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**AN OVERVIEW OF OVER COMING TIME CONSTRAINTS IN THE TEACHING OF THE USE  
ENGLISH/ ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES IN LARGE CLASSES.**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper has discussed problems of Time Constraints in the teaching of the Use of English in Large Classes. To prepare a level playground, basic concepts underlying time constraints and large class were discussed. Through discussion of challenges of teaching the Use of English in Large Classes for example, a fact was established that time constraints affect both teacher and the student.

**KY PUBLICATIONS**

**INTRODUCTION**

In many countries of the world today, English language serves as medium of communication especially at national and international levels. According Sharndama, Yakubu and Yusuf (2014), the demand for English Language all over the world is on the increase because it plays different international roles. In many countries of the world today, English Language serves as the language of Globalization, international Politics and Diplomacy, Commerce, Science and Technology, Education among other was written. Sharndama et al also opines that the increase in global interactions has stimulated the growing demand for proficiency in English.

English Language in today's global village is taught by different countries for different purposes. In many of the countries colonized by Britain, English Language was left as a legacy. It resulted to English becoming second Language of many children and even first for many. In Nigeria, Ghana and India for instance, English Language is used as official language. In these countries and indeed many others, English is the language of instruction in

institutions of learning. In higher institutions, it is taught to students of different course backgrounds, sometimes in large halls and is called the use of English or communication skills and in recent times English for Academic Purposes.

The sizes of the classes use to be large with one teacher teaching heads he cannot identify. Large classes are found in many institutions of learning today as a result increase in students' enrolment. Duncan (1999) for instance points out that increased student numbers in South African universities coupled with reduced resources have often resulted in larger class sizes, thus encouraging a reversion of the traditional style of delivery and a reduction in small group and tutorial contact - in short, less interactive teaching and learning. Magna (2014) similarly, states that large classes create enormous challenges for the faculty who teach them. The challenges range from reducing anonymity to incorporating active learning activities. This implies that though large class phenomenon poses challenges, there are some strategies that tutors can adopt to enhance learning in large

classes. Some of the strategies will be highlighted in the literature reviews.

In recent times, large class phenomenon has become one of the problems of teaching English in many higher institutions of learning across the globe especially in developing countries where learning materials and instructors are grossly inadequate when compared to the number of students in a class. This phenomenon resulted to several challenges of teaching English Language .and the quest for overcoming them. Thus, this paper focuses on how to overcome time constraints as one of the challenges faced by tutors of English Language in Large classes.

#### **Importance Of Use Of English/English For Academic Programme In Tertiary Institutions**

The English Language taught to students of first year in English medium tertiary institutions of the world is known by different names/labels. In Nigeria for example, it is popularly known as the USE of English. In some countries of the world, it is called English for Academic Purposes. According to (Jordan (2007) cited in Afull (2007), EAP is literally located in English-medium universities worldwide. Whereas in the USA, it is usually labelled Freshman Composition or General Composition and lately a variant called Writing in the Disciplines, it is often referred to as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in the UK and Canada. EAP in the UK arose in response to the increasing internationalization of tertiary education, while Freshman's Composition and other allied programs in the USA arose as a response to the obvious decline in the quality of writing of students (Bazerman & Russell, 1994 in Afful 2007. The Use of English or English for Academic Purposes according to Afful(2007) assumes a preparatory, facilitative, and catalytic role for fresh students, ensuring their smooth transition from pre-university stage to the university level. It is English Language Programme to improve the students English so as to enable them pursue their academic course of studies successfully. In Nigeria for instance ,the attempt to prepare students towards attaining competence in the English language has had a fairly long history. The use of English course was started in the University of Nigeria Nsukka, in 1960 and since then the practice has spread to all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria

with such titles as General English, Use of English, Remedial English, etc.(Emenyonu N. and Nnolim E.1994).In spite of the different labels, the objective of teaching it is almost the same in all English medium tertiary institutions. The general objective is to help the students to acquire communicative competence in the English language. This is expected to prepare them for maximum understanding of study materials and performance in their various areas of specialization and general language use. Today, English Language is taught in-sessionally in English medium institutions to facilitate the students proficiency, while it is taught pre-sessionally to prepare the students for study in English as a medium of instruction.

#### **Communicative Language Teaching**

Today, millions of people want to improve their command of English or to ensure that their children achieve a good command of English. And opportunities to learn English are provided in many different ways and through different teaching methods. One of these methods in the languages is known as communicative language teaching method. Communicative language teaching can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards 2006). Galloway ( 1993) is of the view that communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situation that students are likely to encounter in real life.

Thus, the communicative language teaching is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning with the language. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used; and this will allow them to learn to use language.

#### **Approaches**

Under communicative language teaching there are two popular approaches. One is called the Audio-Lingual approach which is also known as the Aural-Oral method used in North America, while the other which is called the Structural-Situational approach is used in the United Kingdom. The audio-lingual which involves the use of recorded models

for language teaching may not be feasible in a typical large class in Nigeria tertiary institution. Hence, the situational language method becomes more feasible. In a typical lesson, a three-Phase sequence, known as the p-p-p 4cycle, was often employed: Presentation, Practice, Production. *Presentation*: Here, the new grammar is presented, often by means of a conversation or short text.

The teacher explains the new structure and checks students' comprehension of it. *Practice* – students practice using the new drills or substitution exercises.

*Production*: students practice using the new structure in the different contexts, often using their own context or information, in order to develop fluency with the new pattern. The P.P.P has been criticized because of its belief that a focus on a particular form helps learning and automaticity. According Skehan (1996. P. 18), some scholars have added innovations to it thereby improving it. Brumfit (1984) for instance added "fluency-first" pedagogy. This method states that students' grammar needs should be determined by performance on fluency task rather than a predetermined grammatical syllabus.

From the foregoing, it has been observed that using the CLT approaches particularly the audio-lingual in the teaching of English to a large class may not be feasible due to time constraint. This is because the approach is time consuming, particularly the audio-lingual approach. However, the P.P.P. can be modified and used by the language teacher in order to achieve effectiveness in the teaching of English even in a large class. For instance, a teacher can take a text that demonstrates how a grammatical theory works: *tense*: the use of present for singular subject and plural subject. The teacher then gives it to students to practice; after which he gives them assignments on correct tenses to use in expressions. The assignment can be marked in class using peer tutoring thereby reducing the amount of time needed for feedback. In addition, below are ways of overcoming time constraint in teaching English language in a large class using the communicative language teaching approach.

### What Is Large Class?

The term large class has no single accepted definition. It is defined from different perspectives since as the people's perception of the phenomenon is constrained by different factors, Centre for enhancement of learning and teaching 2003 cited in Agbatogun (2007), points out that large class syndrome has been attributed to the expansion in annual students' enrolment. At any rate, education as old as man has been characterized with mass instruction and this is the peculiarity of large classes in various institutions. Students, as many as three or four hundred, often cluster in a small hall tending to pay attention to the "talking and chalking" lecturer who occasionally scribbles on the chalkboard, while it is mostly assumed that, as the lecturer passes the necessary information through verbal means, learning takes place, Large class phenomenon does not come about accidentally. Sometime financial constraints, lack of space and shortage of teachers gives no option to the government and school proprietors other than running large. The rapid increase in school enrolment and acute shortage of resource persons, learning materials and structures to match the growing population of students are factors responsible for abnormal class sizes in educational institutions. Shortage of resource persons, learning materials, and structure give lecturers no option other than to use lecture method which gives little or no room for learners to collaborate, explore or share ideas.

Bangkok (2006) opines that a large class has no fixed size; it is measured in terms of the number of children per teacher (students-teacher ratio). 20-30n students per teacher are considered large in some countries. While in other countries these are seen to be normal or even quite small. From teacher's perspective, a class is large whenever it feels large. While a class of 50 students is considered as large to those teachers teaching 35 or fewer students, a class of 35 can be large and overwhelming. Bangkok (2006) however asserts that class size does not automatically correlate with the students' learning. Students in large class can learn just as well as those in small ones. What counts is not the size of the class but the quality of the teaching. In the light of the above, Sharndama

and Agu (2013) opines that with the advent of information technologies, a tutor can handle 400-500 students in a class without stress in delivery and assessment. While public address system can be used to aid communication and learning activities, Computer based test (CBT) can be used to ease evaluation. This implies that a teacher who has the knowledge of using ICTs can still make his lesson in a large class interactive and collaborative. Sharndama (20013) summarizes the definitions of a large class as:

1. Large class has more students than the recommended class size.
2. Large has more students than learning materials and physical structures.
3. A large class has number of students in that can stop the teacher from working as expected and at the same time hampers students' learning

#### Challenges Of Teaching Large Classes And Coping With The Challenges

Teaching in large classes has several challenges since it is abnormal. The challenges however differ from one classroom setting to the other and from one teacher to the other. What is challenging in one classroom setting may not be challenging in another. Similarly, what is challenging for one teacher may not be a challenging for another. The following are deemed as common challenges as posed by [http://cocreat.purot.net/part\\_2\\_challenges\\_in\\_teaching\\_a\\_large\\_class](http://cocreat.purot.net/part_2_challenges_in_teaching_a_large_class)

- (i) **Intimacy:** Remembering student's names can take a while. Teachers may feel that they do not get to know their students as well as they would like to.
- (ii) **Anxiety:** Some teachers feel anxious being so outnumbered by the students. In addition, some students are afraid to ask questions or participate in a large class.
- (iii) **Student needs:** Meeting individual needs can be difficult or impossible when class size is very large.
- (iv) **Marking:** Grading assignments and tests can be very time consuming, and your pay will generally be the same for a smaller class.

- (v) **Distractions:** There are more distractions for teachers in large classes, such as latecomers and people chatting while you are teaching.
- (vi) **Preparation:** Making photocopies for a large class can be very time consuming. Other teachers may be bothered by how much time you spend using the photocopier.
- (vii) **Noise level:** Large classes can become out of hand when students are working in pairs or groups. At times you may feel more like a disciplinarian than a teacher.
- (viii) **Monitoring students:** Teachers may find it difficult to keep students on task as they monitor pair and group work.
- (ix) **Space:** There is limited space in a classroom for energetic activities such as role-playing.
- (x) **Textbooks and resources:** There may not be enough textbooks or computers available for all students.

#### Advertise Coping with Large Classes

- (i) **Use a teacher's notebook:** Attach a small notebook and pen to your belt loop. Take notes while you are monitoring pair or group learning. Review common errors as a whole group after an activity is complete.
- (ii) **Spread out:** Find another space that your class can use for energetic whole group activities. Find a lobby or spare classroom in the building that your students can spread out into when they are preparing a project or performance. Take students outside if there is no indoor space available.
- (iii) **Create a participation grade:** Make homework and attendance count by doing regular checks and making it part of their final grade. Giving a daily exam tip also encourages attendance.

#### STRATEGIES

There are many challenges of teaching large classes some of which have been presented in the last section. Time constraint is one of the challenges of teaching English in large classes. It is plain fact that learners come to the use of English class with different linguistic backgrounds and therefore needs to be handled based on their backgrounds. Time allotted for a lesson often makes it practicable difficult for the teacher. However;

some strategies can be adopted to overcome time constraint in the teaching and learning of the Use of English/English for Academic Purposes even in a large class thereby making learning effective just as in normal size class. Some of the strategies that a teacher could utilize include:

### 1. Interactive Lecture Techniques

This involves students working materials which enable the lecturer to assess the students. These techniques have multiple benefits: the instructor can easily and quickly assess if students have really mastered the material (and plan to dedicate more time to it, if necessary), and the process of measuring student understanding in many cases is also practice for the material—often students do not actually learn the material until asked to make use of it in assessments such as these. Finally, the very nature of these assessments drives interactivity and brings several benefits. Students are revived from their passivity of merely listening to a lecture and instead become attentive and engaged, two prerequisites for effective learning. These techniques are often perceived as “fun”, yet they are frequently more effective than lectures at enabling student learning. [http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101\\_Tips.pdf](http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101_Tips.pdf)

This has to do with inter- parsing the lectures with brief in-class activities that require students to use the information or concepts presented in the lecture. This technique saves time. It is an easy way for instructors to intellectually engage and involve students as active participants in a lecture –based class in which the instructor breaks the lecture at least once per class to have students participate in an activity that lets them work directly with material thereby saving time as well.

The instructor might begin the interactive segment with an engagement trigger. This may come in the form of giving the students a reading to solve a problem or to apply a concept. Reading is a good task for students to have a chance to see real world example of something that has just been discussed in theory in class. For instance, if health care reform lowers salaries to doctors, reading an article about a shortage of doctors provides an

immediate application. In the engagement trigger segment, the instructor might begin by asking a thought provoking question, presenting things with visual appeal or things that are of common interest to students. Thus, instructors might try: Evocative visuals, physical props, cartoons, photographs, evocative textual passages, new clips, and clips from movies or television shows. Through the use of this interactive lecture, a lot would have been achieved in the teaching and learning with the minimum time available. Again, the activities allow students to immediately apply content and provide feedback to the instructor on students.

**2. JUST-IN-TIME TEACHING (JITT):** Just-in-time teaching focuses on improving student learning through the use of brief web- based questions (JITT exercise) delivered before a class meeting. Students’ responses to JITT exercises are reviewed by the instructor a few hours before class and used to develop classroom activities addressing learning gaps revealed in the JITT responses. JITT exercises allow instructors to ;quickly gather information about students’ understanding of course concepts immediately prior a class meeting and tailor the activities to meet students’ actual learning need with the minimum time available. As such, JITT helps improve students’ preparation for class

\_ enhances students motivation for learning.

\_ promotes ongoing formative assessment of students learning (by both instructors and students) Informs in-class activities that target student learning gaps.

**3. Using in - class exercises:** Under the in- class technique, as you lecture on a body of material or go through a problem solutions to the Instead of just posing questions to the class as whole and enduring the ensuring time minutes to come up with a response In this exercise, you might ask students sometimes to write responses individually, sometimes to work in pairs or group of three and sometimes to form pairs and combine and improve their individual responses(think- pair- share) The more you vary your method, the more time you save and the more interesting the class will be.

**4 Out- of – class Group Assignments:** When teaching a class of 160 students and you give individual homework weekly, that’s 160 papers to

grade is every week. If the students complete the assignments in teams of four and only one solution is handed in by each team. That is 40 papers to grade every week. With this team assignment, a lot of time would have been saved with the teacher not sharing away from giving assignment for effective teaching.

**5 Making Technology Work for you:** As technology becomes more complex, it becomes more daunting. But it can also be quite helpful. Here again are some examples of time –saving, effort-saving technologies proven to be effective in teaching Even in a large class(.Galloway,

**5a Classroom communicative systems:** These are electronic response systems you can have students use to respond to multiple choice, in- class Questions you pose about the course material. These systems can help you and your students to assess their learning as you go, rather than waiting until the next quiz or exam. The instantaneous feedback allows students who get the wrong answer to ask you for further information immediately.

**5b Teaching Naked:** This has to with moving some of the content, removing some of the personal safety net and simply trying to connect with our students delivering first contact with the material is very safe. You know what comes next, and it is the students who are naked and unprotected. When you provide another means and incentive for learning the material in advance, you give some control and that can feel like teaching naked, but it can improve students' learning while saving time.

The term teaching naked entails using technology before and after, but not during class time. It can be used in of form e-mail. Email could be utilized for Sending course materials for study to student; messages about lecture time; assignments and getting Feedback. All this measures helps in utilizing to maximum class time judiciously. Thus making sure all that needs to be done have been done and have been properly taken care of by using naked teaching. This method is synonymous with Just –in – Time teaching technique.

**5c Mobile Learning:** Mobile technologies offer a way to create dynamic time-saving interactive learning environments inside and outside the classroom. The current generation of wireless computing and

portable communication devices includes laptops ,tablets, PDA (personal digital assistants) mobile phones, digital cameras, MP3 player ,iPods, phones, small electronic book readers and various multiple function devices .These mobile devices can be used to make up for the limited class periods. It can be used to facilitate quick feedback or reinforcement; deliver interactive demonstrations and quizzes; provide immersive experience even in the learning of use of English.

**5d Lecture Capture:** This also helps in utilizing the limited time available in the use of English class even in a large class. It involves the recording of classroom activities or special events using specific software and making that recording available electronically. The audio or video recording is normally stored digitally on the internet or in iTunes U for downloading and playing back on computers and portable media players and iPods. The recording is sometimes referred to as a podcast or a screen cast and may be audio only or include video of the lecture. Some software synchronizes lecture slides for viewing alongside the relevant sections of audio and/or video recordings of the instructor, Depending on the software used for recording, students may be able to speed up or slow down lectures, pause the playback, and move forward or backward in the presentation (Nagel, 2008; Fernandez, Simo & Sallen 2009)

**6 Cooperative Learning Technique:** Cooperative learning technique involves structuring around small group that work together in such a way that each group member's success is dependent on group's success. Cooperative learning helps students develop the skills necessary to work on projects too difficult and complex for any one person to do in a reasonable amount of time. Cooperative learning exercises can be as simple as a five minute in class exercise or as complex as a project which crosses class periods. Cooperative learning exercises can be developed to fit within multiple categories such as discussion, reciprocal teaching, graphic organizers, writing and problem solving.

## 7. DISCUSSION

The paper has looked basic concepts related language teaching and learning. Communicative language and its basic approaches were first



examined to orient the reader. The phrase 'large class' was as well examine to provide the reader positive bearings. This study re-emphasizes the concept of large class is not essay to define. The difficulties of defining the phenomenon more in the number of students that constitutes a large class. In the developed countries where learning facilities and man power are available, a class of 20-50 can be considered as large. In developing country like Nigeria, a class of 50-100 is still considered normal. This study there established that a large is phenomenon that differs from on learning institution to the other or from one country to the other. It is a phenomenon that is depicted by the inability of the teacher to effectively teach and manage a class.

This study also examined some of the existing strategies of overcoming time constraints in large classes. Prominent among the strategies overviewed include out- out of class group assignment/ cooperative learning which involves grouping the students and giving each group a task to be executed with a given time frame. This gives the students room for sharing ideas and active participation.

Mobile learning and distant learning are also effective way of overcoming time constraints in large classes. The internet nowadays enables a teacher to reach hundreds of students at a time. Sharing of learning facilities can also be made easy by posting it to website where the students can access. Email can also be used for sending and receiving students' assignments which saves instead of doing it the class..

#### 8. Conclusion

This paper has examined the phenomenon of large classes. It has looked background information on the demand for English across the globe and the approaches to the teaching of it, It also established the fact that the concept of large is perceived differently. A class as pointed out that is considered large in one country may not be considered large in another. Large class in ideal sense is determined by the teachers feeling and how it affects his performance. Large classes as pointed out from the literature reviewed posses some challenges to the teachers of English. Since the challenges are many

and differ from one classroom setting to the other, only those deemed common were sampled. Suggestions as to how to cope with large classes were provided.

Since the paper was focused on time constraints, strategies for overcome time constraints were drawn from various literatures. The drawn strategies for overcoming time constraints established the fact that though there are challenges posed by large classes, a teacher could still devise ways of making learning effective as in small classes. Technology for example has made it easy for a teacher to reach out to the students. Technology as well has made assessment easier, Computer based test (CBT) could be prepared which could be marked automatically. Teaching and assessment in large classes could only persist where technological facilities are not available or inadequate. Finally, the paper has shown that time constraints affects almost every aspect of the teachers lesion as evidenced by the different strategies of coping with large classes.

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