonetheless the very essence of human existence. Language plays integrative and other roles in our society. It welds the different ethnic groups in the country together and paves way for national integration and stability that would lead to economic development. For proper intra-international development, Nigerians need education, which is the agent of development. English is a medium of communication and language of education in Nigeria. Amadi & Emeka-Eze (2012). This statement reveals the leading role played by English Language both as a language and a subject in Nigeria; it is accorded a special role. This reflects why it is compulsory for graduating senior secondary students to obtain at least a credit in English Language. Amadi & Emeka-Eze further add that "international position of English as a language of technology and commerce created a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning a language, businessmen and women who wanted to sell their products; mechanics who had to read instruction manuals, doctors who needed to keep up with developments in their fields and a whole range of students whose course of study included textbooks and journals only available in English; English as a First Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are some of the tags associate with English with its attendant effects in Nigeria.

The competence of user of language is hinged on grammatical correctness. This is reflected in writing and speaking of the user. Grammar is essentially about adhering strictly to rules of a particular language. English language is loaded with many rules and it follows a system of rules. As far as teaching grammar in larger classes is concerned, teachers need effective communication with the students so as to produce quality education through knowledge and skills gained. The use of English as a means of communication has been substantially linked to the individual in order to bring change in his behaviour so as become a failed citizen in the community and the society as a whole.

The beauty of the good user of grammar in English is communicative competence. Yule (2010) opines that communicative competence is the general ability to use language accurately, appropriately and flexibly. The

first component is grammatical competence, which involves the accurate use of words and structures. Concentration on grammatical competence only, however, will not provide the learner with the ability to interpret or produce L2 expressions appropriately. Yule's position is that grammatical competence is a needed foundation upon which other components are built. The ability to use appropriate language is the second component, called socio-linguistic competence. It enables the learner to know when to say "Can I have some water" versus "Give me some", according to social context. Much of what was discussed in terms of pragmatics has to become familiar in the cultural context of the L2 learner's to develop socio-linguistic competence. The third is strategic competence which is the ability to organize a message effectively and to compensate, via strategies, for any difficulties. A faulty departure from the grammatical competence may mar the linguistic competence and strategic competence. In some instances, user of the language may result to communication strategy. Thus, the teachers and the students have to be mindful of their choice of words and construction of structures in order not to deviate from rules.

From the above, a lot of expert display is required from the English language teachers so that the English teacher requires special experiences in order to impact knowledge to the learners for proper implementation of the curriculum. Zhao (2004) reveals as language teachers sometimes avoid specific activities for developing effective grammar for main points because they are difficult to implement in large classes and as a result of these, learners encounter difficulties in isolating the relevant and irrelevant information. This makes the learner to write a lot of errors. So, challenges of larger population are synonymous with large classes. In essence, a population becomes a large one in a class if teaching and learning are difficult. It is not about having a definition; rather, it is about an hindrance to teaching and learning. The moment a teacher cannot effectively handle a great number in a class, there is large population. Olutayo & Idowu (2011) refer to the task for the language teacher to teach grammar of a foreign language as an uneasy one. This is because the teacher himself learned the foreign language. It is not his mother tongue.

Therefore, the teacher needs some principles to guide him in his teaching. Secondly, grammar should not be taught as an intellectual exercise. The teacher should concentrate on making meanings so that learners would become more skillful in speech and writing. Thirdly, learners should be taught how to use grammar correctly rather than how to label it. Fourthly, emphasis should be on building structures instead of analysis of it. Fifth, the teacher should use textbook textbooks written with the learners background in mind. The teacher should also have knowledge about the structure of the student's mother tongue to be able to identify its structural qualities which are different from those of the foreign language (A teacher who teaches a class of multi-ethnic group will have challenges). This will enable him to detect areas that constitute problems to the students. Finally, idiomatic expressions should be taught with their meanings and how they are used. They should not be taught in the abstract.

The teacher can use visual aids to teach vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary means teaching the meaning of words of the second language and this would be best done by using visual aids which are carefully selected. Vocabulary can also be taught by using synonyms, antonyms, games, drama, and explanations. Grammatical structure can be taught using repetition drills, substitution drills, situational drills, transformational drills, and question and answer drills. Mabekoje (2006) observed that A handful of errors is usually observable in students writing and speech. In as much that communication entails proper or total comprehension of what has been said by a speaker through a medium, it is also pertinent that learners of English follow strictly the rules and regulations governing a particular language. Errors occur when statements made by a speaker breach the codes of the language that is being spoken or written. Thus, errors can be regarded as deviations from the norms of a language. It can also be defined as un-native like or deviant forms as of language produced regularly and systematically by language learner. The above revelations concerning the grammar are taken with the other dimensions of large population which in effect create a great/big yoke for the teachers and the students of English grammar.

Statement of the Problem

It is evident in our schools that heavy population manifests in classes. This has been observed by the researchers and the administrators. Also observed is that the senior secondary school is the point at which all that have been taught over the years are cumulatively tested and assessed in order to determine the next line of academic exercise that will snow ball the learner into professionalization. So, language especially English in Nigeria becomes a salient catalyst that makes manifest the reality of the learner. Thus, the next level of academic pursuit is hinged on foundation that must be solid. As a language, English plays pivotal roles through grammar. Interestingly, there have been negative effects of large population on the teachers and the students in grammar classes of senior secondary schools in Nigeria. Several studies have revealed that many challenges occur because of large population which renders the managerial capacity of the teachers impotent and also weakens the manipulation skills needed to have learners learn the rudiment of parts of speech, tenses and connected rules. Thus, this paper ventures into effect of large population on the teachers and the students in English Grammar classes of senior secondary schools.

Teaching grammar in a large English Class, Marcello (2015) refers to Teaching Grammar, Structure and Meaning introduces teachers to some basic ideas from increasingly popular field of cognitive linguistics as a way of explaining and teaching key grammatical concepts. The author offers in the paper a methodology for teaching key aspect of linguistic form and an extensive set of learning activities. However, this current study is done on the effect of large class during the teaching of grammar. Hill (2010) also refers to teacher language awareness and its relationship to pedagogical practice (Andrew, 2003) have been identified as significant contributors to the teaching of grammar. She offers those discussions with graduate and former teachers indicate that they feel underprepared to teach grammar. The results of her paper highlight the teachers' reported use of a combination of theories in grammar explanations and that belief. Interestingly, this current study is on the effect of large class, not language teachers' belief on theories of grammar and their influence on teaching practice.

Purpose of the Study

The study was done in order to:

1. Identify students' perception about large population in English Grammar classes;
2. Identify teachers' perception about large population in English grammar classes;
3. Examine the effects of large population on teachers in English grammar classes, and
4. Examine the effects of the large population on students in English grammar classes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What are the teachers' perceptions about large population?
2. What are the students' perceptions about large population?
3. What are the effects of large population on teachers in grammar classes?
4. What are the effects of large population on learners in grammar classes?

Methodology

A descriptive research type using the survey method was used. The target populations were the teachers and the students of Senior Secondary School Class III in Oyo Town, Oyo State. The sample was drawn from all the Senior Secondary Schools that are located in four Local Government Areas in Oyo town, Oyo State. Random Sampling Techniques was used to select 150 English teachers and 150 students from 5 selected secondary schools. The five schools that were selected. Two species of structure questionnaire were used for this study. A teachers' questionnaire tagged "Questionnaire on effect of large population on the teachers in English Grammar Classes of Senior Secondary Schools" was used while the other was "Questionnaire on effect of large population on the students in English Grammar classes of Senior Secondary Schools". Each species of the

questionnaire comprised 2 sections A & B. Section A sought for information on the demographic attributes of respondents such as the respondent's name of the school, gender, age and class i.e for the class taught, the academic qualification(s), the name of the school gender and years of experience. The Section B of the questionnaire contained 20 items which the respondents responded to in four likert scale of Strongly Agree SA, Agree A, Strongly Disagree SD and Disagree D. The instruments were tested for reliability using test-retest method of reliability. Students' questionnaire revealed 0.82 while teachers' questionnaire revealed 0.76. The interpretation of the data collected was done using descriptive statistics.

Results

Table 1: Result data obtained on teachers' demography

School	Total no. of teacher	No of Females	No. of Male	Teacher with Qualification Education (B.Ed)	Teachers with B.A.	Above 10 Years teaching Experience	Below10 Years teaching Experience
5	150	68	82	50	48	55	95
		45.33%	54.67%	33.3%	32%	36%	63.7%

It is evident from this table that 34.7% of the teachers of English do not have relevant qualifications.

Table 2: The data obtained on students' demography

School	Total no. of teacher	No of Females	No. of Male	Age 16 Above	Age 16 Below
5	150	81	69	102	48
		54%	46%	68%	32%

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' perception about population?

Table 3: Teachers' perception about population

S/N	Statement	Agree (No)	%	Disagree (No)	%
1	Are the students more than 60 in the class?	120	80	30	20
2	Do you have time to attend to your students individually?	36	24	114	76
3	I teach grammar three times or more in a week?	75	50	75	50
4	I give and mark the assignment regularly	84	56	66	44
5	The class comprises students from different socio-economic background	135	90	15	10
6	The classroom arrangement is clumsy?	135	90	15	10

From table 3 it has been revealed that there is presence of large population in our schools especially Oyo town as a case study. The perception of the teachers is confirmed with 120 about 80% of teachers' population confirming that there are more than 60 students in their classes 30, about 20% disagree. There is also result of those who have time to attend to their students individually. Only 36 about 24% do this while 114 about 76% don't do it. There is equal percentage distribution of those that teach grammar three times or more than three times in a week: 75 about 56% agree that they give assignment and mark the assignment regularly while 66 teachers, about 44% disagreed. It is evident that the classes comprise students from different socio-economic backgrounds with 135 teachers about 90% agreed classroom arrangement is also confirmed to be clumsy.

Research Question II: What are the students perception of large population?

Table 4: Students perception of large population

S/N	Statement	Agree (No)	%	Disagree (No)	%
7	There are enough English teachers in my school	30	20	120	80
8	My teacher shows interest in my progress	45	30	105	75
9	My teacher uses teaching aid in the class	50	33.3	100	60.7
10	I have interaction with my colleagues during class	85	56.7	65	43.3

11	I sit at the back and so, I am affected by noise	135	90	15	10
12	We exchange our notes for marking assignment	90	60	60	40

Table 4 also confirms the fear of large population of students in our school as only 30 about 20% agreed that there are enough English teachers in our schools while 120 about 80% disagreed. 45 students, about 30% also agreed that their teachers show interest in their academic progress while 105 about 75% disagreed. 50 students about 33.3% agreed that their teachers use teaching aids while 66.7% disagreed. Due to large population, 85 about 56.7% agree they usually interact in the class while 65 about 43.3% disagreed. 45 about 30% agree that noise affects them because their sitting positions are at the back of the class while 105, about 70% disagreed. A laughable revealing is that 90 students about 60% admitted they exchange notes for marking assignment in the class while 60 about 40% disagreed.

Research Question III: What are the effects of large population on the teachers in grammar classes?

Table 5: large population on the teachers in grammar classes

S/N	Statement	Agree (No)	%	Disagree (No)	%
13	Students' performances are generally good	30	20	120	80
14	Less than 50% of the class have textbooks	45	30	105	75
15	I have access to sufficiently teaching aids and use them	45	30	105	75
16	Many times workloads from teaching the class weakens me	60	40	90	60

The effects are reflected in items 13-16 as only 30 teachers about 20% responded that the performances of the students are good while 120 teachers about 80% disagreed. 45 teachers about 30% responded that less than 50% of the class have textbooks while 105 about 70% disagreed. 60 teachers, about 40% have health issues because of workload, while 90 teachers about 60% disagreed.

Research Question IV: What are the effects of large population and the students in grammar cases?

Table 6: large population and the students in grammar cases

S/N	Statement	Agree (No)	%	Disagree (No)	%
17	English grammar classes are bigger than other subject classes of like government	30	20	120	80
18	many aspects grammar are difficult	45	30	105	75
19	My teacher marks the assignment every time	45	30	105	75
20	I enjoy grammar classes	60	40	90	60

The effects of large population on the students in grammar class are captured in table 6. All students i.e. 150, 100% admit that English is a general class and the population is large. 45 students, about 30% agreed that many aspects in grammar are difficult which 105 students about 70% disagree. 90% students about 60% agreed that the teacher marks the assignment every time while 60 students about 40% disagreed. 60 students about 50% enjoyed the class while 60 students about 50% disagreed.

Discussion of the Study

The study was aimed at investigating the effect of large population on both the teachers and the students in English Grammar class. The study revealed that the majority of the teachers agreed that large population have negative effects on them in English grammar classes. The students also agreed that large population had significant negative effects on their performances in English grammar. These two positions consolidated the perception of both the teachers and the students that large population existed in most of the schools and it is a bad omen for our educational sector due to large population. It was observed from the findings that some teachers are being over stressed, thereby making it impossible for them to attend to challenges of their students individually.

It is evident from this study that some teachers had devised strategy of using their students to exchange notes for marking among themselves as a way of ameliorating already excruciating condition that has enveloped

them by large population. This is a bad development because the students may be biased in their assessment. There is also the issue of very few spaces on time table for teaching grammar. More worrisome is the percentage of teachers that are truly qualified as English Language teachers. Only few teachers have what it takes to teach English in our schools. There is also the issue of students' inability to purchase textbooks. Parents, school authorities and government should see this ugly development which must be arrested otherwise the downtrend in performance will continue.

Implications of the Findings

The result of this study shows that the effects of large population is damaging on both the teachers and the students. Interestingly, the students are the worse recipients of the damage since they need to be competent in the use of grammar in order to excel in the areas. Also, the study revealed that large population in grammar classes weakens the effectiveness of the English language teacher. A class with large population is synonymous with noisy environment and other teaching problems. Efforts should be made to address this.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evidently clear that large population has negative effects on both the teachers and the students. Large population in our educational system manifests because of inconsistent and ineffective government policies. The teaching of grammar at the senior secondary schools deserves serious attention since it has tremendous effect on the future careers of the graduates at the level. Conductive and enabling environment are needed to enhance quality teaching of grammar and by extension quality education.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. For effective teaching and learning in a grammar class, class should comprise between 30 and 45 students.
2. Teachers should regularly update their knowledge. Government should provide enough facilities in schools in order to aid teaching.
3. Teachers should have access to teaching aids and they should use them. Relevant authorities should employ competent teachers of grammar in schools. Schools libraries and laboratories should be well equipped.
4. Teachers as parents should have interest in students' project and motivate them to success. Appropriate attention and monitoring should be given to the actors in teaching and learning of grammar. Government should see to the urgent need of retraining of teachers of English Grammar in order to meet up with the needs of the day and as well tackle the challenges that are emanating.

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