



Investigating The Relationship Between Class Interaction And Class Size In The Faculty Of Language Studies At Sohar University: A Qualitative Case Study

Halima Ali Sulaiman AL-Maktoumi^{1*}, Dr. Mohammed Talib Musallam Al. Kiyumi²

^{1*}Sohar University, GFP, Sohar University Sultanate Of Oman, 0000-0002-8215-2707 Hsulaiman@Su.Edu.Om

²Faculty Of Education And Arts, Sohar University, Mkiyumi@Su.Edu.Om

Citation: Halima Ali Sulaiman AL-Maktoumi, Dr. Mohammed Talib Musallam Al. Kiyumi(2024), Investigating The Relationship Between Class Interaction And Class Size In The Faculty Of Language Studies At Sohar University: A Qualitative Case Study , Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 30(6), 3635-3640
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i6.6217

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study described the relationship between class interaction and class size in the Faculty of Language Studies at Sohar University. The sample of this study was selective. It included lecturers who taught students in the Faculty of Language Studies. The number of the lecturers with little experience was five while the number of the experts was fifteen. Two study instruments were utilized, direct observations, and individual interviews. Furthermore, the reliability of the study was proven by repeating the research tools several times. The findings showed that in all three study themes lecturers' interaction with learners, learners' interaction with lecturers, and learners' interaction with learners, there was an inverse link between class interaction and class size. The findings showed that there was greater class interaction in small classrooms than in large classrooms. This finding aligned with the model of the assumed Constructivism Theory. In order to keep the same number of students in small classrooms for two to three hours, it is advised that the number of learners in large classes should be decreased. Additionally, the study suggested offering lecturers training sessions on how to manage the class interaction in large classrooms.

Key words: Class Interaction, learners' Interaction, Class Size.

Introduction

Interaction in classrooms between teachers and learners is considered one of the most effective educational factors in the learning process. Sofian & Rogger (2017) asserted that interaction is the heart of learning in classrooms and it is an effective way to support the learners' understanding in classrooms. Interaction is the way of receiving and giving information collaboratively and effectively.

Rhalmi (2016) argued that high interaction in classrooms leads to effective learning and as a result, teachers contribute in the learning process by providing good techniques in terms of dealing with class interaction in large and small classes.

Based on the learning theory of constructivism, learning process is a dynamic and active process of constructing meaning and transforming effective understanding in interaction with learning environment (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995).

Edutechwiki (2009) stated that theory emphasizes that effective learning is all about knowledge construction, collaborative discussions, and active learning strategies in terms of improving interaction in classrooms via considering the effects of learning environment and the learners' learning styles of understanding details.

Study aim

The study aims to explore the following

- Is there any relationship between class interaction and class size in the Faculty of Language Studies at Sohar University?

Study Questions

This study discusses three themes as follows:

1. Lecturers' interaction with learners.
2. Learners' interaction with the lecturers.

3. Learners' interaction with learners.

The study contains sup-questions for investigating the main question which which "Is there any relationship between class size and class interaction for both large and small classes as follows":

- ❖ Is there any relationship between class interaction and class size in terms of lecturers and learners' interaction?
- ❖ Is there any relationship between class interaction and class size in terms of learners' interaction with the lecturer?
- ❖ Is there any relationship between class interaction and class size in terms of learners' interaction with learners?

Literature Review

Class Interaction in Teaching Process

Class interaction is a major factor in teaching at Sohar University in Oman in both small and large classes. Class size is a challenging factor in terms of teaching and managing a very big number of learners in a classroom in many aspects of facilitating productive and collaborative learning that improves class interaction.

Balakrishnan (2017) indicated that in small classrooms learners do not have multiple opportunities to interact with others as their number is little while they have multiple opportunities to interact with others in large classes.

Hanum (2017) affirms the role of interaction in helping the teaching and learning process to run smoothly and increasing learners' communication. It tells how the learners interact among them and the lecturer and even with the whole class. It supports communication to happen in the classroom. Both the lecturer and the learners will be active in communication and take part in the teaching and learning process.

Class Size and Learners' Interaction

Balakrishnan (2017) proposed that many techniques ave to be included in classroom interaction to ensure its effectiveness. This is also consistent with the traits of effective education for the twenty-first century. Everything done should be interesting, relevant, sensible to the learners, related to their prior knowledge, abilities, and experiences, capable of arousing their curiosity about new information every time, and either directly or indirectly applicable to their daily lives. Such tactics might result in deep learning, which is what the majority of curricula and educational institutions throughout the world aspire for.

This study investigates class interaction, and class size at Sohar University. the following presumed theoretical framework (model) illustrates the relationship between class size and class interaction.

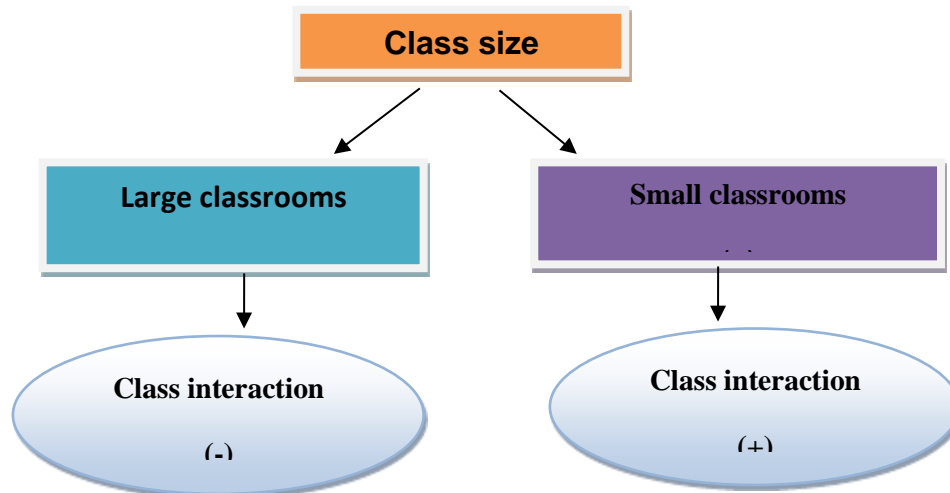


Figure 1.1, The Presumed Model Illustrating Classroom Size and Class Interaction

The above figure shows that small class size indicates more class interaction and vice versa.

Class Size Challenges

It can be difficult to teach and manage a large group of students in a classroom while still creating effective and collaborative learning that enhances class engagement. Additionally, the size of tiny classes presents a challenge for group control because there are so few learners in them. (Davis ,2013).

In large classrooms, low class interaction causes lack of supervision, which prevents lecturers from correcting students' errors which results in a lack of error correction. All students cannot receive equal attention from the teachers. Each learner cannot be watched after by the lecturers and as a result they will be perplexed. The lecturers do not have enough time to grade every paper in large courses. As a result, the learners will be perplexed and the lecturers don't provide helpful feedback to learners in the classrooms; instead, they simply check to see if they have finished the assignment. They also squander time checking attendance records and

delivering directions. On the other side, low class interaction occurs in small courses since there aren't enough students to allow for adequate group and individual sharing of information (Imtias, 2014). Moreover, the disciplinary problems cause confusion among the learners. However, due to insufficient students numbers for proper group and individual information sharing, there is little class interaction in small classrooms. (Shah & Inamullah, 2012).

In contrast, learners can learn more in small settings. In classrooms with a small number of students, lectures can motivate students to do well; however, this is challenging in classrooms with a large number of students. Because they think their grades and performance would be better in smaller courses, learners want to enroll in classes with fewer learners. Additionally, learners perform very poorly in huge classrooms while excelling in smaller classrooms with fewer learners (Chingos, 2013).

On the other hand, large classrooms cause the lecturers to become more anxious. The challenges and limitations of low-class contact can be handled by lectures. The lecturers, however, encounter difficulties in tiny classes and are unable to manage fewer students due to the limited opportunities for conducting multiple groups' interaction discussions (Miller & Frtz, 2003).

Albert (2014) observed that lecturers can better help students in larger classrooms than they can in smaller classrooms, which instills in learners a sense of responsibility and makes them feel important and respected in the learning environment. Due to the limited size of the class, there is little interaction among the learners. As the learners have limited opportunity to interact with others, there is little interaction. Additionally, Balakrishnan (2017) noted that because there are fewer learners in small classrooms, there are fewer possibilities for them to interact with one another than there are in large classes.

On the other hand, making groups like Jigsaw or Banjo, which are thought to be beneficial in cooperative learning groups that can be controlled in large classrooms, allows lecturers to boost the interaction between learners in huge classes. Due to the small number of learners, lecturers cannot form effective groups in small classrooms. As a result, in small classrooms, the boredom of the learners affects the lecturers. As a result, the interaction is drastically reduced (Johnson & Christensen, 2010).

In large classrooms, there is relatively little interaction between professors and students. The teachers in these classrooms don't have enough time to give each student their undivided attention, which results in a lack of feedback. Teachers also struggle with minimal interaction in small courses due to their poor detail understanding. This is the reason Sohar University has now hired certain qualified professors to provide additional support to students who experience learning challenges in crowded classrooms through advising sessions and further consultation. The extra supportive classes are conducted in **Majlis Support Learning Center**. The role of the professional lecturers in Majlis plays an incredible role at Sohar University because it assists the learners and helps them to overcome their problems of low interaction in both large and small classes (Rogger, 2017).

As a lecturer at Sohar University, I have observed that interaction occurs in classrooms more often in smaller settings. On the other side, when there are slow learners present, the lecturers find it difficult to instruct them using methods that suit their learning styles.

small classrooms result in very little interaction. Additionally, there is less interaction in large classrooms than in small ones. Although the high learners' population creates several opportunities for different discussions, lecturers and learners both struggle with engagement, information delivery, and information reception due to the congestion in the classrooms.

Methodology

The study is based on a qualitative case study to investigate whether there is a relationship between class size and class interaction in the Faculty of Language Studies at Sohar University. Both observations for small and large classrooms and individual and focus group interviews for 20 lecturers were implemented. The study explored the reality of relationship and its type whether negative or positive between class size and class interaction. Table one shows that the interaction of students increase positively with decreasing one class size and affect with the students' levels.

Table 1: Relationship between Class Size and Class Interaction Findings and Discussion

Class	Number of students per class	General course	Specialization course	Class size	Class interaction
Frist year	65	15	0	Large	Acceptable
Second year	50	9	6	Medium	Good
Third year	20	2	10	Small	Very good

	21	2	10	Small	Very Good
Fourth year	18	0	12	Small	Excellent
	18	0	12	Small	Excellent
Total	191	28	50	-	-

This study discovered that small classrooms tend to have greater interaction than large classrooms. The lecturers stated their worries that they could manage small classrooms but not large ones, with the exception of tiny classrooms with one-hour sessions. Additionally, they discovered that managing a large number of learners was particularly difficult compared to managing small classrooms in terms of time management, supervision, and teaching strategies. They were also afraid that they couldn't accommodate learners in the large classes. The lecturers lacked the time necessary to use effective teaching techniques, monitoring, and feedback. Additionally, absenteeism among learners was higher in large classrooms than in small classrooms. This study also showed that due to time constraints, there is limited contact even in some small classrooms. Due to the time constraints and the enormous number of learners, both the lecturers and the learners were under pressure in the large classes. Two- hours or three- hours classes were challenging for the lecturers. Actually, in cramped classes, the lecturers were unable to monitor the learners' work throughout the sessions. More learners contact occurs in smaller classrooms than in bigger ones. However, there can occasionally be productive class interactions in large classrooms when the lecturers are effective in their reinforcement. As a result of their experience, skilled lecturers can effectively manage learners in large classrooms by giving them enough feedback thought using effective technology so that they can remember what they have learned. They can effectively control the classrooms and the pace of the lectures by using body language and gestures.

References

1. Achilles, C. M. Finn, J. D., & Pannozzo, G. M. (2003). Small classes in the early grades, academic achievement, and graduating from high school. *Jurnal of Education Psychology*, 97(2), 214-223.
2. Adaba, H. (2017). Exploring the practice of teacher-student classroom interaction in EFL to develop the learners' speaking skills in Tullu Sangota primary school grade eight students in focus. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 8 (4), 1-18. doi: 10.4172/2151-6200.1000295.
3. Alber, M. (2014). *Managing overcrowded classrooms strategies*: Routledge Publication.
4. AL-Omari, H. G., & Akour, M. M. (2014). The effect of class size on reliability estimates of college-students course grades. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Sciences*, 15 (3), 541-558 .
5. Aoumeur, H. (2017). The impact of class size on teaching and learning English as a foreign language: The case of the Department of English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 (2), 349-361. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no2.25>.
6. Arico , A. (2011). The effect of class size on inclusion student academic success. Walden University.
7. Balakrishnan, V. (2017). Teaching and learning for real-life: The application of real-life moral dilemma discussion (Re-LiMDD) for classroom interaction. In *Teacher Empowerment Toward Professional Development and Practices*, 195-210, Springer, Singapore.
8. Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., & Brown, P. (2011). Examining the effect of class size on classroom engagement and teacher-pupil interaction: Differences in relation to pupil prior attainment and primary vs. secondary schools. *Learning and Instruction*, 21(6), 715-730.
9. Brown, H. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. (2nd Ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
10. Burnett, J., & Krause, K. L. (2012). *Teaching large classes: Challenges and strategies*. GIHE Griffith Institute of Higher Education.
11. Cao, J., Crews, J. M., Lin, M., Burgoon, J. K., & Nunamake, J. J. (2008). An empirical investigation of virtual interaction in supporting learning. *The DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems*, 51-68 .
12. Celik, B., & Koc, N. (2015). Effect of class size on university entrance exam in Turkey. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 919-924.
13. Chingos, M. M. (2013). Class size and student outcomes: Research and policy implications. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(2), 411-438. doi:10.1002/pam.21677.
14. Damodaran, A. (2008). *Teaching large classes. Teaching and Learning at Business Schools: Transforming Business Education*, 89-99.
15. Davis, R.(2013).Equal education to SA government: lay down basic standards from schools. *Daily Maverick*. <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/articel/2013-equaleducation>. Accessed on 6th June, 2016.
16. Edutechwiki. (2009).Socio-Constructivism. Retrieved from <http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/socio.constructivisim>.
17. Fauziati, E. (2014). *Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL): Traditional method, designer method, communicative approach, scientific approach*. Surakarta: Era Pustaka Utama.
18. Fortes, P. C., & Tchanchane, A. (2010). Dealing with large classes: A real challenge. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 8, 272-280.

19. Fritz, C. A., & Miller, G. S. (2003). Concerns expressed by student teachers in agriculture. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 44(3), 47-53.
20. Fung, C. S. (2012). An examination of how classroom interaction changes as a result of class size reduction: findings from a HongKong secondary school. (Thesis). University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong SAR.
21. Grabinger, R. S., & Dunlap, J. C. (1995). Rich environments for active learning: A definition. *Association for learning Technology Journal, ALT-J*, 3(2), 5-34.
22. Han, J., & Ryu, K. (2017). Effects of class size reduction in upper grades: Evidence from Seoul, Korea. *Economics of Education Review*, 60, 68-85.
23. Hanum, N. S. (2017). The importance of classroom interaction in the teaching of reading in junior high school. In *Prosiding Seminar Mahasiswa Kerjasama Direktorat Jenderal Guru dan Tenaga Kependidikan Kemendikbud*.
24. Harmer, J. (2009). *How to Teach English*. London: Longman .
25. Iipinge, S. M. (2013). Challenges of large class teaching at the university: implications for continuous staff development activities. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11070/2180>.
26. Imitiaz, S. (2014). Explaining Strategies for English Language teaching of Pakistani Students in public sector Colleges. *Research Journal of English language and literature (RJELAL)*, 2(2), p247-253. Retrieved from www.rjelal.com.
27. Jia, X. (2013). The application of classroom interaction in English lesson. Retrieved from <http://www.atlantis-press.com/php/downloadpaper.php?id =7895> .
28. Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2010). *Educational research. quantitative qualitative and mixed approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
29. Khadidja K. (2010). The effect of classroom interaction on developing the learner's speaking Skill. M. A. thesis, Mentouri University, Constantine Faculty of Letters and Languages. Department of foreign languages.
30. Koenig, L., Gray, M., Lewis, S. & Martin, S. (2015). Student preferences for small and large class sizes. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(1).
31. Kosheleva, O., & Villaverde, K. (2018). How to assess universities: Defining average class size in a way which is most adequate for teaching effectiveness. In *How Interval and Fuzzy Techniques Can Improve Teaching*, 345-352. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
32. Moore, C. (2008). *Young children's social organization of peer interaction*. Queensland: Queensland University of Technology .
33. Mulyati, A. F. (2013). A study of teacher talk and student talk in verbal classroom interaction to develop speaking skill for young learners. *Journal of English and Education*, 1(1), 1-10.
34. Naimat, G. K. (2011). Influence of teacher-students' interaction on EFL reading comprehension. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 23(4), 672-687.
35. Nandrup, A. (2016). Do class size effects differ across grades. *Education Economics*, 24(1), 83-95.
36. Nugroho, K. Y. (2011). Interaction in English as a foreign language classroom (A case of two state senior high schools in Semarang in the academic year 2009/2010). *English education journal*, 1(1), 50-69.
37. Rhalmi, M. (2016). *classrooms interaction*. Retrieved from <http://www.myenglishpages.com/blog/classroom-interaction>.
38. Rodriguez,V. & Lynneth Solis, S. (2013). Teachers' awareness of the learner–teacher interaction: Preliminary communication of a study investigating the teaching brain. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 7(3), 161-169.
39. Rohmah,T. (2017). *Classroom interaction in speaking class: A Naturalistic study at Gama English Course Boyolali*.
40. Sellers, E. (2018). *Small college class size benefits Hearst Seattle media, LLC*. Retrieved from <http://education.seattlepi.com/small-college-class-size-benefits-1269.html>.
41. Shah, J. & Inamullah, M. (2012). The impact of overcrowded classroom on the academic performance of the students at secondary level. *International Journal of Research in Commerce, Economics and Management*, 2(6), 9-11.
42. Shen, T. & Konstantopoulos, S. (2017). Class size effects on reading achievement in Europe: Evidence from progress in international reading literacy study. *World Academy of Science International Journal of Educational and Pedagogical Sciences*, 4(6), 98-114.
43. Sorensen, C. (2015). An examination of the relationship between online class size and instructor performance. *Journal of Educators Online*, 12(1), 140-159.
44. Suherdi, D. (2009). *Classroom discourse analysis: A systemic approach*. Bandung: Celtics Press .
45. Thapa, C. B. & Lin, A. M. (2013). Interaction in English language classrooms to enhance students' language learning. Retrieved April, 12.
46. Thng, Y. X. (2016). *The Effects of Class Size on Student Behavioral Outcomes: The Role of Teacher-Student Interactions* (Doctoral dissertation).
47. Tuan, L. & Nhu, N. (2010). Theoretical review on oral interaction in EFL classrooms. *Studies in literature and language*, 1(4), 29-48.

48. Walsh, S. (2013). Classroom discourse and teacher development. Edinburgh University Press.
49. Wankat, P. (2002). Improving Learning in Small Classes, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
50. Wilkins, K. (2014). How new technologies affect student-teacher relationships. Retrieved from <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/new-technologies-affect-student-teacher-relationships>.
51. Wright, M. C. Bergom, I. & Bartholomew, T. (2017). Decreased class size, increased active learning Intended and enacted teaching strategies in smaller classes. Active Learning in Higher Educatio