

ELT-16

Maximizing learning in large classes

Milestones in ELT

Milestones in ELT

The British Council was established in 1934, and one of our main aims has always been to promote the wider knowledge of the English language. Over the last 75 years, we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

As part of its 75th anniversary celebrations, we are re-launching a selection of those publications online. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

Maximizing learning in large classes: Issues and options

This very practical and 'teacher-friendly' publication was produced following a Hornby workshop on teaching large classes in Ethiopia in 2006. The book was put together by the workshop tutors, drawing on the materials and activities generated by the workshop trainers and participants. Part 1 provides an introduction to the issues involved when teaching in large classes; Part 2 looks at specific classroom activities; and finally the book provides a useful bibliography for those wishing to read more on the subject.



Maximizing learning in large classes: Issues and options



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Contents

Preface	5
<hr/>	
Part I : Teaching and Learning in Large Classes	10
<hr/>	
Introduction to large classes	11
Increasing student involvement in large classes	23
Managing large classes	39
Assessment and feedback in large classes	54
Maximizing the use of resources	75
Introducing innovations in large classes	87
<hr/>	
Part II : Classroom Activities	101
<hr/>	
Activities for increasing students involvement in large classes	106
Activities for managing large classes	123
Activities for assessment and feedback	143
Activities for maximizing limited resources	163
<hr/>	
References and further reading	179

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Preface

The materials in this book come from course participants (teachers and teacher educators) in the Hornby School on 'Teaching English in Large Classes' held in Ethiopia from 28 August - 2 September 2006. The first part of the book was written by four writers from among the course tutors - Fauzia Shamim, Negussie Negash, Chinyere Chuku and Netsanet Demewoz. The Activities in the second part were provided by course participants and edited by the writers. The writers worked alongside the course facilitators to compile the materials into this publication. The aim of the publication is to:

1. Enable teachers of large classes to identify and analyze the issues in teaching English in large classes;
2. Enable teachers of large classes to develop strategies for overcoming the difficulties they face;
3. To provide teachers with a set of activities that can be used in the teaching of English to large classes.

The book has two parts. The first aims to sensitize teachers to the issues of teaching English in large classes through a range of tasks and reflective activities. Teachers are encouraged to analyze the teaching and learning that takes place in their own classes and to compare their 'solutions' with those of other large class teachers. Part two contains suggested activities to carry out when teaching language skills in large classes. The steps in the activities are clearly described to enable all large

class teachers to use them in their classrooms. A table at the beginning of part 2 summarizes the focus of the activities.

The unique aspect of this book is that the activities in part 2 have been developed by large class teachers who, on a daily basis, face issues in teaching English to their large classes. They are teachers from all levels of the school system, as well as from teacher education colleges.

As writers we have tried to present the material in a teacher-friendly way, often directly addressing the large class teacher reading the book. The activities are open-ended enough for teachers to use them at various levels. Variations are suggested to suit a range of levels and teaching contexts. Consequently, we hope that this publication will be used by teachers in the context of real classrooms in Africa and in other developing countries faced with similar challenges.

The following are some *instant poems* on large classes written by the course participants of the Hornby School held in Ethiopia from 28 August - 2 September 2006. The course participants wrote these poems before attending the course on 'Teaching English in large Classes'. As you read them think about which of them reflect your own feelings as a large class teacher? In your opinion, are there only challenges in large classes or also opportunities?

Large Class

Noisy Restless Active

It is like a honey bee

Manage

Wisely patiently actively

I feel like enjoying

Market

(Almaz)

Large Class

Difficult unsuccessful unmanageable

It was like a war

Confront

Strongly Terrible harshly

I feel like Crazy

Warfront

(Tilahun)

Large class

Crowded Noisy Ugly

It is like an Ocean

Interact

Creatively patiently arrogantly

I feel like [being in] hot Water

City

(Biniam)

Large Class

Awful disgusting unbearable

It's like a life challenge

Work

Tirelessly enthusiastically systematically

I feel like controlling

Market place

(Geatachew Melaku)

Large class

Complex challenging enjoyable

It is like a puzzle

Handle

Seriously caringly carefully

I feel like climbing a mountain

A work of art

(Anonymous)

We are glad to tell you that the large class teachers felt rather differently by the end of the Hornby course. Instead of feeling frustrated and overwhelmed in the 'ocean' of large classes, they felt both empowered and 'in control'. In addition they came to realize that they are the ones who can develop ways of

enhancing student learning outcomes in their large classes. They also discovered that they can learn a great deal from sharing experiences and ideas with other teachers.

We hope that as you read this book and reflect on your own teaching you too will feel more prepared to face the challenges of teaching English in large classes.

We invite teachers and teacher educators to send us their comments on the activities in the book and to suggest additional activities that they have found effective in their large classes. We also invite large class teachers to share any practical tips for teaching their large classes more effectively. We hope these will become part of the next edition of the book.

A note on use of language: Throughout the book, the teacher is referred to as 'she' and the learner as 'he' to avoid the use of sexist language.

PART

I

Teaching and Learning in Large Classes

Section

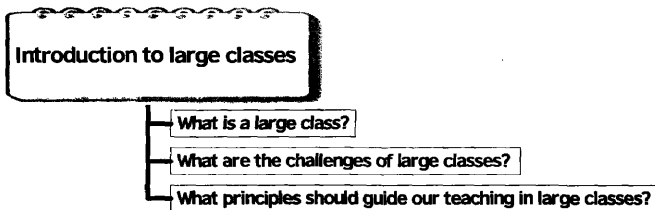
1

Introduction to Large Classes

Objectives:

- To analyze the characteristics of large classes
- To analyze the challenges faced by teachers and students in large classes

Overview



1.1 What is a large class?

Large is a relative word and large classes have been variously defined by practitioners from different

teaching-learning contexts. A large class in a western context such as the US or the UK may be considered small by both teachers and learners in most teaching-learning contexts in Africa. A large class can vary from 22 in US elementary schools to up to 150 in an African classroom. The *Language Learning in Large Class Project* tried to find out 'How large is large?' by asking teachers to share their perceptions and experiences. After administering the questionnaire in several countries, it was found that teachers' perception of class size varies from country to country and at different levels and educational contexts within the same country. Thus Coleman (1989) concluded that 'teachers share no universal conception of the size of the ideal, large and small classes" (p.35).

Reflection:

How would you define a large class?

During the Hornby School on 'Teaching English in Large Classes' participants from seven different countries in Africa were asked to define a large class. There was general agreement that a class with more than 40 or 50 students is large. However, participants gave a variety of reasons for describing their classes as large. These included teacher stress and workload due to large numbers, teachers' concern about giving equal opportunity to all learners, issues of classroom management and concerns about assessment and giving feedback to learners. In the words of participants, "A class of more than 50 feels awkward and feels like a back-breaking task";

“I can’t give equal opportunity to everyone” and “I’m not able to mark exercises within the class time”.

Class size is often defined in numbers. However, teachers’ and learners’ perception of a large class is determined not only by number of students but by several additional factors. These include: physical conditions in the classroom such as the amount of space available; teaching focus; teaching methodology; and the availability of resources. Hence, while numbers may be necessary for defining large classes, numbers alone is not sufficient to arrive at a shared definition, even within one country (Shamim, 1993).

1.2 Teachers’ perception of the challenges and opportunities presented by large classes

The following challenges for teaching English in large classes were identified by the Hornby School course participants

1. Insufficient student involvement/learning
 - Inability to use a student-centred approach
 - Limited opportunity for learners to express themselves in English
 - Difficulty in ensuring everybody’s participation in activities
 - Many students are off-task particularly in group activities

2. Managing large classes

- Class management
- Class control
- Issues of discipline and noise
- Managing group work

3. Assessing learning and providing feedback

- Evaluating the work of students/continuous assessment
- Inability to identify problems of learners
- Inability to know the progress learners make
- Inability to assess students individually
- Inability to provide a remedy based on the feedback from the assessment

4. Limited resources for teaching

- Lack of adequate materials to be distributed to each student

Reflection:

Which of the above challenges do you face in teaching English in your large classes? How do you try to address them?

Participants at the Hornby School course also identified some opportunities that are presented by teaching English in large classes. These included:

1. As you are constantly thinking about how to maximize student learning in large classes, you continue to be a LEARNER all your life;
2. Maximizing the use of resources through creative management and the redistribution of such resources as are available;
3. Rethinking teaching and learning to suit the context of large class teaching

The following poem, written by a large class teacher, outlines in a creative way the opportunities presented by teaching in large classes.

Large Class

Beautiful lovely graceful

It is like Titanic

Moving

Quickly smoothly beautifully

I feel like a man in the sea of mankind

Sometimes I feel like a man amongst flowers

Colourful decorated and patterned

with a lot to say and a lot to learn

having them [large number of students] there

1.3 Learners' perception of the challenges in large classes

It is interesting to note that there is great similarity between learners' and teachers' perception of large

classes. Similar to the teachers, learners describe such challenges as: lack of adequate space leading to overcrowded classrooms; inadequate attention from the teacher; lack of opportunities to participate in classroom activities; and difficulty in getting their written work checked or receiving oral feedback from their teachers. The following extracts from learner interviews illustrate some of the challenges learners in large classes face in secondary schools in Pakistan: (Shamim, 1993)

Example S1: *“The physical conditions in the classroom are less than optimum. There is limited seating capacity as the classrooms are built for 40 students and we have 20 dual desks for students. As some of these may be broken and therefore unusable, three to four learners have to share a desk.*

Example 2: S1: *“There is a lot of noise so even if we want to learn something we can’t do it. These days it is so peaceful because some girls go for games practice.”*

S 2: *“And we can sit two at a desk.”*

S3: *“And there is also less noise. We can understand what is taught by the teacher. If there are 40-50 students, when the teacher is teaching the students at the back can’t hear her clearly, so the teacher has to speak very loudly. But with fewer students the teacher can teach more comfortably. All of us can hear her and understand the lesson”.*

Example 3: S1: *“There is a lot of noise in the classroom which is distracting. Moreover, the teacher is unable to pay individual attention to the students.”*

S2: *“When there are more students teachers do not pay attention to everyone. Now with so many students we sit 3-4 to a desk - so how can she give us individual attention. The noise in the classroom, this along with limited opportunities for classroom participation (answering teachers’ questions), makes it difficult for the students to understand the lesson.”*

S3: *“You don’t get an opportunity to answer. Even if you want to answer, you never get a chance to complete what you want to say.”*

Getting their written work checked by the teacher is another problem faced by learners in large classes in schools in Pakistan as well as Africa.

In teacher-centred classrooms, learners sitting ‘out of the action zone’ miss out on important opportunities for learning as they find it difficult to hear the teacher and/or see the blackboard (Shamim, 1996).

Example 4: S: *“I sit at the back while she stands in the front and teaches girls in the front only. Also we can’t hear her at the back. As she comes into class she starts the lesson immediately. While girls I the front can take out their books quickly we get late.”*

Reflection:

What do your students feel about learning in a large class?

You can use the following questionnaire to find out.

Questionnaire for finding out learners' perceptions about large classes

Instructions: Please circle the answer of your choice (1=Highly important, 5=Least important)

How important is it for you to do the following things in your class for learning English?

See the blackboard and the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Hear the teacher clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Hear other students clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Get individual help from the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Get help from your neighbours/friends	1	2	3	4	5
Have the teacher see/correct your work	1	2	3	4	5
Get opportunities to participate in classroom activities	1	2	3	4	5
Get opportunities to practice your English	1	2	3	4	5
Get individual attention from the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Pay close attention to the teacher during a lesson	1	2	3	4	5
Do the class work assigned by the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Get opportunities to answer teacher's questions	1	2	3	4	5
Avoid being noticed by the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Not get distracted by the noise in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
Any other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

1.4 From problems to principles

Coleman (1989) suggests moving from problems to devising principles for teaching in large classes. He suggests five specific and two general principles for rethinking teaching and learning in large classes. These are summarised below.

Coleman's principles for large class teaching (from Coleman, 1989, 6-8)

General principles

- **Be realistic:** *There are some things that are either very difficult or simply impossible to do in large classes. Similarly, there are other things that can be done well in large classes. Instead of feeling guilty about what cannot be done, explore and focus on what can be done well in large classes.*
- **Give more responsibility to the learners:** *Consider sharing responsibility for learning with the learners instead of taking responsibility for everything that happens inside (and outside) a language learning class.*

The following specific principles suggest ways of sharing responsibility with the learners to address some of the common problems teachers face in large classes.

Specific principles

1. **Discomfort:** *Organize learning in ways that takes the spot light away from you (the teacher), e.g., use pair and group work- this will also allow the learners to take responsibility*

for their learning.

- 2. Control:** *Do not try to monitor everything; share 'control' of learning by giving some responsibilities to the learners.*
- 3. Evaluation:** *Do not feel stressed about evaluating everything that the learners produce. Learners can be encouraged to self-assess or check their peer's work and thus share responsibility for checking learning with you. Alternatively, being realistic, you may decide that all the language produced by the learners does not need to be corrected.*
- 4. Individual attention:** *To address the problem of giving individual attention to learners in large classes, use activities that allow for increased opportunities for individual interaction between teachers and learners.*

Reflection:

Review Coleman's' principles for teaching-learning in large classes.

How might these principles help you rethink teaching and learning in your classes?

1.5 Conclusion

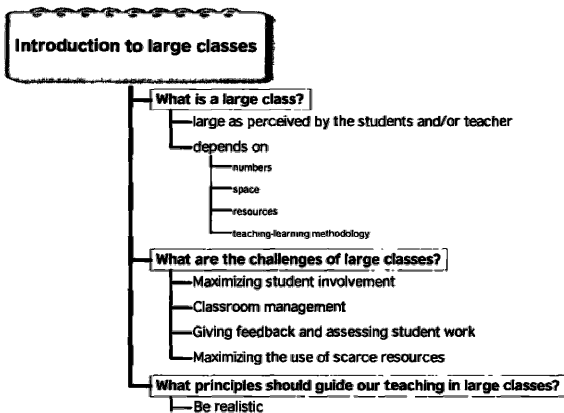
Large classes are a reality in most African countries today and this is likely to remain the case for some years to come. The majority of Africa governments, along with those from other developing countries are committed to the goal of Education for All by the year

2015. This means increasing access to education without a concomitant increase in resources – both human resources and other. In fact, putting a few more children into each classroom may be seen as the best way to increase access to education. The success of Universal Primary Education in Uganda has resulted in class sizes increasing by almost 100% during the last ten years.

In the African context, it is therefore important to acknowledge that large classes are a reality and the chance of reducing class size in the next decade is very slight.

Hence our immediate focus must be on finding ways to maximize student learning in large classes. This booklet is a first attempt by African teachers and teacher educators to take charge of this issue and develop indigenous ‘solutions’ to well-known problems of teaching English in large classes.

Section 1 Review



Section

2

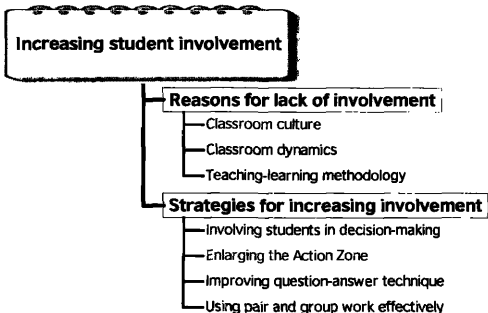
Increasing Student Involvement in Large Classes

It is fundamental to the teaching-learning process that students are engaged – that they are ‘on-task’, listening actively and participating fully in discussions and other activities. This is not easy to achieve in a large and heterogeneous class but we will discuss a range of strategies that teachers can use to work towards this goal.

Objectives

- To analyze the reasons why there may be lack of student involvement in large classes
- To examine ways of increasing student involvement and independent learning in large classes

Overview



2.1 Reasons for lack of involvement

In any class, whether large or small, it is a challenge for the teacher to ensure that all students are actively engaged in the learning process. We will begin this section by analyzing the various reasons why students lack involvement.

Classroom Dynamics

Some students will arrive in class with an agenda other than learning (Allwright 1996). They will probably position themselves at the back where they think they will not be seen. Here they may be passive – perhaps reading a book or doing homework for another class – or they may be disruptive – talking to their neighbours and distracting other students.

Anxiety

Other students may be passive because they are anxious. This is a particular problem in language

classes where students may feel uneasy speaking, and perhaps making mistakes, in front of their peers. Look out for the reticent or shy student (especially females in traditional societies) who may be afraid to take part in whole class interactions.

Purpose or task unclear

Other students may lack involvement because they are unclear about the purpose or the objectives of the class or because they have not heard the teacher's instructions clearly.

Teacher focuses on only a few students

Or perhaps the teacher's style is to teach mainly from the front of the class and to interact only with the most interested students who tend to sit in the front rows. Perhaps, her questioning style favours the few dominant students.

Although all these reasons for lack of involvement occur in small classes as well as large, they are obviously more acute in large classes due not only to the number of students but to their diverse backgrounds.

As the number of students increases in large classes so does the diversity of learning styles, levels and needs or expectations of students. The challenge for the teacher of large classes is to find ways to help each individual student maximise their learning. This is referred to as individualisation. (Sarwar 1994: 202).

2.2 Enlarging the ‘action zone’ to increase student involvement

One of the manifestations of classroom dynamics in large classes is the significance or meaning students attach to seating position (Shamim 1996). Students seem to choose different positions to manage learning and other social and pragmatic demands in the large class.

Reflection

Think about your experience of being a learner in a large class.

Where were your preferred seats (front, back, middle)?

Did this vary at the secondary or tertiary levels? Why?

Did you change seats at different stages of for different classes? Why?

In whole class teaching, the front of the class where the two major resources, the teacher and the blackboard, are located becomes the ‘action zone’ (Ibid: 138) for the students. In this zone the teacher can see the students clearly and therefore tends to interact frequently with selected students in the front seats. As a result some students, usually those who are highly motivated, prefer to sit in the front of the class. Some students, on the other hand, prefer to sit in the back rows to be away from the direct gaze or monitoring of the teacher.

In classes where the teacher teaches mainly from the front of the class, students in the middle and

back rows are in danger of being out of the action zone. This may be because they cannot hear the teacher well or see the blackboard clearly. It may also be that, being out of the action zone, they may simply be more easily distracted.

The following strategies may help increase student involvement by enlarging the action zone.

1. Change your teaching style to focus less on lecturing and more on students doing activities in pairs or in small groups. As a result you widen the activity zone to include the whole classroom. Use a variety of activities that will interest and involve all the students.
2. Get students to change their seats. For example, every Monday, have the front row move to the back and all other rows move forwards so that during the term all students have a chance to sit in the action zone.
3. If there is space, move around the class and conduct whole class activities from different places (front, back, middle of the class). If it is difficult for you to move around the class, move up each row of learners.

2.2 Creating a positive classroom culture to increase student involvement

The type of interaction we observe, in both large and small classes, depends on the classroom culture – on the teacher's and the students' view of learning. The classroom culture determines the roles and rules of engagement for the members.

In the traditional classroom culture a distinction is made between the teacher who produces (or provides) knowledge and the students who consume it (Wenger 1998). Interaction in the classroom is dominated by the teacher and a few high performers because the classroom culture (Breen 2001) dictates that those who know should speak and the others receive. This 'asymmetry' in classroom interaction (Breen 2001; Negash 2005) creates an atmosphere in which many students feel too afraid to speak. Once students feel excluded in this way, they are more likely to be distracted and turn to agendas other than learning.

Learning to speak a new language is by itself a cause of anxiety for many students and if the language learning takes place in large classes the anxiety is likely to be greater. This will be particularly the case for reticent or shy students and, in some traditional societies, may be more so for females than males. They may simply be too afraid to speak in front of the whole class or are afraid of losing face if they make mistakes in front of their classmates. The following extracts reflect this:

S1: *I think we did it well from the past but I have fear when I always speak in front of the students I don't know. Because of my fear I mix some words and I didn't speak straight to the audiences I mean I turn my face because oohh all students were look at me because of my fear.*

S2: *The mistakes I made when I introduce myself to the class: when I speak I was also thinking about the mistakes I commit. This interrupts my idea. I was looking for the teacher. I was ashamed of my friends to speak in front of them. I was also thinking that my classmates may find mistakes and assuming as to*

blame me. (Extract from Negash 2005)

Reflection:

Are there issues of anxiety in your class?

What do you think gives rise to them?

The following strategies may help increase student involvement by creating a positive classroom culture:

1. At the start of the course establish with your students a set of classroom 'rules of participation' that emphasize respect for other students and value making mistakes as part of the learning process.
2. At the start of the course use activities (icebreakers) that help students get to know one another.
3. Use more pair and group work to allow students to practice the language in a less threatening environment. Pair and group work also allows more students to speak than would be possible in a whole class situation. Begin with pairs or groups in which students know each other well and, as they develop confidence, try mixing pairs and groups and asking students to speak in front of the whole class.

2.3 Improving question-answer techniques to increase student involvement

Asking and answering questions is vital to the learning process. Asking questions allows students to clarify points of uncertainty and also indicates the extent to which they are able to use new knowledge and ideas. Responding to questions requires students to recall a new fact or concept and, if the question is phrased appropriately, to apply their knowledge to a new situation. As they respond to questions, students get feedback on their own learning and the teacher gets feedback on students' understanding.

For students to gain maximally from question-answer sessions it is important that all students are involved. Clearly, in a large class not all students will be able to respond to the class but techniques can be used to ensure that all students think about the question before the teacher selects the student who will respond.

The following comments from a teacher and a student highlight this issue:

S1: *The teacher only follows a few students who have previous background and they want to show off. When we raise questions he says they are silly.*

T1: *Whether in class activity or giving answers to take-home assignments, only few students participate in my class. Especially the female students seem to shy away from asking and answering questions.*

Reflection:

In your classes, do all students participate in asking and answering questions?

If not, why is this? How do you try to deal with the problem?

The following strategies may help increase student involvement in question-answer sessions:

1. Begin with some straightforward questions (such as reiteration of facts from the text) that all students should be able to answer. Follow with more complex questions (that require inferring, evaluating or summarising) but allow more thinking time and perhaps time for students to exchange ideas with a partner.
2. Be sure everyone has heard and understood your questions. You may want to reinforce the question posed orally by writing it on the board.
3. When you ask a question that requires thinking, give time for all students to work out the answer. Ask that students raise their hands when they have the answer and wait until many students raise their hands before choosing someone to respond. For more complex questions encourage students to write down the answer before they raise their hand.
4. Encourage students to back up their responses with evidence. For example if they give a yes/no or true/false answer ask them, 'What makes you say that?'

Reflection:

Which of the strategies listed above do you use regularly in your class?

Which would you like to try?

Reflection:

Read the following extract. Suggest how the teacher could modify the question-answer session to encouraging greater student participation?

T: So this is what is discussed in this passage... Number one. Women bear almost all of the burden of reproductive or domestic work in the countries described (reads aloud the 1st reading comprehension question. Students have textbooks open in front of them) False or True?

Ss: True [It is false]

T: Himm

Ss: False

[True

False

T: It is false because children on many instances particularly the girls share the burden, to some extent boys, to some extent urr? Even? Husbands. Therefore they don't bear almost all the reproductive?

Ss: Work

T: [Work

(Extract from Negash 2005)

2.4 Participatory decision-making to increase student involvement

Traditionally it is the teacher who dominates decision-making about teaching and about assessment. This monopoly of the teacher arises from the behaviourist view that learning happens due to the teacher's teaching behaviour. However, if learning is to be effective, students must understand what is happening in the classroom, why it is happening and how that leads to their learning. In other words they must understand the purpose of what they are learning and they must understand the learning objectives. Once students understand the learning objectives, they can, and ideally should, be involved in setting the criteria that will be used in assessment. At the very least they should be aware of the assessment criteria.

Reflection:

To what extent do you involve your students in classroom decisions about teaching and assessment?

Why? Why not?

Involving students in making decisions about teaching/learning can increase students' self-directedness (Breen and Littlejohn 2001) and motivation to learn the target language.

The following strategies may increase student involvement by giving them a greater role in decision-making:

1. Ensure all students understand the purpose

of the class and the learning objectives they are aiming to achieve. Learning objectives should be available for reference at all times so it is best to write them on a section of the board that you will not need to erase during the class. Alternatively you could ask students to write them in their notebooks at the start of class.

2. **Use Learning Contracts:** These are forms on which students state their specific learning objectives, the resources they need and the actions they will take to achieve their objectives.
3. **Share assessment criteria with students or, even better, involve students in setting the assessment criteria.**

2.5 Using pair and group work to increase student involvement

In large classes the use of pair and group work can greatly increase the involvement of individual students. For example in a conversation class, let's assume the period is 40 minutes long and there are 90 students in the class. Let's assume the teacher speaks for a quarter of the time (in many classes it would be a much higher proportion). That leaves 30 minutes for students to speak. Assuming all students have an equal chance of speaking (again not normally the case) the amount of time for each student is 20 seconds.

However, if students spend some of the class time working with a partner or in a small group they

will have a far greater opportunity to speak. Let's assume students work for a quarter of the period (10 minutes) in groups of 5. That allows an average of 2 minutes for each student to speak – six times as much as in the whole-class scenario.

In addition, in large classes, where the teacher is a 'scarce resource', students can learn collaboratively in groups, giving each other feedback and providing peer coaching. For example, if students are writing a text, a draft can be discussed in the group, feedback given and improvements made before a final version is submitted for grading.

When students work in mixed ability groups, it tests the competence of stronger learners while building up confidence in slower learners. Group work also encourages learners to take charge of their own learning.

Group work also gives the teacher more time to give individual feedback if she moves between the groups as they are working.

Reflection:

What strategies can you suggest for using group/pair work more effectively in a large class?

Of course, to ensure that all students participate fully in pair and group work it must be well-organized.

The following strategies may increase student involvement by using pair and group work effectively:

1. Use groups of no more than 6 students. In large groups some students will tend to be

passive and the group may become difficult to manage.

2. Set tasks that require group members to interact and work collaboratively together – tasks that create interdependence amongst group members, The following categories are suggested by Nation 1994:164:
 - **Combining:** Each member has unique essential information to complete the task (e.g. completing a story by bringing parts together, or giving someone instructions to complete or draw something).
 - **Cooperating:** All members have equal access to the information required and the purpose is to enable the learners to share. (E.g. logical puzzles, simulations, role-play etc).
 - **Superior-inferior structure:** One or more group members have information the others need (e.g. data gathering, interviews, etc).
 - **Individual structure:** Each member has the same information and should perform individually (e.g. chain story, whereby one starts a sentence and each student is asked to add the next sentence)

3. Set a variety of tasks to cater for the different learning preferences of your students – those who like to talk, others who prefer to look and listen, those who like to learn by moving, others who prefer to write and draw.
4. Give very clear instructions, ideally both in verbal and written form.
5. To ensure the smooth running of the group, assign (or have the group assign) roles to different group members – leader, note-taker, spokesperson etc.

Reflection:

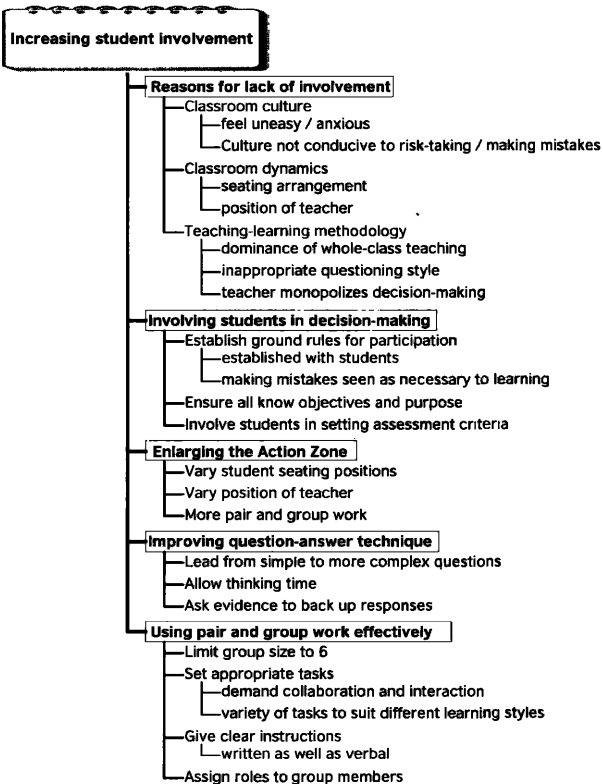
In what situations have you used group or pair work in your class?

What difficulties did you encounter and how might you overcome them?

2.5 Conclusion

To address issues of students' involvement in large classes requires teachers to analyze the multiple reasons behind the lack of involvement and to develop strategies for addressing these. Pair and Group work are invaluable for increasing student involvement in large classes but to be effective they must be well-planned and carefully managed.

Section 2 Review



Section

3

Managing Large Classes

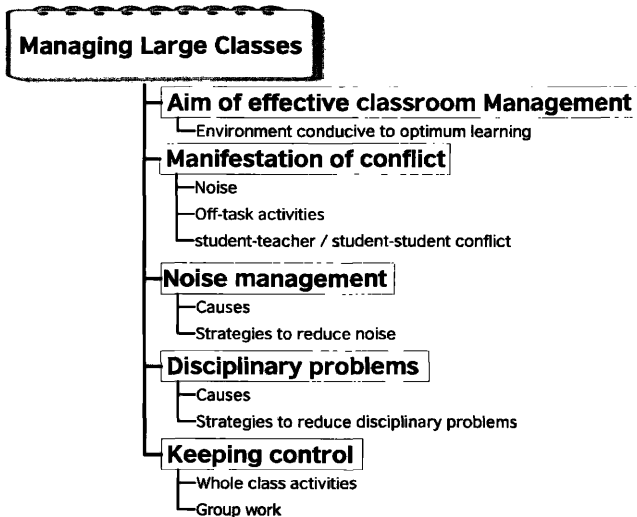
The aim of classroom management is to create an environment that is conducive to optimum learning taking place. This is not something that happens naturally – it requires careful and detailed planning, particularly in large classes.

Large classes are not only large but they are inevitably diverse – diverse in terms of students' level of knowledge, their learning needs, learning styles and expectations. This diversity, often coupled with a lack of resources, contributes significantly to the challenge of managing a large class.

Objectives

- To analyse the causes of conflict in large classes and the different ways in which conflict is manifested
- To enable teachers to develop strategies for conflict avoidance in large classes

Overview



3.1 Manifestation of conflict in large classes

Management problems in large classes manifest themselves in a variety of ways. These include noise, disciplinary problems and lack of cooperation.

Reflection:

What manifestations of conflict have you experienced in your classroom?

3.2 Causes of noise in large classes

We can recognize two different kinds of noise that occur during language teaching – communicative noise and disruptive noise.

Many language learning activities result in a certain level of noise which is created as a result of the communicative nature of the activity. Such noise is natural and indeed necessary to language learning. Nevertheless we must recognize that noise can be disturbing to those teaching in neighbouring classrooms so every effort should be made to ensure noise levels do not rise too high.

Reflection:

Think about an activity you did in class which created a lot of noise.

How did you feel about it?

What could you have done to reduce the noise level?

The other type of noise is disruptive noise. This is unwanted and intolerable noise.

Reflection:

List some causes of disruptive noise that you have experienced in your classroom.

Two typical causes of disruptive noise in a large class are unclear and unheard instructions and shortage of resources, for example text books.

Imagine you are teaching a class of 70 students and students in the last three rows don't hear your instructions properly. Students in the rest of the room start working on the task but the noise level rises as the students who didn't hear ask others to repeat the instructions.

Or imagine a single textbook has to be shared among six students. Inevitably only some of the students can read comfortably. The others may start pulling the book to get a better view and arguments may develop. Alternatively, students at the margins begin to engage in off-task talk. As a result the level of disruptive noise rises.

Reflection:

Imagine you are faced with the above situations.

What would you do to deal with the noise?

What would you do in subsequent lessons to avoid such problems occurring?

3.3 Strategies for reducing noise

- 1. Establish ground rules:** At the start of the course discuss with your students the problems caused by excess noise and, together with them, establish a series of ground rules for reducing noise levels. You might want to display these on the classroom

wall and remind students of them from time to time.

2. **Give individual reminders:** If a group or individual is making an unnecessarily high level of noise move close to them and remind them of the need to keep noise levels low. It is often the case that students are so engaged in an activity that they don't realise they are making too much noise.
3. **Give clear instructions:** To avoid the disruptive noise that results when students fail to hear instructions clearly you can:
 - Give instructions both orally and in written form – on the board or on a piece of paper handed to each group during group work.
 - Speak clearly and use simple, unambiguous English.
 - After giving instructions check whether everyone has understood and clarify anything that is unclear.
 - If instructions are complex, give an example of what is expected or ask a small number of students to demonstrate at the front of the class.

3.4 Causes of disciplinary problems

As in most activities, whether it is a football match or driving through a city, the interaction between individuals in a classroom is governed by rules. The ways in which the teacher interacts with students and the students interact amongst themselves

are not arbitrary. There are norms of acceptable behaviour. These norms may be imposed by the teacher or, preferably, developed collaboratively with students. Everyone must know what they are and understand their purpose.

Disciplinary problems arise when individuals or groups fail to abide by the rules. There are a variety of reasons why this may occur. These include:

- Students are unaware of the rules or have forgotten them.
- Students did not agree to be governed by the rules.

3.5 Strategies for reducing disciplinary problems

- **Establish ground rules collaboratively with your students:** At the start of a course take time to involve your students in writing ground rules for acceptable behaviour. If students are involved in the writing of ground rules, they will generally observe them.
- **Remind students of the ground rules** regularly.

Below are examples of how two teachers remind their students of the ground rules.

Teacher A: *Once I have written the ground rules with my students, I write them on a poster and mount them next to the board throughout the year. I make sure that they are well written and add colour to the classroom.*

Teacher B: *I ensure the ground rules are copied into the first page of each student's exercise book. Whenever the need arises, I'll refer my students to the first page.*

Reflection:

What ways could you use to remind students of the ground rules?

3.6 The challenge and potential of group work

Many language activities are carried out in pairs or small groups. If used effectively, pair and group work increases the involvement of students in the class and helps the teacher manage a large class. However, the success of group work depends on the involvement and cooperation of individuals in the group.

In the absence of a cooperative culture among students, it is likely that the group will fail to achieve its objectives. It is also likely that only a few group members will be actively involved whilst others sit passively or indulge in off-task activities that may be disruptive to other students.

3.7 Whole class activities and the danger of losing control

During whole class activities students work as individuals. Interaction is most often with the teacher, rather than with other students and, as a result, the teacher has a very significant role. The following are two typical examples of whole class activities:

- The teacher provides information or explains a concept to the whole class. Students listen and perhaps take notes.
- Students carry out the same task at the same time, for example listening and filling in the blank spaces while the teacher reads a text.

Reflection:

What are the merits of whole class activities?

What are the management challenges of whole class activities in large classes?

In whole class activities the teacher is at the centre of the teaching learning process. If the teacher loses control, the class will quickly descend into chaos.

Reflection:

Below is the story of a prospective teacher in a teaching practice session.

Study the story and analyze why she lost control.

What strategies would you suggest she could use to ensure a similar situation does not arise in the future?

The first day I was with the class the students were quieter, but in my second lesson the chaos began. As I started the day's lesson, some big boys and girls sitting at the back started making noises. When I turn around they would stop and I wouldn't know who it was disturbing the class. Finally, I caught a girl and a boy tugging at each other. I asked the girl why she was shouting. She said 'he is pulling my hair.' Next another girl said she wanted to go out because she had a bleeding nose. I said to her I can't see anything like it, and the class burst into laughter at that moment. I was not sure she was telling the truth and I was getting agitated because I felt I was losing face in front of the class. But after some struggle I let her go and started the lesson. Then when I was discussing the homework, only kids in the front rows were showing hands and participating and the big girls and boys in the back rows were doing something else. I asked one of the big boys disturbing at the back to give me the answer to one of the questions. He said he didn't do it because he wasn't there the day before. He then murmured something I couldn't hear. The ones around him heard and were laughing. I felt he was insulting me and I became angry. With a stern look I told him to stay behind and talk to me after class.

3.8 Managing whole class activities effectively

In whole class activities you must strive to have the attention of all the students at all times and to ensure that all students are actively involved. You will be more like to engage students if they understand the purpose of what they are learning and the objectives of the class. Start each class by sharing your objectives, ensure they are visible to students throughout the class and that you refer to them at the end of the class when you review the lesson.

In addition, use the following communication strategies:

- **Speak loudly and clearly** so everyone can hear you.
- **Write clearly on the board** so it can be read by all students, including those at the back and sides of the room.
- **Move around** the class so you focus on different groups of students.
- **Don't fix your gaze** on one part of the class – look around.
- **Check understanding frequently** by asking appropriate questions.
- **Encourage students to speak up.** If you stand away from the student, you will encourage him to speak up so you can hear him.
- **Encourage participation from different parts of the class.** When you ask a

question allow time for all students to think about the answer before asking a student to respond.

- **Monitor closely for symptoms of boredom**, particularly by 'fast' learners. Try to have an additional, more challenging, question or task for those who finish quickly.

3.9 Some do's and don'ts if you lose control

DON'T:

- Act impulsively
- Get into an argument
- Make hasty generalizations for example, "I have heard a noise coming from that side of the room so all of you will be punished."

DO:

- Stay calm
- Involve student in solving the problem. If, for example, a particular student or group of students is making a noise while you turn away, ask the class if the behaviour was acceptable.
- Be polite but firm

3.10 Managing group work effectively

Many teachers believe that pair or group activities are the solution to all their problems in large classes. However, if not well planned, pair or group activities can create problems as well as solve them.

Reflection:

Recall some pair or group activities you have carried out in a large class.

What difficulties did you encounter? And how did you overcome them?

Were the activities successful? If so, why? If not, why not?

Below is a summary of concerns teachers have expressed about undertaking group work in large classes.

- *Grouping students is a time-consuming process, particularly if the teacher wants to make mixed ability groups. The pressure of completing the syllabus prevents the teacher from wasting precious class time in organizing group work.*
- *Getting the right group composition is difficult.*
- *Effective group work requires careful planning and good management skills. This is both time consuming and exhausting for the teacher.*
- *Poorly planned group work can result in chaos and create discipline problems.*

- *Teachers are unable to monitor a large number of groups. Hence they are not sure whether the students are really benefiting from working in groups.*
- *Teachers are unsure of how much learning is taking place in groups. They are in groups and talking but are they learning?*

Strategies for managing group work effectively

1. **Limit group size to a maximum of 6.** If there are more than 6 students in a group, some students on the 'margins' will probably get distracted.
2. **Use a familiar method for forming groups** so the students spend as little time as possible doing this. For example give students number and then ask all those with the same number to form a group.
3. **Ensure that the group activity requires working together and sharing.** Avoid the possibility that students can sit together in a group but do the activity individually.
4. **Give clear instructions,** ideally in both written and oral form.
5. **Train students in giving feedback and in peer assessment** (See Section 4)
6. **Ensure that both individual and group efforts are assessed.** Plan group activities in such a way that it is possible to assess individual contributions as well as group performance.

- 7. Use creative ways to gain students' attention whilst they are working in groups.** For example you might agree with your students that whenever you put up your hand every student should freeze and put up his/her hand.

3.11 Managing the transition from pair to group work to whole class

The transition from one form of working to another can be chaotic and time consuming. However, once again through proper planning, management problems can be minimized. Whenever possible, begin with pair activities and form groups by merging the pairs. This way you can also smoothly develop it to a whole class activity.

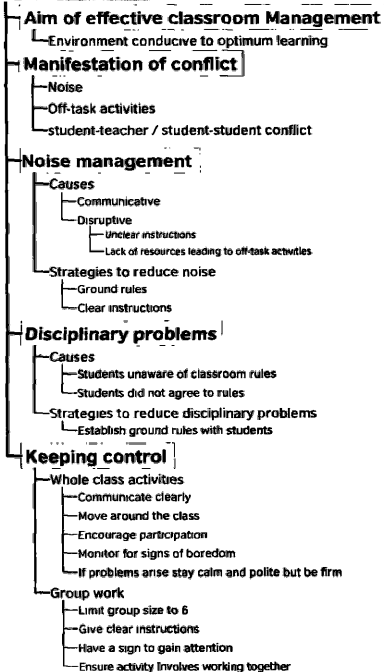
Generally, if transitions do not require significant movement, merging groups can be carried out efficiently and with minimum disruption.

3.12 Conclusion

The shortage of resources and the group dynamics of large classes require teachers to have highly effective management skills. A deeper understanding of the causes and types of conflict together with careful planning and creative implementation of plans allows skilled teachers to cope with the challenge of managing large classes effectively. In a nutshell, it's all about careful planning and creative problem-solving.

Section 3 Review

Managing Large Classes



Section

4

Assessment and Feedback in Large Classes

Regular constructive feedback is vital to the learning process. It helps both learners and teachers monitor the development of understanding and identify areas where further work is needed to dispel misconceptions or consolidate learning.

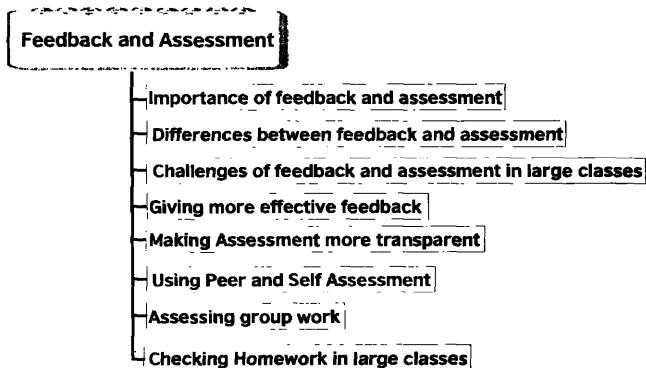
More formal assessment generally takes place towards the end of a unit of work in order to assess the degree to which the learning objectives have been achieved.

Objectives:

- To emphasize that assessment and feedback are integral to teaching and learning in all classes.
- To analyze the problems faced by large class teachers in giving adequate feedback and ensuring effective assessment.
- To examine how self-reflection and peer feedback can be used effectively in large classes.

- To examine strategies for increasing the effectiveness of assessment in large classes.

Overview



4.1 The importance of feedback and assessment

Feedback and assessment are an integral part of the teaching learning process. They allow learners to monitor their progress and achievement. At the same time, they help the teacher identify students who need further help and perhaps remedial work. Feedback and assessment also allow teachers to monitor their own performance and suggest ways to revise and improve units of instruction.

4.2 The difference between feedback and assessment

Assessment and feedback are often differentiated in terms of their purpose. Assessment usually refers to more formal ways of evaluating students' progress and achievement and is often linked to the awarding of marks or grades. In contrast, feedback provides more informal but more regular monitoring throughout the learning process.

Feedback can be oral or written. It may be given by the teacher or, as in peer feedback, by another student. Self-reflection can also act as a form of feedback.

Assessment may also be either written or oral. It is generally carried out by the teacher but, if clear assessment criteria are used, effective assessment can be carried out by other students, as in peer assessment, or by the student himself.

If used effectively both feedback and assessment can motivate students and help them become more independent learners.

4.3 Challenges of feedback and assessment in large classes

When students from large classes were interviewed about their views on assessment they highlighted in particular problems of transparency and fairness:

S1: *I really am not going to spend time on learning English now. Whether I study or not it is the same. If the teacher gives me 3/5 for the first assignment I will get 3/5.*

S2: *The teacher gives me 2/5 without any red mark. Others get 4/5 with a lot of red mark.*

Teachers of large classes also mentioned the problem of students complaining about their marks. In addition they expressed frustration that, despite correction, students continued to make the same mistakes:

T1: *I teach a class of 60 students. I taught them writing and I gave them writing assignments. But any time I return the marked papers they complain that I am too greedy and I am failing them.*

T2: *I mark students' papers frequently. But the mistakes they make are the same again and again. It is just useless.*

However, the primary concern of teachers was their inability to assess students' work as regularly as they would like. They feel stressed, frustrated and unhappy when they fail to check students' work. They feel guilty that they are not doing their job well.

T3: *I teach five classes and I have an average of 80 students in each class. Even if I want to check their work, the 40 minutes is not enough. It's also hard work. So, I can't do it as often as I would love to. It's beyond me; I can't help it.*

T4: *Of course, correcting every student's work regularly is a daunting one and unthinkable. I often put the students into groups and ask them to correct each other's work. But then, I'm not sure whether or not the students give the right feedback. I always feel I'm asking too much from my students.*

Reflection:

Which of the concerns mentioned above are specific to large classes?

What challenges do you face in assessing students' work in your large classes?

What strategies do you use to confront these challenges?

To summarize, the concerns raised in the extracts above are:

- **Assessment is perceived as unfair by students:** Perhaps due to lack of transparency or lack of consistency, students may perceive assessment as being unfair.
- **Students fail to act on feedback:** This concern is not specific to large classes. Teachers express frustration that, despite constant correction, students continue to make the same mistakes.
- **The volume of marking is overwhelming:** Many teachers, and especially teachers of large classes, are stressed and frustrated by the amount of marking they face.
- **Peer assessment may not be reliable:** Teachers are concerned about the quality of feedback students provide to their peers. In addition most teachers (and students) believe that assessing students' work is the job of the teacher.

None of these issues is specific to large classes. However, when the number of students is high and student diversity is great the problems are inevitably magnified.

In the sections below you will find some strategies and tools that you can use to address the problems highlighted in the extracts above.

4.4 Using the Feedback Ladder to give more effective feedback

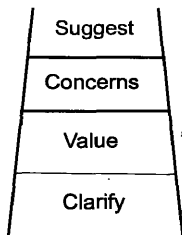
Feedback is not about judging and evaluation. It is about helping students and teachers to analyze progress in the learning process and identify the next steps to take. Regular feedback is an integral part of learning and is a critical factor in enhancing student learning outcomes.

Since feedback must occur regularly throughout the learning process, it is impossible for teachers to give adequate feedback to all students in large classes. It is vital therefore to train students to provide each other with feedback – peer feedback – and to reflect on their own learning – self-reflection.

A useful tool for students to use when giving peer feedback is the Ladder of Feedback. Developed by Harvard Project Zero, it provides a step-by-step guide to giving effective and supportive feedback.

There are four steps on the Ladder and those giving feedback must not skip any of the steps. The steps are:

The Ladder of Feedback



© Project Zero 2000

1. **Clarify:** Before giving feedback it is important to ask questions about any unclear points or missing ideas.
2. **Value:** Valuing a learner's work is important for creating a supportive environment so this step stresses the positive and interesting points, giving honest compliments.
3. **Concerns:** Sometimes there will be legitimate concerns, points that need attention, ideas to question. This step is to raise these concerns but in a non-threatening way such as, "have you considered....?" or "what I am wondering about is...."
4. **Suggest:** The final step is to offer suggestions about how to address the concerns identified or questions raised. This helps the learner to think about the way forward.

The feedback ladder can be used to help students give feedback to one another as well as guiding teachers in the giving of feedback.

4.5 Using clear assessment criteria to improve assessment

Traditionally, assessment is perceived as an evaluation and judgment that the teacher passes on students' performance. This puts control entirely in the hands of the teacher. The students are often unaware of the criteria used by the teacher to judge their performance and this may lead to accusations that marking is unfair.

If students are unaware of the assessment criteria it may also be difficult for them to understand the reasons behind teachers marking. This in turn makes it difficult for them to see how to improve. As a result they are likely to continue making the same mistakes and they are deprived of an opportunity to become independent learners.

For assessment to be fair and transparent, clear assessment criteria, shared with students, are vital. It is even better if students are involved in the development of the assessment criteria so they feel ownership of them and understand why they are important. Indeed, the process of developing assessment criteria can be a powerful learning experience in its own right.

Many teachers like to use rubrics to share their assessment criteria with students. Rubrics not only define the criteria that are important but also describe, for each criterion, the level of understanding required to achieve a certain mark.

Rubrics take time to develop so it is best to use them for assessing assignments that will be given a number of times throughout a course. For example you might develop a rubric for assessing essay writing. Once you share this with students it becomes a guide to essay writing as well as an assessment tool.

4.6 Using peer feedback and self-reflection to improve assessment

Most large class teachers are overwhelmed by the amount of marking they face and are frustrated

that they are unable to give regular feedback to all students.

Using peer feedback and peer assessment can reduce the burden of marking but teachers express concern about the reliability and effectiveness of the feedback students give to one another.

The key to effective and reliable peer feedback is clear assessment criteria and appropriate training so students use the criteria well. It is also important that students recognize the value of peer feedback and collaborative learning. For those used to an educational culture that values individualism and competition this may demand a significant shift in attitude.

Once agreed, the assessment criteria can form the basis on which students review one another's work and comment on it. For example if students are writing an essay, they could share their drafts and give each other feedback based on the assessment criteria, or on a rubric developed from the assessment criteria.

They could use the Ladder of Feedback to structure their feedback so it is constructive and supportive. Students could then act on the concerns and suggestions of their peers to improve their essay before submitting the final version for assessment by the teacher.

Whilst students are carrying out peer assessment the teacher is able to visit the different groups, gain feedback by listening in on the conversations and make comments and suggestions that she feels will be helpful.

Reflection:

Study the following activity taken from English for Ethiopia Grade 11 text book (page 104):

- 1.1. Rewrite the following passage, adding punctuation marks and capital letters where necessary. The passage should have three paragraphs.
- 1.2. Exchange your work with any one of the two students sitting with you and give feedback.
- 1.3. Rewrite the passage in the light of the feedback given.
- 1.4. Check your answer against the teacher's on the board.

What is the value of giving peer feedback in this example?

How could you use the Ladder of Feedback in this example? What would be the advantage of doing so?

Self-reflection and self-assessment can also be very valuable to the learning process. With clear learning objectives and clear criteria for assessment, students can effectively assess their own work and their progress towards achieving the learning objectives. Carrying out self-assessment is also important in decreasing student dependence on the teacher and encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Self-assessment may take a variety of forms. Some teachers ask students to give a subjective evaluation of their ability at the start of the course and then again during and at the end of the course. They might use a simple form like the one below:

Skills	Excellent or v. good	good	satisfactory	poor	Reason
Reading					
Writing					
Speaking					
Listening					
Vocabulary					
Grammar					
Pronunciation					

The results of this self-assessment can be used as a basis for students to set their own learning goals.

Effective self and peer assessment reduces learner dependency on the teacher, and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. As a result, the impact of assessment on the learning process can be greatly enhanced.

Reflection:

When would you consider using peer feedback in your class?

How would you organize the process to ensure that the feedback students give to one another is reliable and supportive?

Key points for peer assessment:

- Discuss with students the value of peer assessment and the importance of doing it well;
- Give clear instructions – both oral and written;
- Provide clear assessment criteria and explain what to focus on;
- Encourage students to use the Ladder of Feedback when giving feedback;
- Monitor the process by visiting different groups, checking their assessment and listening to the way they give feedback.

4.7 Strategies for assessing group work

As discussed in Section 2 of this book, group work is an important strategy for increasing students' involvement in learning, especially in large classes. However, many teachers are concerned about how to assess projects or compositions carried out in groups. They worry that it is often one or two more able group members who carry out the task

and the others become free riders (Crandall 1999; Negash 2006). If the teacher then assesses the group work and gives a mark, those who have done most of the work feel that the others have been unfairly rewarded. Hence there is concern from both teachers and students about the fairness of assessing group work.

Of course, it is not necessary to assess all work that is carried out in groups. If students are invested in the learning process and actively providing one another with feedback, learning is taking place whether or not it is formally assessed.

At the end of a period of group work students can be asked to reflect individually on what they have achieved, ideally using the learning objectives as a guide for reflection. They can also be asked if they still have questions or concerns.

If you do decide to formally assess work carried out in a group it is important that the task is very clear to all group members and that roles are assigned to each student in the group. The criteria that will be used for assessment should also be clear and students can be asked to use these to assess their own work before it is handed to the teacher for marking.

When you give a group assignment you can also ask students to evaluate each other in terms of contribution and cooperativeness. You can agree with the students the weight that their peer assessment will have in the overall mark.

Reflection:

Do you have concerns about assessing group work?

What action have you taken or could you take to assess group work more fairly effectively?

4.8 Strategies for monitoring homework

Homework is an important part of the learning process. It provides an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in class and hence to consolidate their learning. It is an opportunity for them to self-assess their understanding and to identify any areas of uncertainty. It is important that students understand the purpose of homework.

It is clearly impossible, especially in large classes, for teachers to mark each piece of homework. However, it is important to check that students have done their homework thoroughly and have an opportunity to ask about any aspects that puzzled them.

Below are some strategies that you could use to check students' homework.

- 1. Students compare their homework in pairs** and raise any questions that they cannot answer for each other.
- 2. Provide model answers** so students can self-assess their homework.
- 3. Collect a few examples of homework each class** and choose different students each

time. This allows you not only to see the individual students' work but also to identify any difficulties that the students in general are having.

The following case study describes how a teacher in a secondary school in Pakistan uses a whole class format to provide feedback to learners on their homework on the 'active-passive' [voice]. Forty six students were present out of a total of fifty.

The teacher starts the lesson by reminding the students of the two pieces of homework given earlier, i.e. "Writing 10 sentences in active voice" and "Completing sentences of tenses not done in class". She checks if everyone has done their homework. She reminds the students of classroom rules: "We don't say "Miss, Miss" and we don't give the answer in chorus". She instructs them: "Have colour pencils in your hand and do honest self-correction. A person learns by his/ her mistake." Before beginning the assessment, she encourages the students to help each other in understanding the task.

The teacher reads out each sentence. The students raise their hands and are selected to give the answer. The teacher confirms the answer from the class and if incorrect, invites other students to give the correct answer. In between she asks questions to check students' understanding, e.g. if they know that the 3rd form of words is used in passive sentences. Sometimes, when the students are not confident, she explains or revises the rule with them. For example, the teacher explains to the class "when we have two objects we need to make a choice between 'weak' and 'strong' objects". She invites the students to apply the rule to the sentence which earlier the students had done incorrectly. The teacher continues this method

of oral correction for the other sentences. Finally, she tells the students to sign the work they have self-corrected and add the date. She asks how many of them got all the sentences correct. She tells them to give themselves a star and advises all the students to bring their books to her later for her signature.

The whole process takes around 15 minutes after which the teacher begins to teach the next topic.

Reflection:

How does this teacher engage the students in the process of assessing each other's work?

How does she use the process of assessment as an integral part of the learning process?

In what context could you use a similar process in your own class?

4.9 Other suggestions for improving assessment in large class

The following list of suggestions was made by a group of large class teachers who had read the extracts in section 4.3

Suggested strategies or 'solutions':

- *Take assignments home;*
- *Check only some students' work;*
- *Change assessment task and strategy. For example, provide a group project, allow group presentation and check the work of each group*

instead of every student;

- *Change the type of question, for example from subjective to objective, to make marking easier;*
- *Involve students in giving feedback;*
- *Use peer assessment;*
- *Prepare, ideally in collaboration with the students, a marking guide which you can write on the black board or distribute to the students for peer correction. Allocate clearly on the guide the marks for each item in order to promote transparency;*
- *Allow students to self-assess their work using model answers provided on the blackboard;*
- *Use oral questions for feedback purposes in the class;*
- *Develop an “I can do ...” attitude;*
- *Spot check while correction is being done, and even after, by collecting the work of a few students only;*
- *Take samples of students’ work and present them to the class for comments;*
- *Give an extra mark to the group or person(s) who corrects accurately using the given criteria;*
- *Ask students their impressions about the way the marking has been done;*
- *Only check students’ work yourself when you have to grade your students.*
-

Reflection:

Look back at the concerns raised by teachers 3 and 4, outlined in Section 4.3.

Read the suggestions above.

If you were one of these teachers, which advice would you follow? Why?

Which advice would be difficult for you to follow and why?

4.10 Case Study: Oral Feedback from the teacher in a whole-class situation

Teacher feedback to students in large classes is useful to motivate students to learn the target language (Williams and Burden 1997).

The following case study describes a Class VI English class in a secondary school in Pakistan. There were 44 students in the class. The class was held during the last two class periods of the school day (80 minute block time).

As a post-reading activity the students have written a poem on “If I were a dustbin”. The aim of this class is to provide feedback to the students on their poems.

There is a lot of excitement amongst the students - they are busy making decisions about how to present their poems.

The teacher writes on the board: PRESENTATIONS- If I were a dustbin.

Many SS are still planning their presentation as she calls the class to attention.

As the teacher walks around checking to see if everyone is ready, she collects the poems from the students and urges them to hurry up, "Quickly beta [son], we have to go for another activity." Four girls go to front of the class to present their poem. The students listen quietly.

One group of SS sings their poem accompanied by some acting. All the students listen quietly while the teacher stands at the back of the class.

She asks for volunteers for the next presentation, reassuring them, "If you want to present, it's fine otherwise no problem." The teacher continues in this fashion. She negotiates with two groups of students, checking if they are ready to present their work. They want two more minutes to prepare.

The teacher moves to the next group. When this group presents, it is clear that many students are not listening but are engaged in doing other things. The teacher admonishes the students: "Are we all listening?" [use of inclusive we].

The students next to me are still busy planning and rehearsing their presentation. Another group of three students also sing and act out their poem. They are hardly audible. The teacher tells them to speak more clearly and goes closer to them to read their poem silently.

By now almost no one in the class is listening. The teacher tells this group of presenters "you were not speaking clearly and there are other problems, go and reflect on this" She advises all the students to practice 2 – 3 times before presenting their poem.

Another pair presents, each student reading half of the poem. The teacher sits in the back row listening attentively. The presentations continue till the end of class time. During this time the majority of the students look distracted. The teacher keeps reminding them of social skills and keeps a strict watch on the students who seem to be off-task i.e. not listening to the poems being presented by their peers by reprimanding them now and again.

The teacher chooses to give feedback on each student presentation using a whole class format. However, as she has a large class, there are two problems in using this format for providing feedback:

1. It is time-consuming;
2. It is difficult to sustain learners' interest in what is being presented after the first few presentations. This is because a) some students are not ready and therefore engaged in preparing for their presentation; and b) intensive listening is only possible for short periods of time.

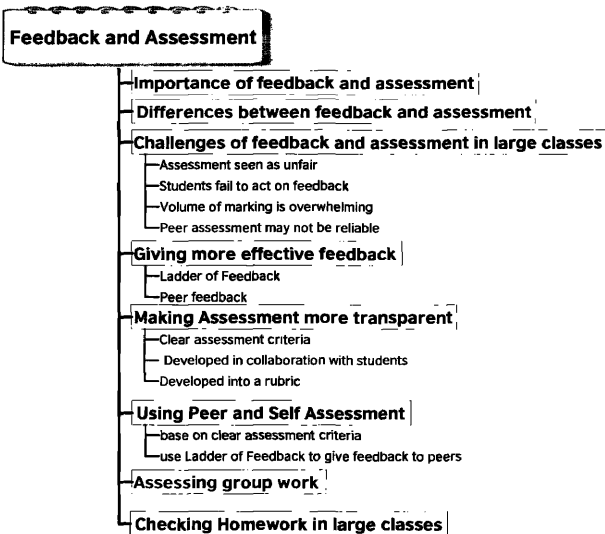
Reflection:

What other ways could this teacher have used to provide learners with feedback on their poems?

4.11 Conclusion

Assessment and feedback in large classes may be more challenging in large than in smaller classes. However, once clear assessment criteria have been agreed, peer assessment and self-assessment can be used to relieve the burden on the teacher. In addition, once students are trained to give effective and supportive feedback to one another, for example using the Ladder of Feedback, regular feedback can be provided to all students, despite the large numbers in the class.

Section 4 Review



Section

5

Maximizing the Use of Resources

In recent years student enrolment has increased rapidly in many countries of the world. However, the rise in student numbers has not been accompanied by a corresponding expansion in facilities and resources. As a result teachers are faced with large classes and very limited resources to support their teaching.

It is unlikely that this situation will change in the near future so we must look for creative solutions to maximize the use of the limited educational resources available.

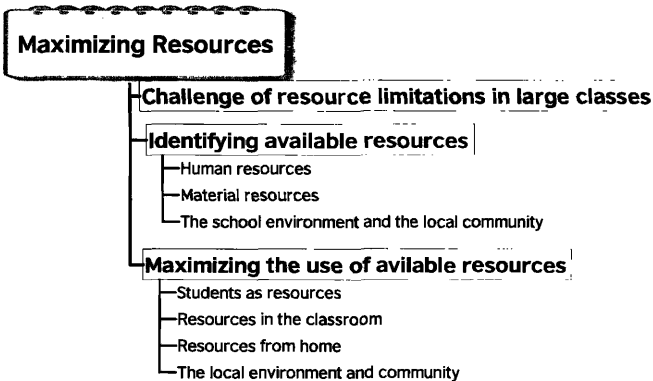
This section will help you identify the resources – both material and human resources – in your classroom, its environs and in the community. We will look at ways to use these resources creatively to maximize learning.

Objectives:

- To identify the resources in the classroom and its environs that can be used to support teaching and learning.

- To examine how the creative use of available resources can help address some of the challenges faced by lack of resources.

Overview



5.1 Challenges of limited resources in a large class

Alongside classroom management and assessment issues, lack of resources is a major challenge for teachers of large classes. In particular they stress the difficulty of promoting active learning in a large and heterogeneous classes when resources are limited.

Language teachers identified lack of the following resources as a constraint to the teaching of language skills in large classes:

- Text books
- Story books
- Flash Cards
- Audio and Video tapes
- Radio cassette player
- Video cassette player
- Computers and internet resources

Whilst all these are valuable resources in a language class, it is possible with creativity to teach language skills where these resources are unavailable or in limited supply.

Reflection:

What activities do you find difficult in your class due to lack of resources?

5.2 Identifying the available resources

When identifying the resources available to support learning we must look at both human resources and material resources. We must look not only in the classroom but in the school environment as a whole. We must look not only at the school but at the community.

Reflection:

List the resources available in your classroom that can be used to support teaching and learning. Don't forget yourself and your students.

What about the school environment, how can you use it as an educational resource?

And the community – its people and the environment. How could they be used to support your teaching?

It is important to see resources not only in terms of physical facilities in the classroom and its environs, but also to include the, arguably much more valuable, human resources. In most African classrooms, the most abundant resources are the students. However, many teachers fail to recognize the potential of their students as resources.

5.3 Using students as a resource to support learning

In large classes, where other resources are likely to be in short supply, the large and diverse group of students represents an invaluable resource. Teaching large classes can be challenging but it can also be very rewarding if the teacher takes full advantage of the wealth of resources in her students.

Reflection:

How could you use your students as a resource to support learning?

Students are an invaluable asset to the teacher. In a large class, the students' different abilities, interests, experiences and backgrounds represent a rich resource for language learning.

In order to exploit this resource to the full you need to get to know your students and they need to get to know each other. Also, as you come to know your students better you will be able to help them make a personal connection to what they are learning and they will become more motivated to learn. You will be able to cater more easily to the diversity of learning styles in the class.

The process of getting to know your students can be a difficult one in a large class but there are activities you can use to facilitate the process. Some activities are suggested below.

Students can interview one another to find out facts about, for example, each other's experiences, likes and dislikes, family background. These activities not only enable you and your students to get to know one another but they can also be very motivating and increase student involvement. In addition they require no resources other than the students themselves.

Here is another activity you can use to get to know your students and help them get to know one another:

- Students are asked to pair up with someone who is not their friend.
- They are given five minutes to find out about their partner.
- The whole class comes together.
- The teacher throws a ball to the students.
- The first student who catches the ball introduces their partner and throws the ball to another person.
- This goes on until all the students have been introduced.
- Students are asked to write down the information about their partner and submit it to the teacher.
- The teacher can keep this for future use.

Students can also support one another's learning through demonstration and role play. For example, if you are teaching the present continuous or the past tenses, they can act these out. If you have a student walk to the door and ask the class what he is doing while he is walking to the door they should answer in the present continuous. If you ask what he did after he had finished and gone back to his seat they should answer in the past.

Students can also be asked to act out different actions or scenarios that incorporate new vocabulary. They can be asked to mime a particular word for the

class or their group members to guess.

5.3 Using student-generated learning resources

Many teachers of English lack stories to use with their students as learning materials. However, teachers of large classes can generate an array of stories from their students. Students can be asked *individually, in pairs or in groups to write stories on a variety of themes*. Once in final form these can be shared with the class and used as a resource for teaching *narrative skills, speaking skills, listening skills and writing skills*. The most interesting stories could be posted on a wall or on the class notice board. The teacher could also keep them to use with other classes.

Students can also be encouraged to provide teaching and learning materials in the form of old newspapers, story books and magazines. They can be asked to bring cartons, ropes, pegs and other materials that can be used to construct items such as notice boards or other instructional materials.

5.4 Using students to tutor one another and give feedback

Students who understand a concept or skill well can be used to help weaker students. Since teaching someone else is one of the best ways to consolidate learning, both the 'tutor' and the 'tutee' will gain.

Peer tutoring takes place naturally in group and pair work when students give each other feedback. In addition, more experienced or more able students can be encouraged to help others in the group, thereby giving the teacher more time to monitor the activity and give feedback.

Reflection:

In what ways do you currently use your students as resource?

What additional ways might you use them as a resource in the future?

Students are invaluable classroom resources. As well as the suggestions above, teachers can also involve students in:

- **Assessment** – self assessment, peer assessment and group assessment (see Section 4)
- **Classroom Management** – collaboratively developing and enforcing rules about classroom behaviour and helping maintain discipline during group work (see Section 3)

5.5 Maximizing use of the classroom as a resource

The classroom and the school environment contain an array of resources whose use can be maximized.

In the classroom these include the walls, floor, ceiling, seating, blackboard etc.

The walls of the classroom can be an important learning resource. They can be used as a place to celebrate students work, for example a good essay, poem or story. This is very motivating and can create a healthy sense of competition among the students. In addition, such poems, stories or essays can be used to teach further reading or writing activities.

Groups of students can also produce posters that aid the learning of particular skills, concepts or vocabulary and these can be posted on the wall as a resource.

If it is not easy to post things on the walls, try sticking nails to the wall and using a rope and pegs.

The wider school environment also has great potential as a resource. The playground, for example, forms an outdoor space for activities as well as a source of materials.

5.6 Using resources outside the classroom

Below are just a few ideas for using resources from outside the classroom to support your teaching:

1. Students can be asked to bring empty boxes, packets, tins or wrappers on which instructions are written in English. These can be used to encourage real life reading and writing activities
2. Students can be asked to report, orally or in writing, on articles they have read in a

newspaper or magazine or programs from the radio or television .

3. Students can go on excursions to places of interest in the community and this can be used to teach report writing or can form the basis of other follow-up activities.
4. Students can be asked to write down slogans from billboards. They can study these, for example to identify grammar points or misspelt words. They can also be used to teach pronunciation or vocabulary.
5. Members of the community can be interviewed by individual students or invited as guests to the class to deliver a lecture or take part in a question answer session.
6. Some lessons can take place outside the classroom in the play ground. Also during group and pair activities it can be useful to use additional space outside the classroom.

Reflection:

What other ways can you think of to use resources from the school environment or the wider community to enhance your teaching?

Read the following case study of a teacher of a large class.

“My class is very large, I mean large because there are 95 students in my class. The syllabus demands that I teach all aspects of the English language:

speaking, reading, listening and writing skills. I find it particularly difficult to teach speaking skills because I don't have the required resources like audio and video tapes or radio and video cassette players to do this. I thought of using myself as a model but dropped the idea when I noticed that some students in my class speak the language better than I do.

What I have done therefore, is to subtly avoid teaching this skill and I am not very happy about this.

Also in creative writing, I usually run out of stories so I keep recycling the same stories over and over again and the students are somehow bored and uninterested whenever it is time for this. What Can I do?"

Reflection:

What issues of resource constraint are mentioned in this case?

If you were the teacher in this case, what would you do?

5.6 Conclusion

Teaching large classes is hard work but, in the area of resource use, there are many opportunities as well as challenges. In particular the large and diverse group of students in a large class is a rich resource for the teaching learning process.

As large class teachers develop creative solutions to combat limitations in resource availability they should derive a great deal of satisfaction from their accomplishments.

Section 5 Review

Maximizing Resources

Challenge of resource limitations in large classes

- Lack of textbooks and other written materials
- Lack of tape and video cassette players

Identifying available resources

Human resources

- students - rich resource in large and diverse classes
- teacher
- guests

Material resources

- classroom objects
- objects from home
- objects from the environment

The school environment and the local community

Maximizing the use of available resources

Students as resources

- Maximize only if know students well
- Role play
- Using student writing
- Students as tutors and givers of feedback

The classroom

- walls to display student work
- walls to hang educational posters created by students

Resources from home

- Empty boxes, wrappers etc. with writing in English
- Newspaper and magazines articles

The local environment and community

- Excursions and inspiration for writing
- Interviews with community members

Section

6

Introducing Innovations in Large Classes

In previous sections we have discussed strategies that can be used in large classes to reduce the burden on teachers and improve student involvement, classroom management, assessment and resource use. Some of these innovations may involve only minor changes from your current practice. Others may require substantial changes, for example in the role of students in the learning process.

This section discusses the process of introducing innovations in large classes and analyzes why many innovations fail to have the expected impact. It ends by introducing Action Research, a step-by-step process for planning, implementing and evaluating change. The Action Research method can be used effectively by individual class teachers.

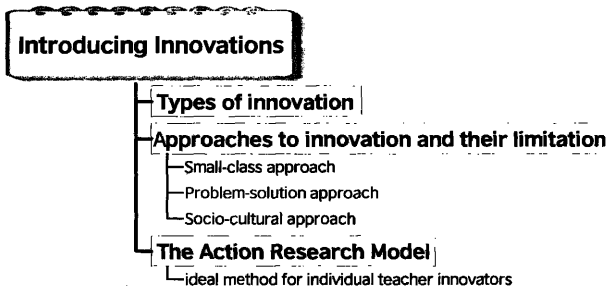
Objectives

- To analyze why innovations often fail to work effectively in large classes.
- To recognize the need for developing contextually-appropriate methodology for

effective teaching and learning of English in large classes in Africa and in similar contexts elsewhere.

- To introduce Action Research as a method that can be used by teachers introducing innovations in their own classrooms.

Overview



6.1 Variation in the nature and scope of innovation

There is a great deal of variation in the nature of innovations in large classes. The innovation might involve a change in methodology, a new management technique, a strategy for giving feedback or assessing students' work.

There is also variation in the scope of innovation. The change might take place at the level of an individual teacher or it could involve restructuring

an entire course taught by a number of teachers. Change may also take place at the level of the whole school or even the whole district or whole country.

Innovations also vary greatly in the demands they make on resources. Some require no extra resources, some require no more than the creative redistribution of available resources. However, major innovations may rely for their success on the provision of extra resources, such as new textbooks or self-access materials.

6.2 Approaches to innovation and their limitations for large classes

We can recognize three approaches to the process of introducing innovations in large classes:

- The small-class approach
- The problem-solution approach
- The socio-cultural approach

We will discuss each of these approaches in turn and analyze why they may fail to meet expectations in a large class situation.

The small-class approach

The small-class approach involves transferring to large classes new methodologies that have worked successfully in small classes. However, instructional techniques and assessment practices that have been developed in and for small classes are often difficult or impossible to apply in a large class situation, at least without significant modification. The problem is compounded if the innovation relies

on additional provision of resources that are already limited in large classes..

As a result, either the large class becomes the reason for outright rejection of innovative methodology or a few cosmetic changes are grafted on to the original innovation to make its use possible in large classes. In either case, the change is likely to be short-lived or of limited impact.

It is important to note that in the small-class approach, large classes are not taken into account in the development phase as an important contextual variable to be considered *before* innovations are introduced. Instead they are identified as a constraint *after* the non-success of the innovation in these classes.

Problem-solutions approach

In contrast to the small class approach, where innovations are introduced for their own sake, in the problems-solutions approach innovations are developed in *response* to the difficulties faced in the teaching-learning process, for example in the teaching of English in large classes.

This approach is guided by the assumptions that:

- The problems in teaching large classes are identifiable;
- These problems can be solved pedagogically.

Hence the search is for methodological solutions that will work in large classes.

The advantage of a problems-solutions approach is that the innovations are developed in response to a

felt need rather than being imposed from outside. As a result, there is a greater probability of these innovations being used by teachers.

However, the problem-solution approach is simplistic with regard to the source of the problems it seeks to address. It fails to take into account the complexity of issues that influence teaching and learning in difficult circumstances. Secondly, the problem-solutions approach varies in its usefulness in different educational contexts. It seems to work well in contexts where large classes are a recent phenomenon and are, therefore, perceived as the major problem. However, the problems-solutions approach may have limited usefulness where large classes are but *one* of the major problems in the teaching-learning situation.

A further weakness of the problem-solutions approach is that it reacts to the problem once it has arisen rather than providing strategies for avoiding the problem in the first place. Not surprisingly, once problems emerge, teachers are likely to feel overwhelmed and unable to cope. The creativity of even the most enthusiastic teacher is likely to be frozen in such a situation. At this stage it takes a great deal of effort to overcome the feeling of frustration and give the innovation a chance.

Socio-cultural approach

In the socio-cultural approach, as in the small-class approach, the need for introducing innovations is assumed at the outset. However, this approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the host culture as a pre-requisite to introducing innovations (Holliday, 1991a, 1991b, and Naidu, 1991; Naidu et al, 1992). In contrast to the small-

class approach, the various features of the teaching-learning situation, including large classes, are taken into account at an early stage instead of being seen as constraints at the stage of implementation.

A major strength of the socio-cultural approach is that the reality of classroom conditions and the teaching learning culture in the classroom and community are taken into account *before* any changes are proposed. As a result, the chances of successful innovation are greatly increased.

Read the following account by a group of teachers who used a socio-cultural approach to introducing innovations in their large classes in India (based on Naidu, 1991; Naidu, 1991; Naidu et.al. 1992)

The Classroom Interaction Group of the English language teaching Community in Bangalore, India, began with a study of the traditions of teaching and learning in their situation. They found that it was important for the teacher to remain in front of the classroom for various reasons, such as the status and role of the teacher in the community and the expectations of learners. Thus a teacher-fronted classroom was taken as given. Furthermore it was assumed that large classes and several other features of the teaching-learning context such as syllabus and textbooks would remain the same for a long time to come.

After carrying out this realistic appraisal of their situation, the group identified three major problems in their large classes: heterogeneity; the need to increase learner involvement (How can I involve as many students as possible in interaction, keeping the noise level at a bearable level?) (Naidu, 1991, p.6); and discipline.

After an ethnographic description of the lecture mode prevalent in the system, the group considered what could be the best way of making their large classes more interactive within the constraints of their educational context. The following 'interactive mode' was developed as a model for teaching and learning in their large classes.

Divergent methodological strategies were complemented by convergent management techniques while negotiating with the text and students. Some of the 'constants' were the texts, common tasks, clear instructions for performing the task, time limits, turn taking and other mutually accepted guidelines for giving feedback which maintained order and discipline in the classroom (op. cit, p. 10).

The problem of discipline was tackled by changing the notion of discipline from a silent class to one "in which students are involved in what is happening, differentially perhaps but making some amount of personal investment in keeping with the demands of the task" (ibid.). The group believed that the use of this interactive mode of teaching helped them in coping with large classes in a number of ways.

Reflection:

In your case what are the features of the teaching-learning contexts that you would need to take into account as you introduce changes in your classroom?

6.3 Undertaking Action Research

As an individual teacher, the first place to introduce innovation is generally in your own class. Here, on a small scale, you can analyze the teaching-learning culture, identify the need for change, plan the change in collaboration with your students, implement it, evaluate its success and identify where further modifications are needed. As you do so you are undertaking Action Research.

Study the following case studies of teachers who have introduced innovations in their own classrooms:

Case Study 1: Teaching Writing in Pakistan

Background

Teachers of large classes in Pakistan usually dictate essays or letters to the whole class on some general topic or write them on the blackboard for the students to copy in their notebooks. The students are then expected to learn these by heart for the exams. Hence, the majority of students can pass their exams with reasonably good grades. However, even after completing high school many students are unable to write even a single coherent paragraph independently in English. Large class teachers give the following reasons for this common practice in schools in Pakistan:

- as everyone has the same version of the essay or letter, it is easy for the teacher to 'check' the work of a large number of students in the class (the teachers' focus in checking the essays is mainly on mistakes in copying from the blackboard);
- There are few red marks in students' notebooks which leave a good impression on the parents, heads and school inspectors.

Bina, a large class teacher in a secondary school in Pakistan wanted to provide her students with an opportunity to learn to write on their own. She felt that if the writing task was fairly well controlled and the students organized in small groups to do the task, they would be able to do it successfully. Below is a brief account of how she tried to introduce an innovative approach to teaching writing to 49 grade VIII students.

Bina's innovation

Bina begins by eliciting from the students what fruits are available in the market these days. As the students shout out names of fruits she prepares a list on the blackboard. Then she asks:

How many like an apple? Is there anything- a saying or a story- you can remember about apples?

Students think hard and offer the following responses:

Newton's apple

An apple a day keeps the doctor away

Bina continues asking questions such as: how many kinds of apple are available in the market?

She divides the blackboard into seven columns and

elicits information about apples from the students: She writes this as headings in each column as follows:

She then asks the students to get into small groups. The students divide themselves into nine groups

Shape	Size	Color	Variety	Use	Advantages
1.					
2.					

of unequal size with 3-6 students in each group The teacher directs the students to discuss this information about apples in their small groups.

Next, she elicits this information from different groups and writes it in the columns on the blackboard. All the students are very active. When the teacher asks a question, several students shout out the information together. Due to the high level of noise in the classroom, the teacher has to speak very loudly. She tries to enforce the 'one-at-a-time' rule for turn taking. However, the students are too excited to pay heed. Some continue with their discussion in groups while the others shout out the answers together.

The teacher invites a volunteer student to draw an apple on the blackboard. She elicits words from the students to describe parts of an apple e.g. peel, core. She writes a few more vocabulary items on the blackboard and asks the students to begin writing their essay on 'apples'. She reminds the students to 'write all the points of one kind' in one paragraph.

The students continue to sit in groups but write their

essays individually. There is an air of excitement and busy activity in the classroom. The teacher walks around to ensure that everyone is working.

Reflection:

To what extent did Bina achieve her goal of having students write on their own?

What did you value about the change Bina introduced?

What problems did she encounter?

What suggestions would you make to help Bina improve the activity next time she does it?

Case Study 2: Assessing written work

As a teacher of composition I gave students individual or group writing tasks. I usually marked their papers and returned with some marks and comments in red ink. The students complained that I was marking their work unfairly. This made me to rethink my approach. For the students to have confidence in my assessment and for them to have motivation and clear goals to improve their writing, I decided to experiment with making my criteria transparent and involve the students in assessing their own work.

I asked the students to write a composition (a paragraph). I asked them to get into groups and brainstorm what criteria I should use to assess their writing. Some emphasised handwriting, others grammar and mechanics such as sentence construction, logical connection. More or less

they covered the aspects I normally check in their compositions. We came up with a list of 12 points. The 12th was effort. I told them it could be very difficult for me to look for 12 things while I am reading their work and we agreed to reduce them by grouping some points together, and giving them values out of 10. We therefore had:

Content & Organisation = 3

Accuracy & Appropriacy = 2.5

Mechanics and lay out = 1.5

Effort = 2

We agreed with the points allocated. But the problem was how I was going to evaluate effort, as I could only see the product when they submit. We negotiated it so that they could submit their outlines and drafts.

Benefits: Students' complaints decreased. They seemed to explicitly see the purpose and specific goals for learning. I could get students to process write more after the activity. In the past they didn't bother to do so. The plus for me was that I could see that their first and subsequent drafts were not the same.

(Summary of Negash 2005)

Reflection:

To what extent did this teacher achieve her goal of introducing a fairer and more transparent assessment system?

What did you value about the change she introduced?

What problems did she encounter?

What suggestions would you make to help her improve this system further?

6.4 Conclusion

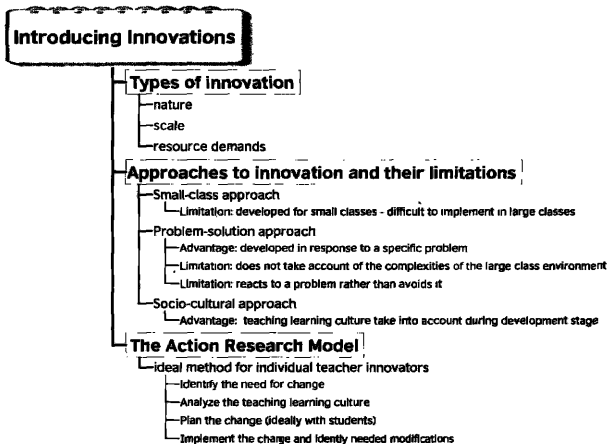
Large classes can easily become the scapegoat for rejecting innovation. They can become the 'excuse' for maintaining the status quo!

Perhaps this is why large classes, while so commonly talked about as a constraint, have been neglected as a target for research into innovative methodologies in developing countries.

Whilst innovations may be more challenging to implement in a large classes, we know that large classes are here to stay. The need of the hour, therefore, is not only to look for solutions to problems of teaching-learning in large classes but to undertake qualitative studies of teaching-learning in large classes in Africa and other developing countries to develop contextually appropriate methodology for large class teaching. (Holliday, 2000).

We hope that, as teachers of large classes, this book will encourage you to be at the forefront of this Action Research. We hope you will share your innovations so they can be included in the next edition of this book.

Section 6 Review



PART

II

Classroom Activities



Activities Overview

Activity	Page	Theme					Language Focus				
		Student involvement	Management	Assessment	Resource Use	Writing	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Vocabulary	
1. Playing with words	106	x	x		x	x				x	
2. Our differences and similarities	109	x	x		x	x	x				
3. Agreeing and disagreeing	111	x	x			x	x				
4. Asking and expressing likes and dislikes	113	x	x				x		x	x	
5. Making more friends	115	x		x		x	x				
6. Reading comprehension	117	x	x						x		
7. Creating a story	119	x	x			x	x				
8. Listening	121	x	x					x		x	
9. Describing celebrities	123	x	x				x			x	
10. Effective communication	126	x	x				x	x			
11. Acting out stories	129	x	x	x			x				
12. Mindmapping	132	x	x			x				x	
13. Playing with adjectives	135	x	x		x		x			x	
14. Re-telling fables	138	x	x				x	x	x	x	
15. Arranging jumbled paragraphs	141	x	x			x			x		
16. Setting criteria for assessing speaking	143	x	x	x	x	x	x				
17. Collaborative writing and peer assessment	147	x		x	x	x					
18. Students as tutors / Peer assessment	151	x	x		x	x					
19. Checking written work in a large class	154		x		x						
20. Self-assessment of writing	157	x	x		x						
21. Group assessment of written work	160	x	x	x		x					
22. Teaching reading skills with limited textbooks	163			x				x			
23. Story writing to generate resources	168	x	x		x	x	x	x			
24. Teaching Listening skills	170			x			x				
25. Guests as teaching and learning resources	172			x	x	x	x				
26. Peer Interview	174	x			x		x	x			
27. Teaching tenses using limited resources	176		x	x							

Managing Group Work

Many of the Activities that follow involve students working in pairs or small groups.

Forming Groups

It is important that this is done as quickly as possible so as not to waste time.

Groups should not include more than 6 students.

Once groups are established don't change them during a class unless absolutely necessary.

If you want groups to report to one another you can merge groups or have representatives from each group 'visit' another group.

Some simple methods of grouping:

- With neighbours (easiest in a crowded classroom or when seating is fixed);
- By giving a number to each student and then all number 1s form a group and so on for number 2s etc.;
- To ensure each group has a strong leader, choose leaders first and then use the numbering procedure.

Giving Instructions

Give very clear instructions, both orally and in writing.

- **Aims** – should be visible throughout the activity, for example written on the board.
- **Procedure** – oral and written. Available in written form to refer to throughout the

activity – either on papers handed to each group or on the board.

- **Attention Signal** – establish a signal that will be used to gain the attention of all students.
- **Roles** – establish roles as required by the activity (leader, note-taker etc.). The roles could be assigned by you or established by the group itself. Roles should be explained.

Giving Feedback

As the groups are working, walk around the class and listen to the discussions. Check students are on task. Value their work and give suggestions if required. Encourage the passive students to participate actively.

Concluding Group Work

You will probably want to bring the whole class together after a group activity in order to

- Value the work they have done
- Allow groups to share their work with the class. This could be orally or in written form – perhaps as a poster that each group hangs on the wall. With a large class you will need to be selective – perhaps just one example from each group or the most important conclusion.

- **Review the aims of the activity**
 - **To what extent were they achieved?**
 - **Does anyone have questions or things that still puzzle them?**
- **Give instructions about follow-up activities.**

Section

7

Theme: Increasing students involvement in large classes

Activity 1: Playing with words

Aims:

- To learn new vocabulary
- To create a word bank to be used in a writing exercise
- To write a composition

Level: all

Time: 45 minutes

Resources Required: Pen, exercise book

Language Focus: Vocabulary, writing

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity.

- Put students into groups of 4-6.
- Ask each group to come up with 10 words (5 verbs and 5 adjectives) that express happiness and sadness.
- Using words offered by the groups of students, compile 4 lists on the blackboard:

Happiness		Sadness	
Verbs	Adjectives	Verbs	Adjectives

- Ask all the students to use the words on the board to write a composition that begins with:

“The day I was disappointed was...” or
“The happiest day of my life was...”
- Instruct students to read their compositions to their groups.¹
- Invite volunteers to read their composition to the class.

Variations:

- Make the task simpler by asking students to write single sentences rather than a composition.

¹ Students could use the Ladder of Feedback to give feedback to other group members

- The activity can be used to generate vocabulary before any writing activity.

Practical tips:

- Before you begin agree a signal that will be used to gain students' attention.
- Ask students to raise their hands, rather than shout out, when they have completed the task.

Follow-up Activity:

Have students assess their composition using an assessment grid.

Activity 2: Our differences and similarities

Aims:

- To enable students to express their likes and dislikes
- To enable students to compare their likes and dislikes with those of other students.

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Material Required: blackboard, exercise book, pens

Language Focus: Speaking and writing

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the procedure.
2. Put students into groups of four or six so that each group can divide into pairs.
3. Write on the board the names of 10 objects.
4. Each student decides individually whether they like or dislike each of the objects.
5. Pairs of students compare their answers and find out the similarities and differences in their likes and dislikes.

6. Pairs of students report to the whole group using sentences such as:

“We both like ...” “We both dislike ...”

“One of us likes but the other doesn’t.”

7. Each group nominates a spokesperson to tell the class about the group’s likes and dislikes. Ask for one statement from each group. Encourage students to use sentences such as:

“We all like ...” and

“We all dislike ...”

8. Each student writes about their own “likes” and “dislikes”.

Follow-up Activity:

- Give students a table such as the one below – or have them copy it into their exercise book
- Ask them to compare the likes and dislikes of the different people.

	Rahel	Genet	Mohammed	Daniel
Smoking cigarette	x	x	?	√
Jogging	√	x	√	√
Reading books	√	√	√	√
Visiting friends	√	√	x	x
Listening music	√	?	x	√
Swimming	x	√	√	√
Playing cards	x	x	x	x
Watching football	√	x	√	x

Activity 3: Agreeing and disagreeing

Aim:

- To enable students to express the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular statement.

Level: Intermediate / Advanced

Material Required: blackboard, exercise book, pens

Language Focus: Speaking and writing

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity.
2. Put students into groups of four or six so that each group can be divided into pairs.
3. Write on the board 10 statements.
4. Each student decides individually whether they agree or disagree with each statement.
5. Pairs of students discuss their feelings about each statement to find out the similarities and differences in their responses. Ask them to back up their responses with supporting statements. For example, "I agree that..... because"
6. Pairs of students tell the rest of their group about their discussion, using sentences such as:

“We both agree that ...because.....”

“We both disagree with the statement that... because.....”

“One of us agrees with the statement that..... but the other doesn't because.....”

7. Each group nominates a spokesperson to tell the class about one aspect of their group discussion.
8. Each student writes about their personal views and how these were modified by the group discussion.

Variation:

- If space allows (some) students are asked to stand on an imaginary decision line that goes from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’.

Follow up activity:

- Ask students to find in a newspaper or magazine a statement that they either strongly agree with or strongly disagree with.
- They can either write about why they agree or disagree with the statement or come to next class prepared to explain orally.

Activity 4: Asking and expressing likes and dislikes

Aims:

- To enable students to express their likes and dislikes
- To enable students to ask what others like or dislike

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources Required: Sample dialogues, papers, students

Language Focus: Speaking

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Put students in groups of 4.
3. Distribute a sample dialogue in which the characters express different degrees of likes and dislikes.
4. In their groups students read the dialogue with different group members playing the different characters.
5. In their groups they then identify the different words used by the characters to express likes and dislikes.

6. Compile a list of these words on the board by asking students from each group to contribute.
7. In their groups students draw a line like the one below on a piece of paper and decide, through discussion, where to place each of the words.

Strongly like _____ Strongly dislike
8. In their groups students discuss their own likes and dislikes and try to fit them on the line.

Variations:

- Choose students to role-play the dialogue in front of the class.
- Ask students to write their own dialogue about likes and dislikes.

Follow-up Activity:

- Ask students to interview a friend or family member about their likes and dislikes - for example in relation to food or what they do at the weekend. They could either write about what they find out or come to class prepared to talk about it.
- Alternatively students could make a Like-----Dislike line from the information they find out.

Activity 5: Making more friends

Aims:

- To build confidence in speaking English
- To practice asking and answering questions
- To enable students to get to know others in the class

Level: Intermediate /Advanced

Time: 45 minutes

Language focus: Speaking, listening, asking and answering questions

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Write on the board some words and numbers that give information about yourself.
3. Ask students to guess what the words and numbers represent.
 - Example: You write 30. Students ask 'is this your age?'
 - Example: You write Samuel. Students ask 'is this the name of your son? Your brother?'
4. Each student writes, in large print on a piece of paper, words and numbers about themselves.

5. Students circulate around the room looking for class-mates that they don't know well. The students ask questions to find out what the numbers and words represent about each of the students they meet.
6. After an agreed time bring the students back together as a class and ask individuals to introduce someone they met.

Practical tip:

- If it is difficult for students to circulate in the classroom, take them to a quiet place outside the classroom so that they can move about freely.

Activity 6: Reading comprehension

Aims:

- To improve students reading comprehension skill
- To improve students' ability to construct questions

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources Required: Reading text, papers.

Language Focus: Reading

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and, the overall procedure.
2. Arrange students in groups of 3 - 6.
3. Distribute the reading text to each student and have them read it individually to comprehend the passage.
4. Individual students then construct five questions about the text and write these on a piece of paper. They keep a note of the answers on a different piece of paper.
5. Within their group, students exchange question papers.
6. Each student tries to answer the questions

written by others in the group. They can refer to the text if they wish.

7. Students then compare and discuss their answers within the group.
8. Each group can then be invited to pose one question to the class as a whole.
9. Students could also be invited to share questions that they wonder about but that cannot be answered from the text.

Variations:

- If your students are finding it difficult to construct questions, you can guide them to construct wh-questions or yes-no questions.
- If you are short of resources have students work in pairs to read the text and create questions.
- You could have students pose the questions orally, rather than in writing, to other members of their group.

Follow-up activity:

- Ask students to write a summary of the text.
- Ask students to write a sequel to the text – what came after (or even what came before).

Activity 7: Creating a story

Aims:

- To help students construct sentences.
- To help students write creatively

Level: Intermediate / advanced

Time: 45 minutes

Resources Required: pen, students' note book

Language focus: The simple past tense

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and, the overall procedure.
2. Put students into groups of 4 -6
3. Give each group a sentence that can be used as the beginning of a story. e.g. "There once was a wise man who lived on the top of a mountain."
4. Appoint a note-taker to write down the group's story as it develops.
5. Group members take it in turn to add the next sentence in the story.
6. The group should keep the story going until everyone has had at least two turns.
7. When the story is complete one group member should read it aloud.

8. Individuals may then suggest alterations to improve the story. When they make a proposal they should always give the reason why. "I would suggest we say..... because....."
9. One or two groups can be asked to read their story to the class. Alternatively two groups may join to read their stories to one another.
10. You may also want to emphasize that the simple past is the most common tense in stories that refer to past events and actions.

Variations:

- You could stop the groups before they finish their stories and have each student write an ending. These could then be shared among the group and the group could choose the one they prefer.
- The stories could be used for further activities and / or published in a school newspaper.
- The stories could be assessed by the group itself (or by another group) using pre-agreed criteria or an assessment sheet developed in collaboration with students.

Activity 8: Listening

Aims:

- To increase students' vocabulary
- To develop students listening skills

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resource Required: pen, students' notebook, listening text, and blackboard

Language Focus: Listening

Procedure:

1. Choose a relevant text and bring it to the class.
2. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and, the overall procedure.
3. From the text, select words that you think may be unfamiliar to the students and write them on the blackboard.
4. Put students into groups of 4-6.
5. In their groups, students discuss the meaning of each of the words.
6. Whilst groups work on the word meanings, write on the board the questions you want them to answer on the text. (Include a range of questions from simple true/false to questions

that require students to infer the answer from the text.)

7. Using suggestions from the groups, construct on the board a list of words with their correct meanings.
8. Read the text aloud to the class.
9. Have a student read the text a second time.
10. Students work individually or in pairs to answer the questions you wrote on the board.
11. Students then compare their answers with those of other group members and try to come to a consensus.
12. Conclude the activity by asking groups if there are any questions that still puzzle them or for which they found it difficult to come to an agreement.

Variations:

- Students can be asked to provide the text to be read to the class. It could be a newspaper or magazine article or an extract from a book.
- You would need the student to show you the text in advance if you are going to construct suitable questions.
- Alternatively ask students to construct the questions, using guidelines about the range of questions and perhaps suggesting some question types that may be more challenging.

Section

8

Theme: Managing Large Classes

Activity 9: Describing Celebrities

Aims:

- To help students practise describing people.
- To encourage students to practise writing outside of class.
- To help students increase their vocabulary

Level: Intermediate/ Advanced

Time: 45 minutes

Resource Required: Students, exercise books

Language focus: Speaking / Vocabulary

Procedure

Preparation Assignment

1. Select 10 famous people known to the students.
2. Put students into groups of 6-10.
3. Give each student in the group a piece of paper on which the name of one of the famous people is written. (Each student in a group should have the name of a different famous person.)
4. Tell students that for homework they should find out about the person. They should then pretend they are the famous person and write 10 statements about themselves. Explain that next class they will read their statements to the group and the group will try to guess who they are.

For Example:

- i. I have two children.
- ii. I am over 30.
- iii. I am Ethiopian
- iv. I am a long-distance runner.

In class

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and, the overall procedure.
2. Ask students to form the same groups as for the preparation assignment.

3. In their groups, students take it in turns to read out their 10 statements. The other students try to guess who they are.
4. Each group then says who they found most difficult to guess and explains why.
5. Students then nominate a 'Personality of the Year' (or Decade or Century if more appropriate). This must be a group decision. Encourage students to support their suggestions with evidence as they discuss who they will nominate (I think Haile Gebriselassie should be Personality of the Year because)
6. Each group chooses a spokesperson to state their nomination to the class and give the reasons for their choice.

Follow-up activity:

- Students write their individual nomination with justification.

Variation:

- Ask students to think of different ways to group the 10 famous people. Men and women is an obvious one. How many other groupings can they make?

Activity 10: Effective communication

Aims:

- To increase awareness of the different methods of communication in the classroom and their effectiveness in bringing about learning.
- To develop students' listening and speaking skills.

Level: Intermediate and above

Time: 45 minutes

Resources Required: students, paper and pens

Language Focus: Listening and Speaking

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Put students in groups of 4.
3. As a group ask students to discuss the different ways in which human beings communicate with one another (verbal and non-verbal, by words, images, symbols, gestures. Remind them that communication involves both giving and receiving information). Ask them to list the different communication methods they can think of or to make a mind-map to record their discussion.

4. Ask each group to divide into pairs and give each pair a plain piece of paper. Together the students draw a picture of a classroom, showing the different ways that students communicate with each other and with the teacher. The rule of the game is that the students take it in turn to draw different elements of the same picture. Emphasize that artistic skill is not important but rather the ideas being portrayed.
5. Each pairs of students then shares their drawing with the other pair in the group. The students look at each other's drawings and describe what they see, what they think is going on and what they wonder about. (See ...Think...Wonder)
6. The group then discusses different communication methods and decides how effective they are at bringing about learning. One group member acts as note-taker, drawing a table with two columns – effective communication and ineffective communication and listing the behaviours in each column.
7. The group then discuss what can be done to improve student-student and teacher-student communication in a large class.

Variation:

- Ask volunteers to prepare a role-play about good and bad communication in the classroom. The class identifies what made one effective and the other ineffective. Ask the students to reflect on what can be done to improve student-student and teacher-student communication in a large class.

Activity 11: Acting out stories

Aim:

- To help students practice their speaking skill

Level: Intermediate/ advanced

Time: 10 minutes for each performance

Resources required: stories

Language focus: Speaking

Procedure

Before the class:

1. Select stories from the textbook you are using and/or from other available books of a suitable level.
2. Prepare a timetable for the completion of each step in the activity.

Over a series of classes:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and, the overall procedure and the timetable (see below).
2. Form groups of six and assign a different story for each group.
3. Have each group choose a coordinator and clarify their role.
4. Students work in groups over a series of

classes to prepare a performance of their assigned story.

- Write dialogue
- Read through dialogue and modify if necessary
- Allocate parts
- Rehearse

Activity	By	when	Remark
Prepare dialogue	Groups	One month after assignment given	Dialogue can not exceed 6 pages
Dialogue rewritten	Groups	10 days after first draft returned	With names students playing each character
Three group rehearsals	Groups	Within 15 days after dialogue is approved by teacher	Group coordinator reports if there are any problems
Presentation schedules announced	Teacher	Two months from the day assignment was first given	Prepare dialogue

5. The criteria that will be used to assess each performance are agreed with students and an assessment form or rubric is produced. This is shared with students well in advance of the performances.

6. After a group presents, all other students fill out the assessment form and hand it to the teacher.
7. The presentations judged to be best could be presented to other classes or to parents.

Variation:

- Groups could give more informal feedback using the Ladder of Feedback

Practical Tips:

- Choose stories that have a suitable number of characters and give fairly equal opportunities for participation.
- Give enough time for preparation so that it does not affect students study time and other subject duties.

Activity 12: Mindmapping

Aims:

- To improve students note-making skills
- To raise awareness among students of the challenges of noise management in large classes

Level: Intermediate / advanced

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: blackboard, chalk, city map, mindmap,

Language Focus: writing, vocabulary

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Show student the city map and talk about how the roads (trains, trams etc.) connect the different elements of the city to one another.
3. Ask students to think with a partner about the question: What is the similarity between a city map and the brain? Ask pairs of students to share their views on how the brain is like a city map (and where the analogy falls short).
4. Show students an example of a Mindmap.
5. Tell students that they are going to build a Mindmap about classroom noise.

6. Have a volunteer come to the front of the class and stand at the centre. He represents noise in class. Have the student hold a notice saying NOISE.
7. Ask the class to suggest words and phrases that come to mind in relation to classroom noise. Write these on the board. After gathering a considerable number of words and statements, suggest to students that some relate to causes, others to solutions and yet others to the consequences or effects of noise.
8. Ask three volunteers to represent causes, solutions and consequences. Give them notices to hold and ask them to position themselves at arms length from the student representing NOISE.
9. Select other students to each choose a word or phrase on the board and position themselves in an appropriate position in relation to the students already in front of the class. Explain that the students are beginning to form a Mindmap about classroom noise. Ask students to hold hands with each other to emphasise that the connections are like those in a mind map.
10. Have students work with a partner to produce their own Noise Mindmaps on a piece of paper, using the words and phrases suggested by the class but adding additional elements of their own.
11. Post some of these Mindmaps on the classroom wall. In this way you celebrate the students' work and also have a constant

reminder of the need to control noise level in the class.

Follow-up Activity:

- Ask students to write a composition on 'Causes, effects of classroom noise and my role in reducing noise in class'.

Variations:

- Encourage students to use Mindmaps for note-taking or for reviewing their work.
- As is done in this book, use Mindmaps to introduce a topic and then to review the topic at the end of a unit.

Activity 13: Playing with adjectives

Aims:

- To help the teacher get to know her students and to help students get to know one another.
- To use a range of adjectives to describe people.

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: Blackboard, student, 3 balls (you could make them from waste paper)

Language focus: Adjectives

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Write on the board, "I'm ____ and I'm ____". Fill in your name in the first blank and an adjective describing yourself in the second blank. The adjective should begin with the same letter as your name.

For example: I'm Gemtesa and I'm generous

3. Demonstrate the procedure a few more times by asking students to say the sentence, filling in their name and an appropriate adjective.
4. Divide the class into 3 large groups and give

each group a ball. You may find it best to take the students into a larger space such as the playground.

5. Students stand in a circle. The ball is passed from one student to the next with each student saying their name and an appropriate adjective to describe themselves. If the student can't think of an appropriate adjective others in the group can help. Remind students to listen to other students' names and their adjectives carefully.
6. Once every student has had a turn, students throw the ball to a student whose name and adjective they remember, saying the name and the adjective as they throw the ball.
7. This student in turn throws the ball to another student, calling out his/her name and adjective. This continues until every student has had a turn.
8. If a student makes a mistake or cannot remember the name or adjective or both, he gives the ball to the student standing next to him and leaves the circle.

Variations

- The students may use adjectives that don't begin with the first letters of their names. This makes thinking of the adjective easier but remembering it harder!

- Carry out the same activity with different sentences, such as:

"I am _____ and I like to eat _____";

"I am _____ and on Saturday I like to _____".

Activity 14: Re-telling fables

Aims:

- to improve students reading, listening and oral skills.
- to increase students' vocabulary.

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: Aesop's fables, papers, students

Language focus: reading, listening and speaking, vocabulary.

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Tell the students a short fable, such as the story of the hare and the tortoise. Ask students to identify the moral of the story.
3. Ask student to share examples of fables that they know and ask others to identify the moral of the fable. (This does not need to be done in English).
4. Tell students that you have brought some fables in English for them to read and to discuss with their classmates.

5. Arrange students in groups of three.
6. Mark the fables A, B, C or D. Distribute two copies of one of the fables to each group together with the set of instructions below.
 - Read the fable individually and silently.
 - Discuss your understanding of the fables in your respective groups, using sentences such as, 'What I know is.....'; "What I wonder about is....."
 - Write important vocabulary words that will help you tell to others the fable you have read.
 - As the groups are working, circulate to answer any queries and to gain feedback about how the activity is going.
 - Ask each group to join a group who read a different fable.
 - Students then retell the fable they have read.
 - Invite volunteers to retell each of the fables to the whole class and ask the class to identify the moral of each.

Follow-up Activity:

- Have student produce an illustration for one of the fables or to write the fable in cartoon style. Examples of this work could be posted on the wall of the class.

Variations:

- You may want to re-write some of the fables in simpler language if you feel they are too difficult for the level of your class.
- If you don't have access to Aesop's fable, encourage students to bring and tell any fable they know to the class.

Activity 15: Arranging jumbled paragraphs

Aims:

- to help students to write coherent and well-structured paragraphs
- to improve students' reading comprehension skill

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: Jumbled paragraphs, papers

Language focus: Reading and writing skills

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Introduce the activity by writing a jumbled paragraph on the board and asking students to suggest how it should be re-structured. When responding, students should support their proposed restructuring with reasons. Based on this introductory activity write on the board a number of clues to use when restructuring paragraphs. For example: similarity markers, contrastive markers, beginning and ending markers.

3. Divide students into small groups.
4. Distribute to each group, the jumbled paragraphs together with the following instructions.
 - Work individually for 15 minutes to restructure the paragraph.
 - For each element you restructure, write the clues that helped you.
 - Share your work and discuss any elements where your work differs. As you do so be sure to back up your ideas with reasons.
 - Come up with an agreed restructuring for your paragraph.
5. As the groups are working make sure that all students are involved and help students resolve any disputes that arise. Avoid giving the correct answer but instead ask students to give reasons for their position and respond to these reasons.

Follow-up Activity:

- Ask students to write a paragraph that might come before and/or after the paragraph they have restructured.

Variation:

- If you think that rearranging paragraphs is difficult for your students, use jumbled sentences instead.

Section

9

Theme: Assessment and Feedback

Activity 16: Setting criteria for assessing speaking

Aims:

- To establish criteria for effective assessment of speaking.
- To involve students in a collaborative decision making process

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: Notebooks

Language focus: Speaking and listening

Procedure

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Brainstorm, as a whole class activity, "what is effective /good speaking?" Ask questions such as: Can you think of a good speaker of English? Why do you consider him/her a good speaker? Give examples of speakers who are confident, fluent etc.
3. Divide the students into small groups.
4. Draw a table like the one below on the blackboard.

Criterion	Good	Fair	Poor
Clarity of speech			
Pronunciation			
Comprehensibility			
Choice of vocabulary			
Use of appropriate gestures and body language			
Sense of audience			

5. Students copy the table and, working in groups, fit the phrases below into the appropriate columns of the table.
 - Clarity of speech: Speaks clearly and audibly

- **Pronunciation:** Pronunciation is like a native speaker.
 - **Comprehensibility:** Difficult to understand
 - **Choice of vocabulary:** Uses inappropriate words for the topic and/or level of formality
 - **Use of gestures and body language :** Uses appropriate gestures and body language
 - **Sense of audience:** Does not consider the audience
6. Students from different groups are invited to suggest where the phrases fit. The teacher completes a grid on the blackboard as students offer their suggestions. If others disagree they can suggest changes, giving their reasons for doing so.
 7. The students then work in their groups to develop descriptions of the missing levels for each criterion.
 8. Students from different groups are invited to suggest phrases to fill the blanks. The teacher continues to complete the grid on the blackboard as students offer their suggestions. If others disagree they can suggest changes, giving their reasons for doing so.
 9. After the class make any necessary modifications to the table.
 10. Next session share it with all the students and post it on the classroom wall.
 11. Encourage students to use the criteria for self-and peer assessment of their speaking

skills

Variation:

- Use a similar activity to develop assessment rubrics for other language skills.

Practical tips

- Use this activity at the beginning of the term so that students can begin to assess their speaking skills by themselves, in pairs, or in small groups using these criteria.

Activity 17: Collaborative writing and peer assessment

Aims:

- To improve writing skills
- To involve students in assessing their classmate's work according to agreed criteria
- To help students get to know each other better

Level: All

Time: 2 class session (or approximately 80 minutes)

Resources required: Notebooks

Language skill focus: Writing

Procedures

First session

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Tell students that they are going to be involved in a writing task for two sessions
3. Write on the board the following form and ask students to copy it into their exercise books.

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Number of family members (father, mother, brothers, sisters etc):

Previous school:

Present school:

Hobbies:

Favourite school subject:

Another interesting fact about yourself:

- 6.** Ask students to fill in the form giving real information about themselves.
- 7.** After completing the form, ask each student to form a pair with a student he/she does not know very well.
- 8.** The students then work in pairs, exchanging their work, and asking any questions of clarification from each other.
- 9.** Each student should then write a paragraph about his/her partner using information given in the form and any other information that came up in their conversation.
- 10.** Share with students (or develop collaboratively with them) the criteria that they will use next session to assess each other's paragraphs. These might include:
 - Accuracy
 - Word choice

- Flow of ideas
- Grammar
- Organization of the ideas
- Spelling and punctuation
- Lay out, etc.

11. Students should edit their work and bring it to the next session.

Second session

1. Remind students of the aims of the activity, the overall procedure and what they did last session. Explain that this session they will assess each other's work.
2. Ask students to form the same pairs as in their previous class
3. Ask each student to read to their partner the paragraph they have written about him/her.
4. Have students assess each other's paragraphs using the criteria agreed last session.
5. Ask three volunteer pairs to come to the front of the class and read their paragraphs.
6. Let the whole class give feedback on the paragraphs. You could use the Ladder of Feedback to structure this feedback (asking any clarifying questions, saying what they like about the paragraph, expressing any concerns and finally making suggestions)

7. Post students paragraphs on the wall so other students can get to know them better.

Variation:

- You can extend the form to include other relevant details such as, achievements, success, failure etc.

Activity 18: Students as tutors/peer assessment

Aims:

- To help students give each other effective and supportive feedback
- To help students use feedback from their peers to improve their own learning
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and that of their classmates

Level: All

Time: 1-2 class sessions

Resources required: chalk, blackboard.

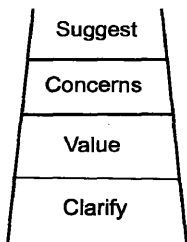
Language Focus: Speaking

Procedure:

First Session:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Identify students who have strong language skills to act as group leaders.
3. Students form small groups (not more than 6) and a leader is assigned to each group.
4. Give six topics to each group. Each member of the group selects a different topic.

The Ladder of Feedback



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5. Students work individually to prepare a short oral presentation on their selected topic. Encourage them to seek help, if needed, from their group leader.
6. The groups meet in their free time to give comments to one another and to rehearse their presentations. Student tutors (group leaders) help other learners in the group as and when required. (This step could be carried out in class time if this is practical.) Encourage students to use the Ladder of Feedback to structure their comments to one another.
7. Tell students that one student from each group will be selected randomly to present his topic to the whole class next session. It is hoped that this will motivate students to work on their own presentations but also to help others in their group.

Second Session

1. Remind students of the aims of the activity, the overall procedure and what they should have done already.
2. Randomly select the topic on which each group will make their oral presentation to the whole class.
3. After each presentation allow time for questions and comments, using the Ladder of Feedback to guide the process.
4. After all the groups have finished, you can give your comments to the whole class.

Variations:

- The group could assess one another's presentations using agreed criteria, perhaps in the form of a rubric.

Practical tip:

- You can use this activity several times during a school year using different topics.

Activity 19: Checking written work in a large class - teacher and self-assessment

Aims:

- To improve student skills in writing a paragraph or essay
- To train the students in self-assessment skills based on model feedback from the teacher

Level: All

Time: 2-3 sessions (this includes time for writing)

Resources required: Students' written work

Language Focus: Writing

Procedure:

First session

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Teach students about the elements of a paragraph, using as an example a model paragraph on a topic of interest to students. (Include topic sentence, supporting details and conclusion)
3. Give the class a topic on which they are to write a paragraph which they will submit at the end of the session.

4. Collect the paragraphs students have written, and mark them at home. Do not check every thing in the paragraph but focus on a specific point such as the topic sentence.

Second session

1. Remind students about the aims of the activity, the overall procedure and what has been done already.
2. Return the marked papers and tell them that only one aspect has been thoroughly checked.
3. Explain the criteria you used to assess their work. Highlight the elements students did well and also the commonest errors you observed while checking their work.
4. Students then write another paragraph on a different topic, focusing particularly on the topic sentence and keeping in mind the feedback from last session's work.
5. Students then self-assess their paragraphs using the full range of criteria (not only the criteria for topic sentence).
6. Select a paragraph randomly and write it on the blackboard so the whole class can check together how well it meets the various criteria.

Variations:

- Use the same procedure for teaching and assessing other kinds of writing such as an

essay, letter etc.

- Develop with students a set of assessment criteria that can be used for self-assessment as well as peer and teacher assessment. To train students in the use of the assessment criteria have all students assess the same piece of work and compare it with your assessment. Discuss any questions that arise from this.
- After self-assessment, collect some notebooks randomly to check that students are using the criteria accurately.

Practical tip:

- Post the agreed criteria on the classroom wall for students to refer to when assessing their own work. Or ask the students to copy them in their notebook so they will have them for reference whenever they need them.

Activity 20: Self-assessment of writing

Aims:

- To help students in large classes to assess their own written work using an agreed checklist
- To help students use a mindmap to structure their written work
- To improve the quality of students' written work

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: student compositions, blackboard and chalk.

Language focus: Writing

Procedure

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Prepare with students a checklist that could be used for checking their written work. The checklist might include:
 - Spelling
 - Punctuation and capitalization
 - Grammar
 - Content
 - Organization
 - Clarity

3. Students copy this checklist into their notebooks and/or it is posted on the wall of the classroom.
4. Give students, a writing assignment.
5. Write the topic in the centre of the black board then, as a whole class activity, brainstorm main points of content to be included. As students make suggestions, create a Mindmap on the board.
6. Students then write a paragraph using the main points on the blackboard and additional ones if they wish.
7. Fix a maximum length for the writing and give a specified time to complete the assignment individually.
8. As students work, walk around the class to ensure that everyone is engaged in the activity and to answer any questions students have.
9. After students finish writing, remind them of the criteria for checking written work that were agreed at the start of the session.
10. Students then check their own composition using the checklist.
11. At the end of the class collect a few compositions so you will be able to comment next lesson both on the compositions and also on students' use of the checklist.

Variations:

- You could use a model text to demonstrate the use of the criteria before the students write their own composition and check it. If you don't have enough copies of the model text, write it on the blackboard.
- Each time students self-assess their writing, tell them to focus on one or two aspects of writing only e.g. organisation, mechanics etc. This helps in focusing their attention during assessment. This also allows the teacher to give comments on more essays in less time.
- If the task cannot be completed in a session, give the self-assessment as homework.

Practical Tip:

- For elementary grades keep the checklist as short and clear as possible. The checklist can be more complex for higher classes.

Activity 21: Group Assessment of written work

Aims:

- To help students to critically evaluate each others' work.
- To build the spirit of working together to learn from each other

Level: All

Time: 2 class sessions or 90 minutes

Resources: Chalk, blackboard, students' writing

Language Focus: Writing

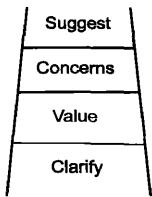
Procedure:

First session:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Divide students into groups of six and ask them to assign names or letters (e.g. A, B, C,) to each group member.
3. Provide (or elicit from students) a list of possible topics for writing a paragraph.
4. Students, working in their groups, select one topic and brainstorm the ideas that could be included in the paragraph on the topic. They could do this using a Mindmap format.

5. Each student in the group then writes a short paragraph on the topic selected and brainstormed by the group.
6. Once all students in the group have written their paragraphs, each student passes his paragraph to the student sitting on his left. In this way all students in the group have a paragraph written by another person.
7. Ask students to give feedback on each others' work using criteria developed earlier. They should use the Ladder of Feedback to structure the feedback they give.
8. While the students are working in small groups, walk around the class to see if any students need help or have not understood the task.
9. Students then revise their work based on the feedback they have received.

The Ladder of Feedback



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Second session

1. Remind students of the aims of the activity, the overall procedure and what has been done so far.
2. In their original groups, students select the best ideas from their individual paragraphs and develop a single paragraph for the group.
3. This is written clearly on a separate sheet of paper so it can be shared with other groups.
4. Once all the groups have written their group paragraphs, they are exchanged between groups. Each group uses the agreed criteria

to assess the paragraph they have received from a different group. They then write feedback based on the Ladder of feedback.

5. Groups then revise their paragraphs as they feel necessary before they are displayed in the classroom.

Variation:

- This activity can be used for various kinds of writing e.g. essay, story etc.

Practical tip:

- For giving peer and group feedback, students can agree to focus on just one or a few aspect of writing such as grammar, spelling, lay out etc. Alternatively, you can suggest the focus of assessment.

Section

10

Theme: Maximizing Limited Resources

Activity 22: Teaching reading skills with limited textbooks.

Aims:

- To teach reading using limited resources in large classes.
- To involve students in a collaborative reading activity.
- To engage all students in an active reading task.

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: An extract from the class textbook or from another text, copied and cut up into paragraphs with sufficient paragraphs for each student. If the groups will be of 6 students you need a passage cut into at least 6 paragraphs.

Language Focus: Reading.

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Students form groups of no more than 6.
3. Each group receives an envelope containing the contents of the entire passage, neatly cut up into paragraphs. Each paragraph should be numbered.
4. Each student in the group receives a paragraph (in groups of fewer than 6 students some will receive 2 paragraphs)
5. Students take it in turn to read aloud the paragraphs they have received. (Alternatively, students can read their paragraph silently then pass it on to the next student until all students in the group have read each paragraph.)
6. Students then discuss the content of the paragraphs and arrange them in what they think is the correct order. As students discuss the order encourage them to explain the reasons for the proposals they make.
7. A volunteer from each group then records their proposed paragraph order in a table such as the one below which you have drawn on the board.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Correct order

8. Once all groups have recorded their paragraph order, any discrepancies can be discussed, with groups justifying why they chose a particular paragraph order.
9. Finally the correct order is agreed and the students can be asked to copy this into their notebooks.

Variation:

- You can use the recommended textbook for the class or an article from a newspaper, magazine or any other story book for this activity.

Practical tips:

- Tell students not to write on the paragraphs and to return them at the end of the exercise then you can use them again.
- Assign group leaders to be responsible for the distribution and collection of the materials.

Below is an example of a text which you can use for the exercise.

Thomas Edison

1. *Thomas Alva Edison lit up the world with his invention of the electric light. Without him, the world might still be a dark place. However, the electric light was not his only invention. He also invented the phonograph, the motion picture*

camera, and over 1,200 other things. About every two weeks he created something new.

- 2. He was born in Milan, Ohio, on February 11, 1847. His family moved to Port Huron, Michigan, when he was seven years old. Surprisingly, he attended school for only two months. His mother, a former teacher, taught him a few things, but Thomas was mostly self-educated. His natural curiosity led him to start experimenting at a young age with electrical and mechanical things at home.*
- 3. When he was 12 years old, he got his first job. He became a newsboy on a train that ran between Port Huron and Detroit. He set up a laboratory in a baggage care of the train so that he could continue his experiments in his spare time. Unfortunately, his first work experience did not end well. Thomas was fired when he accidentally set fire to the floor of the baggage car.*
- 4. Thomas then worked for five years as a telegraph operator, but he continued to spend much of his time on the job conducting experiments. He got his first patent in 1868 for a vote recorder run by electricity. However, the vote recorder was not a success. In 1870, he sold another invention, a stock-ticker, for \$40,000. A stock-ticker is a machine that automatically prints stock prices on a tape. He was then able to build his first shop in Newark, New Jersey.*
- 5. Thomas Edison was totally deaf in one ear and hard of hearing in the other, but thought of his deafness as a blessing in many ways. It kept*

conversations short, so that he could have more time for work. He called himself a “two-shift man” because he worked 16 out of every 24 hours. Sometimes he worked so intensely that his wife had to remind him to sleep and eat.

- 6. Thomas Edison died at the age of 84 on October 18, 1931, at his estate in West Orange, New Jersey. He left numerous inventions that improved the quality of life all over the world.*

Activity 23: Story writing to generate resources

Aims:

- To generate learning resources through the students.
- To develop students narrative-writing skills in English and also to learn from one another.
- To develop students' listening and comprehension skills.
- To encourage students to work collaboratively

Level: Advanced

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: chalk and blackboard.

Language Focus: Speaking, listening, narrative-writing

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Students form groups of not more than six.
3. Each group is given a story-writing assignment. This could be the same assignment for each group or different assignments for different groups. Some ideas are given below:

- a. Students are given the title of a story.
 - b. Students are given the first paragraph of a story and asked to complete it.
 - c. Students are given a picture and are asked to write a story about how the characters in the picture came to be where they are and what is going to happen next.
4. On the agreed date, remind student of the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
 5. Assign numbers to each group by a draw. The numbers determines the date on which the groups will present their story.
 6. Draw the grid below on the board and students draw it in their exercise books.

No.	Group	Title of the story	Theme	Characters	Setting	Moral lesson
1						
2						
3						
4						

7. Representatives of the group that is presenting are invited to stand at the front and tell the class their story.
8. Students are given time after the story to complete the grid.
9. Students are also given the opportunity to give feedback using the Ladder of Feedback as a guide.

Activity 24: Teaching Listening skills

Aims:

- To give students the opportunity to practising comprehension skills.
- To encourage students to learn from one other.
- To build confidence in the students.

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes

Resources required: A reading text

Language focus: Listening comprehension

Procedure

1. Identify a student with good reading skills and give them the text before the lesson so they can practice reading it.
2. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
3. Write on the board the questions students will answer once they have listened to the text.
4. Students copy these questions into their exercise books.
5. Invite the student reader to read the passage.
6. When the student has finished the first reading,

give some minutes before giving the reader a sign to read the text a second time.

7. When he has finished the second reading, give students time to answer the questions.
8. Invite the student to read the passage for the last time.
9. The students then make any corrections or additions to their answers.
10. Thank the reader, and move on to follow-up activities such as discussing the answers to the questions or using the topic for speaking or writing practice.

Variations:

- If it is at a lower level, you can get a student to read out a sentence, and others will answer the questions you ask based on it.
- At an advanced level, students can choose the reading text. They would need to do this in advance so that you can prepare the evaluation questions.

Practical tip:

- You may like to hear the student read the text before the lesson so you can give any necessary feedback.

Activity 25: Guests as teaching and learning resources

Aims:

- To introduce variety into teaching
- To let students learn from others' experiences.
- To get students into the habit of interacting with people outside the classroom.
- To improve students skills in asking questions

Level: All

Time: 2 periods

Resources: The Guest.

Language Focus: Listening, speaking and Writing skills.

Procedure:

Before the session

1. Select an English speaking guest and tell them what you would like them to do when they visit the class. Explain the aims of the visit. (Students could be involved in the selection and/or in writing a letter to the guest)
2. Fix the time of visit with the guest and inform the students in advance.

3. Ask each student to prepare some questions to ask the guest.

During the session

1. Introduce the guest to the class.
2. Explain clearly the aims of the guest's visit and the structure of the session.
3. When the students are ready, invite the guest to speak.
4. When the guest has finished, thank him/her and invite students to ask questions.
5. After the question and answer section, thank the guest once again.
6. After, the guest has left, initiate a discussion to find out from the students what they learned from the guest's visit.
7. The students can work individually or in groups to write a report of the visit and/or a letter of thanks to the guest.

Follow-up Activity:

- Students could be asked to interview a respected member of their family or the community and to report on the interview to the class.

Activity 26: Peer interview

Aims:

- To encourage students to interact with, know and appreciate one another (especially at the beginning of the semester/term)
- To help them practice asking questions.
- To get students into the habit of interacting in pairs or groups.
- To help students develop confidence in getting and giving information.

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes.

Resources: Students

Language Focus: Asking and answering questions.

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Ask the students to think about what they want to know about their classmates.
3. Show them examples of questions for interview. e.g.

What.....?.

When.....?.

Where.....?

Do you.....? Etc.

4. Ask two volunteer students to come to the front of the class and role play the interview.
5. Discuss the language items to be used.
6. Students then interview someone they do not know well and record the responses they get.
7. Ask selected pairs to report their findings to the class.
8. Add composition activities for follow up.

Variation:

- The whole activity could be done in role play fashion (one student acting as a *journalist* and the other person acting as an official, as a guest etc).

Practical Tips:

- Take three sample pairs from the front, middle and the back of the class.
- For lower grades, write the questions that will be used for the interview on the blackboard.

Activity 27: Teaching tenses using limited resources

Aims:

- To teach grammar in a large class using limited resources.
- To help students learn the simple past tense in a meaningful contexts.
- To help students to use the simple past tense in oral and written tasks.

Level: All

Time: 45 minutes.

Resources required: Students, chalk and blackboard.

Language Focus: The Simple Past Tense.

Procedure:

1. Explain clearly the aims of the activity and the overall procedure.
2. Ask students to think of what they did the previous day and write down as many activities as they can remember in short sentences.
3. Write some of the activities you did on the chalkboard as an example of what you want them to do:

- a. I corrected assignments
 - b. I read a novel
 - c. I prepared a lesson plan etc.
 - d. Draw the following table on the blackboard and tel the students to copy it into their exercise books.
4. Tel students to think of what they did the previous weekend and complete the table with the activities they carried out. See who can think of the most activities

	Saturday	Sunday	Number of activities
Morning	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	
Afternoon	2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	
Evening	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	
Total number of activities			

5. Get them to exchange their work with a partner and to write a short paragraph on what their partner did during the past weekend.
6. Get two or three volunteers to report what they have written about their partners to the class.

7. Summarise the lesson by telling them that they have been learning the past simple test and give them further practice as homework.

Variations:

- You can use months or years instead of days in teaching past events.
- You can also do the activity by asking the students to demonstrate some actions before the whole class and asking others to report what they just did.

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An annotated bibliography on large classes is available on the following web-site maintained by Hywel Coleman: <http://www.hywelcoleman.com/learning.htm>

Large class sizes are a challenge faced by many teachers around the world and are a particular issue in many developing countries where teacher recruitment has not kept pace with rapid increases in school enrolments.

This book focuses on the specific issues faced by teachers of English in large class environments. Produced by a team of teachers, teacher educators and academics, all of whom have first hand experience of working in these environments, it gives clear and practical guidance for teachers on how to ensure that student learning is maximised.

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