TEACHER-LEARNER BEHAVIOUR AND CLASSROOM PROCESSES IN LARGE ESL CLASSES IN PAKISTAN

by

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The thesis presents a descriptive-interpretive account of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in large ESL classes in Pakistan. The fieldwork for the study was done in 6 secondary schools in Karachi, Pakistan; a total of 232 classes of varying size were observed; furthermore, 20 teachers and 21 groups of learners from the same classes were interviewed. The major findings of the study are as follows:

1) Numbers seem to be necessary but not sufficient for defining class size. Other factors which influence participants' perceptions of class size include participants' previous experience, the average class size in the immediate educational context, the size of the room and the ease or difficulty of doing certain activity types in the classroom.

2) Participants tend to view their difficulties in teaching-learning in large classes in relation to the ease in doing the same kinds of activity types in classes of a smaller size.

3) All teachers use a set of 'core' activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in their classrooms, irrespective of the size of their classes. This indicates the presence of a shared culture of teaching and learning in school classes in Pakistan which cuts across the variable of class size. On the other hand, though enhancing activity types are used by different teachers in both larger and smaller size classes, individual teachers seem to find it more difficult to use enhancing activities in larger as compared to smaller classes.

4) It seems that teachers do not change their teaching style if two (or more) classes are perceived by them to be in the same 'size category' in regard to their threshold levels of class size .

5) In large classes, the location of the students in the front or the back of the classroom seems to affect the pattern of teacher-learner interaction and the degree of learner participation in the classroom. This, in turn, has consequences for the classroom behaviour, and the motivation and learning of students at varied locations in the classroom.

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Chapter 3 The process of research: A socio-cultural experience

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1 a) The following abbreviations have been used to denote different data sources:

    CO Notes Classroom observation notes

    RD   Research Diary

    TI 1   Teacher interview no. 1

    TI; 5.2*   Teacher interview no. 2

    LI; 5.2.1* Learner interviews

*The numbers indicate different sites as well as the the code number used to identify different teachers and learners at any one site (see below).

b) Some other abbreviations which have been used are as follows:

    BB   Blackboard

    SS   Students

    TT   Teachers

2 The six different sites are numbered 1-6 as follows: (see also table 3.1)

    Site 1 Govt. - Nationalised school

    Site 2 Private school

    Site 3 Private school

    Site 4 Govt. - Nationalised school

    Site 5 Govt. school

    Site 6 Govt. school

3 Pseudonyms have been used in the data to protect the identity of the respondents. However, the participants from any one class can be identified by having the same site and teacher code numbers, for example: 2.3 means teacher number 3 from site 2; and 2.3.2 denotes the second group of learners interviewed from the class of the same teacher.

4 The classroom observation notes from the two phases of the fieldwork are denoted by numbers I and II, for example: 2-I-3/ CO 7 means classroom observation number 7 in the class of teacher 3 during phase I of the fieldwork at site 2.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally research on class size has been characterised by the following underlying assumptions: a) small classes are better than large classes; and b) class size is an independent and controlling variable. There seems to be a widespread belief that an increase in numbers has a negative correlation with learning and achievement in the classroom. On the other hand, it is assumed that a reduction in numbers would affect, positively, not only learning and other non-achievement variables but also the method of instruction and teacher behaviour in the classroom. However, the findings of class size studies do not prove with any certainty that this is, in fact, the case.

Furthermore, traditionally there have been two camps in the debate on class size. On the one hand are teachers who consider teaching large classes as highly problematic. (The teachers report not only physical exhaustion but also increased levels of stress accompanied with lower levels of professional satisfaction in large classes; large classes also increase the workload of the teachers.) On the other, there are administrators and policy makers who consider reduction in class size as one of the most expensive interventions in regard to financial expenditure while at the same time being extremely elusive in terms of showing tangible gains per unit of expenditure, such as increase in learner achievement in smaller classes. The contradictory and inconclusive nature of the findings of research on class size is often cited as evidence against investing huge sums of money on this educational reform.

Being a teacher of large classes and a teacher trainer in a variety of educational settings in Pakistan, where large classes are a 'fact of life', my study was motivated largely by the need for improving the effectiveness of teaching-learning in large classes. I decided to study varying size school classes from the view of the participants (both teachers and learners) in an attempt to *understand* what actually happens in large classes *as they are* (instead of trying to prove the 'smaller is better' hypothesis). Consequently a total of 232 classes were observed at six sites (secondary schools) in Karachi, Pakistan.

Furthermore, 20 teachers and 21 groups of students (3-5 students in each group) from the same classes were interviewed for the purpose of the study.

The study was designed to arrive at a holistic picture of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan. More specifically, the aim was to gain the insider's view of the 'reality' of teaching and learning, and consequently an understanding of what happens, particularly in terms of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes, in large ESL classes in secondary schools in Pakistan. As is usual in qualitative studies, several additional issues were identified during the process of data collection and analysis. As a result, I was able to outline the final research questions for my study only towards the end of my investigation. (For both the initial aims of the study and the final research questions, see chapter 2, section 2.2.)

The overall structure of the thesis is as follows:

The thesis begins, in chapter 1, with a review of literature. The function of this review is to look at the major issues and trends in class size studies and to investigate the reasons for the contradictory and inconclusive nature of their findings. This leads to a discussion of a) how the findings of research on class size are used in policy making and its implications; and b) the practitioners' response to the reality of teaching large classes in their everyday teaching-learning situation. The review of literature reveals that firstly, class size studies are mainly quantitative in nature; secondly the bulk of class size are conducted in North America where the conditions of teaching and learning are vastly dissimilar from developing countries (cf. Coleman:1991a); thirdly, it is difficult to isolate class size as an independent variable in order to study its effects on, for example, learning and achievement in the classroom. These observations underline the need for studying teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size *as they are*. Furthermore, they emphasise the need for conducting class size studies in developing countries such as Pakistan.

The review of literature on class size in chapter 1 is followed, in chapter 2, by a description of the the need, purpose and rationale of the study. The place of the case study method in the tradition of qualitative inquiry and its suitability for undertaking the present study is also discussed in chapter 2. In chapter 3 the actual process of research is described and some issues raised regarding the socio-cultural context of different research settings and their effect on the nature and quality of data collected in the field.

The research begins, in chapter 4, with an attempt to define large and small classes. For this purpose, a search is undertaken in the literature on class size (reviewed earlier in chapter 1, sections 1.3. 1.4 and 1.6) to highlight both the researchers' and practitioners' definition of 'small' and 'large' classes. This reveals that different researchers have arbitrarily used varied definitions of 'small' and 'large' classes in their studies. Furthermore, there seems to be no agreement amongst teachers about what constitutes 'small', ideal', 'large' or 'intolerably large' classes in different parts of the world, and even between teachers who are teaching at different levels within the same educational environment. It is also found that the criteria used by teachers for defining their classes as 'small' or 'large' are not identified in the literature. Thus chapter 4 describes the procedure used in the present study for defining varying size school classes in Pakistan from the perspective of the participants (both teachers and the students in the same classes). The perceptions of the participants about their present classes as 'very large', 'large', 'neither small nor large' and 'small'[1] and the factors that seem to contribute to teachers' and learners' varied perceptions (and therefore variable definitions) of class size are also identified and discussed in this chapter.

The beliefs of teachers and learners about larger and smaller classes (based both on their experience and perceptions of varying size classes) are discussed in chapter 5. As in

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[1] It is significant that only one teacher in the study described her class as 'small'. However, the data from her classes was not included in the study as it was very clear that she was trying to do display teaching for the benefit of the researcher. (She had been a participant in a teacher training programme on which the researcher was one of the tutors.)

chapter 4, the discussion in this chapter is organised in terms of participants' 'categories'; in other words, the categories for the classification of teachers' and learners' beliefs about larger and smaller classes are derived from the data rather than from theory or imposed arbitrarily by the researcher.

Chapters 6 and 7 describe teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes as observed (by the researcher) in classes of varying size. More specifically, an overview of the 'core' activity types as observed in classes of varying size is presented in chapter 6; in chapter 7, the behaviour of teachers and learners and classroom processes in varying size classes are looked at more closely in terms of the descriptive framework developed in chapter 6 (cf. 'core' and 'enhancing' activity types). The combined evidence of teachers' and learners' beliefs about larger and smaller classes and an observation of their classroom behaviour reveals both similarities (core activity types) and differences in the frequency of use of enhancing activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours and classroom processes in larger and smaller classes. One major difference found in smaller and larger classes, i.e, the difference in the pattern of teacher-learner interaction and learners' classroom participation vis-a-vis the location of the learners in the front and the back of the classroom (chapter 7, section 7.4.1), is explored in greater detail in chapter 8.

During the course of the study, a difference was also observed in several discrete teacher-learner behaviours and classroom processes in the classrooms of two teachers (out of the 22 teachers whose classes were observed for the purpose of the study) who were trying to introduce innovations in their individual classrooms. In chapter 9, a closer look at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in their large and smaller classes reveals that the innovations are introduced mainly *within the framework of the core activity types* described in chapter 6 (section 6.3). It seems that some innovations, such as group work, are more difficult to introduce in larger as compared to smaller classes. However, the nature and scope of the innovations in the classrooms of these two teachers indicates that the process of introducing innovations in large school classes in

Pakistan is related very closely to the shared culture of teaching in varying size school classes in Pakistan.

The major approaches to introducing innovations in large classes in different parts of the world, as reported in the literature, are also identified in chapter 9 in an attempt to suggest a procedure for developing a model of innovations for large classes in Pakistan.

In chapter 10, an attempt is made to arrive at some understanding of the problems reported by teachers in large classes and the homogeneity and differences found in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan. This is done both in the light of the findings of the present study as well as some earlier studies of class size in this area (cf. chapter 1, sections 1.3.3 and 1.4). The overall findings of the study are also summarised in chapter 10. Furthermore, some conclusions are drawn about teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in large school classes in Pakistan. Finally, some directions for future research are suggested.

CHAPTER 1

THE STUDY OF LARGE CLASSES: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1.1 Introduction

The effects of varying class size on the teaching/learning process and achievement have been a matter of debate for almost a century now.[1] During the 1940's interest in the question of class size and its effects on instruction and learning outcomes waned for some time. However, the issue was taken up once again in the 1950's and has been an important issue in research from the 70's onwards (Glass et al.:1982).

We do not know with any certainty that small classes are inherently 'good' or that large classes are always 'bad' in terms of their effects on the teaching/learning process and achievement in the classroom. Moreover, research evidence indicates that it is not possible to define an optimum class size which could be applicable in all teaching-learning situations. However, it is interesting to note that teachers have always held the view, whatever the size of their class may be, that small classes are better and somehow more beneficial for learning and effective teaching - a belief that does not have unqualified support from research in this area.

My aim in this chapter is to present an overview of research and other literature available on different phenomena in large classes.[2] Firstly, I will present a brief historical account of some issues and concerns in the study of large (and small) classes, particularly from the 1950's till date. This will be followed by a look at different themes and

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[1] A number of developing countries such as Pakistan, gained their independence after the second world war. Hence the review of literature takes into account the period from the 50's onwards only.

[2] The literature on class size can be divided into three kinds: 1) Research studies investigating the relationship between class size and different aspects of the teaching-learning process and teachers' and learners' difficulties in large classes etc. (sections 1.3 and 1.4); 2) Reviews of research on class size, often commissioned by educational authorities, to inform policy decisions (section 1.5); 3) Accounts of teachers' experiences of teaching large classes and their 'coping strategies' in teachers' journals and newsletters usually with limited geographic distribution (cf. Coleman:1989b) (section 1.6).

directions in research on the relationship between class size and different variables in the teaching-learning process. I will draw on a selection of studies from different research traditions to identify the major themes and research traditions in the study of the effects of class size. Thirdly, the work of the Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project will be reviewed briefly.[3] Next, the role of class size research in policy making will be discussed. Some conclusions will also be drawn about the implications of the findings of class size studies. Fifthly, the response of practitioners to large classes will be described. Finally, a case will be made for reorienting class size research from 'proving' that smaller is better to 'understanding' what happens in large and smaller size classes.

1.2   Some issues and concerns in class size research: A brief historical account

1.2.1   The effects of class size: For whom and for what purposes?

Any discussion about the effects of class size raises several important issues. They are as follows:

1) Does class size affect all or some dimensions of the teaching-learning process?

2) Is the effect of class size consistent across different educational environments, subjects, levels, and kinds of student population or does it vary in relation to other variables in the teaching-learning process? What are these variables?

3) What are the conditions under which the effect of class size is felt most/least within the same or different educational environments? (cf. norms of behaviour in the community, large classes in relation to other large groups in the community etc.)

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[3]The work of the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes research project will be reviewed separately as it represents the first concerted effort, made by teachers and researchers together, to undertake the study of large classes in a systematic way, particularly in developing countries.

Sitkei (1968), after reviewing past research on class size, reached the conclusion, rightly in my opinion, that, 'it is probably impossible to bring together consensus that a single optimum class size integer or range can be set up for any or all school systems' (p. 3). Therefore, perhaps a better question to ask is 'Class size for what end and under what circumstances?' (op. cit.).

Williams (1980) reported the results of the 1975 National Education Association teachers' opinion poll. The teachers were asked to suggest one change that would improve their morale and professional satisfaction. The highest ranking response was to reduce class size. Williams observed that although small classes were generally shown to have a number of advantages over large classes,e.g. opportunities for more creativity and divergent thinking, it was not very often that teachers changed their instructional procedures with a reduction in class size. He reached the conclusion that optimal class size was dependent on a number of other contributory factors such as types of students involved and teacher competency to adapt instructional approaches to varying class size. He was, therefore, of the view that,

> No single class size applies to all situations and a flexible approach is usually more suitable than a rigid class size policy - a flexible approach to varying class size for varying instructional purposes and student needs . . . a band class may need 65 students for concert performance; a remedial reading resources class may require only five (p. 6).

Cotton and Savard (1980) after their review of 35 research studies (out of which 20 were considered valid) reached similar conclusions.[4] Thus they recommended that if resources permit, smaller classes should be made available for 'academically needy and younger students' (p. 6). However, the researchers were of the view that as appropriate class size seems to be dependent on students' age/grade, subject taught and instructional method used, it would be more useful to devote attention 'to improving instructional methods, rather than altering class size in general' (op. cit.).

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[4]The research was undertaken as a topic summary report, a part of the school effectiveness project of the State of Oregon to facilitate decision making on important educational issues.

Robinson and Whittebols (1985 in Robinson:1990) did an extensive review of 100

research studies on class size from 1950-1985, using a technique called cluster analysis.

The research studies were arranged into clusters considered important for decisions, such

as grade levels, subject areas, student characteristics, student achievement, student

behaviour and teaching practices.   Though the research review was undertaken to

facilitate decision-making on class size, it reveals some important findings about the

relationship between class size and other factors in the teaching/learning process. They

are:

- The most positive effects of small classes on pupil learning occur in grades K-3 in reading and mathematics, particularly in classes of 22 or fewer students. However, the first years' positive effects may not be sustained in subsequent years.

- Studies examining students' attitude and behaviour found the most favourable effect of smaller classes in the primary grades.[5]

- Smaller classes can positively affect the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority students.

- Within the mid-range of 23-30 pupils, class size has little impact on the academic achievement of most pupils in most subjects above the primary grades.

- The positive effect of class size on student achievement decreases as grade levels increase. However, the available studies in specific subject areas in the upper grades are limited in both number and quality.

- Little if any increase in student achievement can be expected from reducing class size if teachers continue to use the same instructional methods and procedures in the smaller classes that they used in the larger classes.

- Reductions in class size have small positive effects on achievement in comparison to many less costly learning interventions and strategies. (Robinson:1990:82)

Thus both researchers and policy makers are increasingly becoming conscious of the

fact that class size is not the controlling variable that it was thought to be in the 50's and

60's. In other words, there is a growing realisation that class size, though necessary, is

perhaps not sufficient to produce an effect on all aspects of teaching and learning in

different educational contexts. Hence, nowadays, it is considered more prudent to

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[5]See also Slavin (1990).

consider the class size question in relation to other contributing variables such as students' age, the subject to be taught and teaching methods used.

1.2.2 Class size research: Asking the wrong questions or time to mend the nets?[6]

In 1975, the Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada, commissioned research on the best questions to ask in class size research. This was a unique effort of its kind and it seemed to be timely as doubts were being raised with increasing frequency about whether previous research on class size had asked the right questions. Ryan and Greenfield (1975) after undertaking a comprehensive review of available research outlined a number of reasons for the inconclusiveness of the results of previous research on the class size question. Some of the problems in available research noted by them (Chap IV) are as follows:

1) Most of the research findings are based on studies where 'The research designs, procedures followed, criterion measures used, and statistical analyses employed are typically subject to question' (p. 173).

2) All the studies have varying definitions of small and large classes. Thus what might be considered small in one study might actually be defined as large in another study. Moreover, what was considered large has changed over the years as a result of marked reduction in class sizes.

3) Most studies of class size have failed to control other confounding variables, which probably have a greater influence on achievement than class size. One important variable that was typically not controlled for in earlier studies of class size was the teaching method used in small and large classes. Another important variable is

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[6]cf. Burstall (1979), Kay (1980).

teacher workload (the total number of students a teacher is responsible for during a day or the week).

4) In the majority of studies, only one criterion measure (i.e. student achievement test scores) was used to assess the relative effects of varying class sizes.

Ryan and Greenfield also pointed attention to the fact that class size effects might be different for different subjects and grade levels. In the light of their extensive research review, they presented a model for conducting future research on the class size question. This model was reviewed by researchers from different disciplines in a conference organised by the two researchers in 1976. Thereafter the model was slightly modified (Ryan and Greenfield:1976). However, research based on the proposed model could not be carried out due to problems of funding.

Erickson (1976) in a review of Ryan and Greenfield's model for future research on the class size question eloquently summarised the problems of past research and recommendations for future research by using the analogy of fishing, thus:

> . . . it is as though we had been fishing all day with no results though believing with good reason that there were fish in these waters. Finally, we discover our net is full of such enormous holes that it couldn't snag anything smaller than a whale. What shall we do? Rather than giving up, as though there were no fish to be caught, I say we should try again with a better net (p. 20).

Though Ryan and Greenfield could not carry out their proposed research programme, their deliberations on the class size question can be seen as the beginning of a new era in class size research with more elaborate research designs addressing a variety of questions while accounting and/or controlling for other contributing variables. An important new direction that can be observed in research conducted in the late 70's and thereafter is the increasing attention being paid to classroom process variables - particularly instructional procedures - and other factors influencing the learning environment in small and large classes.

1.2.3 The nets are mended!

The last decade of class size research seems to have been more fruitful in proving some of the advantages of smaller classes. This has largely been due to the following:

1) Use of more sophisticated and complex research designs; and

2) Asking different (right?) types of question.

As mentioned earlier, the late 1970's and 80's are characterised by more elaborate research designs taking account of not only the number of students in a class but also other factors in the classroom, such as the age of the students, that might interact with numbers to produce an effect on what happens in the classroom. Recently, a number of large scale projects have been undertaken with huge amounts of state funds, for example, Tennessee State Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) Project (1985-89), to study the effects of small classes on instructional practices, teacher morale and satisfaction, the learning environment in the classroom and different measures of learner achievement.

The STAR project was undertaken in 1985 at the behest of the state legislative assembly with a grant of $12 m for three years. It included 305 schools which were located in rural, suburban, inner city and urban areas, with a mixed population of both white and minority students. The purpose was to find the optimal class size in grades K-2. (The project was later extended by one year to include grade 3 also.)

According to Word et al. (1990) the project was unique in several ways:

1) It followed a within-school research design including three classes in each grade in each institution - a small class of 13-17 students, a regular class of 22 students and a regular class of 22 students with a teacher's aide;

2) It focused on the teaching of basic skills in the elementary grades only (K-3);

3) The teachers and students were randomly assigned to different class types.

Each year data were analysed in subsets on the SAT achievement scales, the BSF performance tests (beginning in grade 1), and the SCAMIN self-concept and motivation scales. Also, at the end of each year, teacher exit interviews were conducted of teachers in small classes and regular classes with teacher aide, to find out their perception of change in the learning environment and other instruction and classroom variables. Two different questionnaires were also administered to the same teachers (the instructional grouping practices questionnaire and the parent/volunteer teacher interaction questionnaire) to find out their 'grouping practices' and the nature and extent of teacher-parent relationships in both small classes and regular classes with teacher aide. (The findings of the project will be discussed in sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.3 below.)

Though the nets have probably been mended and are now cast wider to include other variables in the teaching/learning process, as is evident in the above study, it is significant that the bulk of class size studies have been conducted in North America (Coleman:1991a). At the same time almost no research studies, particularly of this magnitude, have been undertaken in 'acquisition poor environments' in developing countries. Also, there seems to have been no tradition of class size research in ELT classrooms (op cit.).[7]

1.3 Themes and directions in the study of large classes

The research studies on class size are usually distinguishable both by their focus of investigation as well as the research methods used. However, as mentioned in section 1.2.3 above, some recent large scale studies of class size have used more sophisticated research designs to investigate the effects of class size on more than one aspect of the teaching-learning process. The findings of these studies will therefore be discussed separately in different sections below.

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[7]See Horne (1970) for an exception.

1.3.1 The relationship between class size and achievement

The studies of class size and achievement have typically been undertaken to test the 'Smaller is Better' hypothesis based on the common belief that an increase in numbers in a class inhibits effective teaching and learning. It is thus usual to take class size as an independent variable and study its effect on achievement as the dependent variable. These studies usually follow an experimental or input-output research design where the learners are assigned to two or more groups of different sizes and their learning and achievement is measured by comparing their pre and post test scores, on standardised tests of achievement.

1.3.1.1 Studies that favour small classes

Blake (1954 in Sitkei:1968) in his survey of a selected number of class size studies in elementary and secondary schools found 35 studies that favoured small classes, 18 studies which were in favour of large classes, and 32 studies which were inconclusive in showing the relative advantages of either small or large classes. When Blake conducted a further analysis applying more rigourous criteria for inclusion, a ratio of 5 to 1 was found in favour of small classes. Thus out of 22 studies, 16 (72%) favoured small classes, 3 (14%) favoured large classes and 3(14%) were found to be inconclusive. However, Ryan and Greenfield (1975) in their review of research on class size later pointed attention to the fact that one of the major faults in Blake's study was that, 'half of the evidence supporting small classes results from measures of opinions, and the remaining studies are almost equally divided between support and lack of support for small classes' (p. 172).

Glass and Smith (1978) and Glass et al. (1982) in their extensive search of literature on class size from 1900-1979 for their meta-analysis found 77 empirical studies of class size and achievement. Glass et al. point out that whereas in some studies a rigourous experimental design was not followed, in others (e.g Whitney and Willey:1932) great

care was taken to control the confounding variables by randomly assigning students to different size groups which were often taught by the same teachers. However, by using a statistical procedure called meta-analysis, they were able to combine even very small and statistically insignificant effects in individual studies, that were discarded earlier.[8]

According to Glass et al., the basic unit of their statistical analysis was:

> . . . a comparison of pupils' achievement in classes of two different sizes. For example, the reading performance of pupils taught in classes of size 15 might be compared with that of pupils in classes of size 30 (p. 41).

In all they found 725 comparisons (some studies compared more than two class sizes) out of which 435 or 60% favoured the smaller class.[9]

Glass et al. further showed that there was a difference of 30 percentile rank in learner achievement between class size 1-40 while the difference between classes of 20 pupils and 10 pupils could be larger than 10 percentile ranks. On the other hand, there was hardly any difference in achievement between class sizes of 35 and 40 pupils. They claimed, on the basis of the result of their analysis, that there was a strong relationship between small classes and achievement, thus:

> Small classes were very much better than large classes. [However] Large classes were hardly any better than very large classes (p. 47).

Moody et al. (1972) studied the effect of random groups of 1,2,5 and 23 students in 4th grade on their achievement of 10 mathematical objectives. Extraneous variables were controlled by randomly assigning 7 teachers to teach the lesson on 3 days to at least two different size groups (one large and one small) over a two-week period and testing immediately afterwards. Results showed that students in each of the smaller class sizes displayed significantly greater attainment of the 10 mathematical objectives than did those

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[8]The validity of the technique of meta-analysis was later confirmed in an independent study by Hedges and Stock (1983).

[9]See also Glass (1987).

in classes of 23 students. Also one-to-one instruction was shown to be significantly superior to one-to-five.

Similarly, the findings of the Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) project (first mentioned in section 1.2.3 above) seem to provide unequivocal support to small classes of 13-15 students against regular size classes of 22 students and regular classes with a teacher aide, the other two groups in the study (Word et al.:1990). It was found that pupils' performance in reading and maths was significantly greater in the small classes. In fact it is claimed that the results are 'definitive' in proving that , 'a significant benefit accrues to students in reduced-size classes in both subject areas' (Finn and Achilles:1990:557).[10]

The achievement results were tabulated according to grade levels for each year and longitudinally for all grade levels for the four years of the project. At the kindergarten level, the results showed definite advantages for small classes in achievement but no significant advantage for the use of a teacher aide. At the end of the first grade, project STAR students in small classes were performing better than students in regular and regular/aide classes on standardised tests and also on the state's Basic Skills First (BSF) test of reading and mathematics. Similarly, students in regular classes with a full time teacher aide outperformed students in regular classes in both reading and mathematics. In second and third grade, students in small classes continued to outperform students in regular and regular-aide classes. Though the difference in grades two and three was not very significant, the students in small classes seemed to maintain the advantage gained earlier over students in regular and regular-aide classes. Thus the effect of small class size though felt originally in the kindergarten was maintained for the next two years in school.

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[10]See also Finn et al. (1990)

Moreover, while a strong class size effect was evident in all school locations and for all students on standardised and criterion referenced achievement measures, the effect of the teacher aide was found to be consistently absent. However, the impact of reducing class size in terms of student achievement was greater in inner city schools with high minority enrollment than in schools in other locations in the city.

Unlike Glass et al. (1982), who did not find any significant relationship between class size and level and class size and subjects, Word et al. (1990) point out significantly the positive effects of having smaller classes in the early years.[11] It is also shown that the effects of smaller classes could vary with different kinds of student population.

The findings of an earlier five year study of the relationship between class size and achievement in reading and maths also point in the same direction (Furno and Collins:1967). The data for the study was derived from records of the Baltimore public school system for all 16,449 grade 3 pupils in the class of 1959, comprising both regular and special education and white and non-white students. Pupils in smaller classes in both the regular and special education classes were found to make significantly greater achievement gains than students in large classes. In the smallest class size (1-25) the achievement gains by non-white students were considerably greater than those by white students. This indicates that even if the positive effect of small classes is shown on learning outcomes, the effect is not consistent for all kinds of student populations and at all levels in different subject areas.

1.3.1.2 Studies with inconclusive results

Marklund (1963) studied the effects of size and homogeneity of class on achievement in grade six of Swedish compulsory schools. He found that out of 281 comparisons made of attainment between larger and smaller classes, '37 favoured the larger classes, 22 the

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[11]Swan and others (1985) in their evaluation report of the Indiana State PRIMETIME project also point attention to the overwhelming evidence in favour of small classes of 18 students in the early years.

smaller and in the 22 remaining comparisons, the differences were not significant' (p. 65). Haskell (1964) also arrived at similar conclusions in his study of the effects of class size upon pupil achievement in geometrical drawing. 103 secondary school children were randomly assigned to two 'large' and two 'small' classes. The two groups were matched for I.Q. and age. Other factors such as the syllabus and teacher were also held constant. Achievement in geometrical drawing and attitudes were measured by specially designed tests. The findings did not show any significant relationship between achievement and class size and the effect of social organisation on attitude and attainment in the subject. Haskell did not seem worried by the inconclusiveness of his results but accepted them as 'generally in keeping with the more reliable studies' (p. 30).

Wright et al. (1977) undertook a large scale study (also reported in Shapson et al.:1980) of the effects of class size on pupil achievement in vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematical concepts, mathematical problem solving, art and composition. The students were randomly assigned to four different size groups of 16, 23, 30, and 37 students. The results indicated an overall significant difference only for the learning of mathematical concept due to class size.

Williams et al. (1985) investigated the relationship between class size and achievement at the college level. Instead of using an experimental approach a total of 16,230 test scores were used from the university testing centre archives, representing 305 sections from 24 different subjects. The size of the sections ranged from 13 to 1,006 students. The results of their data analysis did not reveal any significant differences between different class sizes. Williams et al. tried to speculate on the inconclusiveness of their findings. Thus in their view, it is possible that class size does not have any significant effect on the achievement of lower level skills such as recall of facts, but affects the development of higher order skills of thinking and problem solving, thus:

> There are several other achievement related variables that could interact with class size and achievement . .. Examples of these are student ability; level of teaching and learning; complex skill learning, which requires extensive feedback on personal performance; problem solving and learning requiring simulations (p. 136).

The beliefs of Williams and his colleagues were confirmed by Mahler et al. (1986) who investigated the effects of class size on activity and cognitive dimensions of lessons in medical instruction. It was found that in small classes the focus was on higher order skills while in large classes more attention was paid to knowledge level. Similarly, large groups showed a higher percentage of interactions at the lowest cognitive level and a minimum of cognitive diversity in the class.

It is important to note that research interest during recent years has shifted from proving that small is better to finding out why, if at all, smaller classes are better than large classes. In other words, research effort seems to be directed at finding out the specific characteristics of small and large classes that make the participants view them in a negative or positive manner. Furthermore, some small scale investigations have begun to examine the effect of class size on different dimensions of the instructional process (discrete items such as instructional tasks) that can affect learning outcomes instead of trying to find a 'whole' effect on 'all' the dimensions of the teaching-learning process.

Thus the results of the studies on the relationship between class size and achievement do not prove with any certainty that small classes are always better than large classes. Bolton (1989) after his review of studies on class size and achievement arrived at the same conclusion thus, 'what evidence is available is at best, inconclusive and probably untenable' (p. 20).[12] This could be due to one or more of the following factors:

1) **Problem of definition:** Small and large classes have been defined variously by different researchers for the purpose of their study. This has resulted in a 'small' class in one study being defined as a 'large' class in another study and an overlap in small and large class size even between different comparisons within the same study. Further, there is a large variation in the definition of small and large across different studies. For example, one of the large classes in the study of Shapson et al. (1980)

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[12]See also Bolton (1990).

i.e. 37 is almost twice the size of the large class (20) in one of the comparisons in Marklund (1963). (See also section 1.2.2 above.)

2) **Difficulty of isolating class size as an independent variable** (cf. Peachey:1989): Dunkin and Biddle (1974) identify a variety of teacher, learner and context variables that need to be considered in the study of classroom learning. The difficulty of isolating class size as an independent variable and controlling the effect of all other variables in a classroom could be another reason why research has not been able to show, with any certainty, the importance of class size as a significant variable in learning and achievement.

3) **Difficulty of operationalising 'achievement'** (the dependent variable): Once again, there is great variation in how different researchers have operationalised learning and achievement for the purposes of their research. Thus whereas Haskell(1964) measured pupil achievement in geometrical drawing through attainment tests administered to all the subjects and Shapson et al. (op. cit..) used standardized achievement tests in reading, math competence and art, it is not clear that the different tests used test the same cognitive skills or that variation in class size has the same effect on pupils' achievement in different subject areas.

4) **The specific constraints of teaching-learning in the large class context encourage students to engage in more out of class study:** It is perhaps the case, as Allwright (1989a) suggests, that students in large classes begin to take more responsibility for their learning due to the difficulty of teacher-student interaction and the relative anonymity of the large class situation.[13] Williams et al. (1985) also hypothesized that students, especially at the university level, probably take more

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[13]Coleman (1991b) in his visit to Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok found that small thatched huts had been built around the university to provide the students an opportunity to meet in small groups. (Report of visit to Thailand, op. cit.). It must be remembered that class sizes in Ramkhamhaeng University range from 200-5,000 students (Itzen:1986).

responsibility for their learning and use more self study methods which could affect class size achievement results.

1.3.2 The relationship between class size and non-achievement variables

A number of surveys of teachers' and learners' perceptions and attitudes have been conducted to find out how the participants view the large class context in terms of its effects on the ease and effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes. The results of these studies, according to Glass et al. (1982), have been more decisive in showing the beneficial effects of small classes than 'the confusion reflected in the literature on the achievement issue' (p. 51).

Though varying class sizes have been found to influence teachers' expectations quite significantly, there is some evidence to suggest that class size per se does not have any significant effect on learners' perceptions or their attitudes towards large classes. In fact, it is likely that one of the major determinants of students' attitudes is the instructional method used rather than the size of the class.

1.3.2.1 Teacher effects

Smith and Glass (1980) did a meta-analysis of research studies on class size to find out the non-achievement effects of class size on students, teachers and the instructional process. Ten categories of outcomes were identified representing student attitude, individualisation of instruction, student participation in learning, enrichment activities, classroom behaviour, interpersonal regard, "open education", general quality of instruction, teacher attitude and school climate. The effects were calculated for classes ranging from 5-70 students. The findings indicated that ' there is a beneficial effect on the general quality of the education environment resulting from decreasing class size' (p. 45). In other words, it was found that the 'smaller is better' hypothesis is viable in terms of a positive effect on non-cognitive and affective variables. At a more specific level, it was revealed that in the outcome effects, ' the largest of the effects was on teachers'

thereby giving empirical support to the widely held belief that teachers feel more comfortable and perform better in smaller classes.

Wyly and Frusher (1990) conducted a survey of the stressors and coping strategies of teachers in small town/rural schools in U.S.A. They found that oversized classes were top of the list (59.1%) in teachers' account of factors causing stress. This was closely followed by low salaries (57.3%) and having too much to do each day (51.7%). It is likely that one of the reasons for excessive teacher workload is the large number of students in their classes.

Carver (1988a) asked participants of three teacher education programmes at Moray House in Edinburgh, UK,to identify their problems in teaching English in their home teaching situation. Large classes was one of the 12 most commonly cited problems. The participants through another questionnaire were asked to rate these problems in terms of importance and solubility. 'Having too many students in the class' was rated as a problem by the highest number of respondents. Also in terms of solubility large classes were least frequently mentioned as a problem that can be solved easily (Carver:1988b).

A study of perceived sources of teacher stress was carried out by Gorrell and Dharmadasa (1989) in Sri Lanka. In all there were 722 respondents to the teacher stress inventory representing large city, small town and village schools, both public and private, in south and central regions of Sri Lanka. The highest level of stress (mean score 5.30 on a score of 6.00) was reported for overcrowded classes. This was followed closely by 'teacher keeps too many records and reports' (M=5.19) and student absenteeism (M=5.13). Though the researchers did not examine the relationship between different factors causing stress, it is likely that an increased amount of teacher workload is the direct result of having large classes. Similarly a high rate of student absenteeism could be attributed to the relative degree of anonymity provided by the large class context.

Another study of stress related factors for teachers in Nigeria also found that large classes were a major source of stress for the teachers (Okebukola and Jegede:1989). It is

significant that despite differences in educational contexts class size is reported as one of the major factors related to teacher stress in different parts of the world.[14]

1.3.2.2 Learner effects

Stones (1969) investigated students' attitudes to different size teaching groups - tutorial, seminar and lecture. The study was based on a questionnaire survey of 1,052 third year students of 12 colleges in the Birmingham area. The results clearly revealed that students preferred seminar groups to tutorial groups and lectures. (A seminar group was defined as a group of students working with a tutor for discussion purposes.)

The relationship between the motivation level of the students and their respective class sizes was studied by Bolander (1973). Bolander was also interested in finding out if this relationship affects students' evaluation of the course.[15] A total of ten classes, different only in terms of class size, were taught by five instructors. The data was collected through student questionnaires and interview of each instructor to find out information about his/her teaching methods. If one instructor was found to teach a large class in a different way from his/her small class it was assumed that the difference was attributable to class size. Although results revealed that student motivation levels were higher in smaller classes and course evaluations were better in the small class, it was not possible to find out if class size had a direct effect on student evaluation or if it was mediated through student motivation level. Hence it was concluded that, 'The relationships do exist but the support is not overwhelming' (p. 17).

McConnell and Sosin (1984) conducted an attitude survey of 961 students 'in relatively large economics classes' to find out whether students liked or disliked large classes and what factors determined their attitudes. It was discovered that, 'Students

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[14]See also Kenny and Tsai (1992), Shamim (1991a) and the findings of the Lancaster Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes research project.

[15]See also Feldman (1984) for the relationship between class size and college students' evaluations of teachers and courses, and Shapiro (1990) for effect of instructor and class characteristics on students' course evaluations.

generally were unfavourably disposed towards large classes' (p. 182). However, 'a more favourable student perception of the instructor and a receipt of a higher grade both tended to make the large class setting more acceptable to students' (p. 187). Also, 'students' attitudes varied by the subject matter of the classes' (p. 188). Consequently, McConnell and Sosin speculated that the differences in students' attitudes could perhaps be explained better with reference to differences in the nature of the subject matter, course objectives, instructional methods, and/or students' perception of their instructors rather than class size per se.

The findings of Wulff et al. (1987) also indicate that students consider effective teaching more important than the size of the class. Wulff et al. gave a questionnaire to over 800 students to find out their view of the large class context (both positive and negative factors), and their perception of teaching and learning in large classes in terms of the content and amount learnt , specific instructional dimensions such as instructor competency and instructor's concern for students, and the evaluation process. The results showed that:

> Although their [students] perceptions are varied and sometimes conflicting, students do reinforce the importance of focusing on the dimensions of effective teaching rather than the number of students in the large class (p. 19).

Moore (1977) is also of the view that 'the badness of large class instruction must lie not in the size but in the method of instruction' (p. 21). She conducted an attitude survey to assess students' feelings towards large group instruction. The results of the pre-test supported the inherently negative attitude of students towards large classes. However, when the method of instruction was changed, there was a marked change in students' attitudes.

The comparative effects of two large classes (with 129 and 121 students respectively) and traditional sized pre-Algebra classes ranging in size from 30-40 students on students' aptitude and attitudes were studied by Edgell (1981). The pre and post-test comparisons of 135 students in large classes and 85 students in traditional size classes showed a

positive change in aptitude for students in the two groups. On the other hand, there was a change of attitudes which was negative in both cases. However, there was a significant difference in negativity in the two groups. According to Edgell, the more negative attitudes of students in large classes could be explained by factors other than class size, for example, not having laboratory experiments as part of their regular class. Also there were more upper level students in the large classes than the small classes.

Wright et al. (1977), in their large scale two year study of 63 4th and 5th grade classrooms in Toronto (also reported in Shapson et al.:1980), found that though class size had a significant effect on teachers' expectations, there was no significant difference in the attitudes and opinions of students in classes of different sizes. Thus prior to the study, 94% of teachers' positive expectations were from small classes (16 and 23), and 91% of their negative expectations were directed towards large classes (30 and 37). At the end of the year after experiencing varied class size the teachers' opinions were found to match their earlier expectations. However, no significant effect on pupil satisfaction, subject emphasis, and educational resources could be noted in smaller classes. Likewise, no change could be found in students' attitude towards school or their self concept in different size classes.

Thus the evidence suggests that whereas teachers prefer smaller classes, learners do not perceive class size as separate from instructional method and other teaching-learning variables.

1.3.3 The relationship between class size, instructional method and classroom processes

Classroom observation schedules were used by Oakley (1969), Wright et al. (1977) and Bourke (1986) to study the effects of class size on instruction and classroom processes.

Oakley found that teachers' behaviour did not change significantly as a result of change in class size. In fact a number of other factors seemed more important than variation in class size in terms of their influence on teacher behaviour in the classroom.

Wright et al. (1977) used the Toronto Observation Schedule for their study of the instructional process in 4th grade classrooms in Toronto.[16] The observation schedule specially developed for the purpose of the study was used to observe classrooms in 12 schools - half a day each time and eight times through the year. The areas selected for observation were: Teacher-pupil interaction, student participation (both verbal and non-verbal), student satisfaction, method of instruction, subject emphasis, physical conditions (e.g. noise, furniture arrangement), use of educational aids and classroom atmosphere. The mean scores of each class were compared but there was no evidence that any of these variables were affected by class size.

Cahen et al. (1983) did a qualitative multi-site case study of two large and two small classes taught by the same teachers. The study began by observing teachers in their large classes. The class size was subsequently reduced after one term by dividing the large classes into two smaller classes to find out if a reduction in class size brought about a consequent change in teaching methods also. The data was collected through unstructured observation of the two classes. It was observed that, by and large, teachers continued to use the same teaching methods in their small class that they had used earlier in their large classes. Thus a difference in class size did not bring about any significant change in the instructional process even when class size was considerably reduced.

In two related studies of classroom interaction in large and smaller size classes, Kumar (1992) and Prasad (1992) found similar patterns of interaction in classes where

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[16]A further instrument was used to find out the quality of the various dimensions of the instructional and classroom processes. The instrument consisted of 51 items, each describing one 'positive' and one 'negative' classroom activity. An observer spent up to 20 minutes in a classroom and for each item indicated whether what was observed could be described by either the positive or negative signs. It was found that the indicators of quality scores were not affected by class size.

the same kind of teaching mode was used despite the difference in class size. More importantly, class size did not seem to be a significant variable in determining teaching practice as both the interactive and traditional styles of teaching were found in large as well as smaller size classes. The results also confirmed that students had more turns and opportunities to communicate and negotiate meaning in classes where the teacher used a more interactive style of teaching than in classes where the teaching mode was mainly traditional. Therefore, the researchers concluded that, 'it is not necessarily the size of the class which limits the learning opportunities made available but the nature of the teaching-learning activities and the teacher's role and attitudes which influence the nature of student interaction and create particular types of interaction patterns' (Kumar:1992:44).

Bourke (1986) sought to discover the mechanism through which class size has an effect on achievement in different size classes. He observed the maths classes of 63 year-five teachers in government elementary schools in the Melbourne area over the period of one term. A low inference observation schedule was used to collect data on teaching practices in the classroom. The frequency of teaching practices was recorded in terms of the classroom context, participants in interaction and the nature of each interaction. A three-stage causal model was developed to interpret the data which suggested that background factors affect class size which in turn affects the teaching practice used in classrooms which then has an effect on student achievement. The teaching practices identified showed that grouping was used more in large classes while there was more whole class teaching in smaller classes. Also more students asked for help and clarification in large classes but there was more teacher follow-up of questions in small classes. Other differences such as the time spent on monitoring students' work and nature of teacher-pupil interaction were also found to be different in small and large classes (unlike the findings of Kumar(1992)and Prasad(1992)reported above), with large classes having more interactions overall between teacher and students. The noise level was also higher in large classes. Thus according to Bourke, teaching practices were shown as being highly significant in terms of their effect on student achievement. Moreover, differences

in class size were found to be directly related to teaching practices and through them indirectly to student achievement.

The findings of the STAR project (also discussed in sections 1.2.3 and 1.3.1.1 above) about the effects of class size on classroom processes and teacher behaviour seem to be in agreement with Bourke's (1986) conclusions about the relationship between class size, teaching practices and students achievement. In the STAR project, the teacher interview data was analysed in terms of 14 categories, such as grouping of pupils and physical environment (Johnston:1990a, 1990b). Two characteristic features of small classes were consistently observed by all teachers, i.e. availability of more time and using it in a variety of ways, and opportunity to individualise instruction. The teachers also reported fundamental differences in the physical, social and emotional classroom work environment. Overall, an improvement was observed in the quality of instruction and the learning environment in grades K-3 due to reduced class size.

The researchers in the STAR project found what they described as conclusive evidence of the positive effects of reduced class size on teacher behaviour and the instructional process in the classroom. However, the fact that some of these findings are based only on teachers' accounts of what they think they do in smaller classes (teacher exit interviews at the end of each year of the study) rather than an observation of their teaching practice in small and larger classes, makes us question the authenticity of the accounts and consequently the validity of the results. We need to remember that teachers in the study of Wright et al. (1977) also believed they were using different (better) instructional procedures in their smaller classes. However, this was not borne out by classroom observations of the same teachers in classes of varying size.

The above discussion suggests that research studies of the relationship between class size, instructional method and classroom processes are as conflicting in their findings as the studies of class size and achievement reported in section 1.3.1 above. Thus several studies report no change in teacher behaviour in large and small classes (Oakley:1969;

Wright et al.:1977; Cahen et.al.:1983). Also, class size does not seem to be a significant variable in determining the style of teaching in the classroom. Furthermore, the pattern of interaction in the classroom, and consequently the learning opportunities available for the students, seem to be related as much to the style of teaching and the nature of teaching and learning activities used in the classroom as to the size of the class (Kumar:1992; Prasad:1992). (For further discussion of these issue see chapters 6 and 10.) In contrast, some studies show a positive relationship between class size and teaching practices (Bourke:1986; Johnston:1990a, 1990b) which it is believed leads to an increase in the achievement level of the students.

The present study aims to understand what happens in large ESL classes through an investigation of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size in secondary schools in Pakistan. The results indicate no fundamental differences in the kinds of activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in larger and smaller size classes. However, as will be discussed in chapter 5 , teachers reported a number of difficulties in teaching larger classes. Moreover, both the teachers and learners felt that there were fewer opportunities for teaching and learning in large classes as compared to classes of a smaller size, particularly in relation to the varied locations of the learners in the classroom. The observation of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size classes also suggests that teachers' problems in large classes could be due partly to the specific characteristics of the large class context, such as limited space in the classroom (cf. chapter 8); however, the difficulties faced by the participants in large school classes also seem to derive from the presence of a shared culture of teaching and learning which seems to cut across classes of varying size in both government and private schools in Pakistan (see chapters 6 and 7).

1.4 The work of the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project (LCRP)

1.4.1 An overview of the aims and activities of the LCRP

The Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes research project began in 1986 with a group of like-minded researchers some of whom had faced the problem of teaching in large ESL/EFL classes in developing countries and were consequently interested in studying the phenomenon of large classes in further detail.

Coleman(1989a) cites the following reasons for the need to study large classes:

1) The personal experience of some members of the research team suggested that large classes were a problem.

2) The same evidence showed that large classes were a matter of concern for teachers.

3) It seemed that little theoretical attention had been paid to language learning and teaching in large classes.

4) It was felt that TESOL teacher training courses in the UK were viewed by a majority of the trainees as unrealistic because they failed to take into account the reality of their teaching-learning situations, such as large classes.[17] (pp 1-6)

The project team outlined four areas of activity as follows:

- Creating a bibliography on large classes

- Networking, in order to identify institutions around the world where large classes exist and to contact people concerned about large classes

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[17]The 'Learning and Teaching of English in Large Classes' is now offered as an optional course both at the diploma and the masters level in the School of Education, University of Leeds, UK.

- Organising colloquia to provide researchers and teachers an opportunity to come together and to give wider exposure to their work

- Promoting and undertaking research.

Coleman (op. cit.) also identified nine areas of investigation moving from a description of large classes to analysis and finally application. However, all the nine areas were defined as parallel tracks rather than sequential in nature. Research in different areas could therefore be undertaken simultaneously though it was hoped that findings in one area would feed into research in other areas.

The project team has uptil now published twelve research reports and some further reports are in preparation. Six of the published reports (reports no. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) are based on empirical research. The other six reports comprise an exhaustive bibliography that has been constantly revised and updated since it was first compiled in 1987 (project report no. 1 is the 11th version)[18], an account of the aims and activities of the research project (project report no. 2), a consideration of methodological issues in analysing the problems of English language teachers in large classes (project report no. 10), approaches to the management of large classes (project report no. 11), and considerations of the class size problem and possible reasons for the failure of research to show class size as a significant variable in learning and achievement (project reports no. 3 and 12).

The project team has also been actively engaged, since 1988, in organising colloquia at the international level to bring together its members and to provide them an opportunity to share their work, which is often being undertaken in different parts of the world.

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[18]Coleman (1989b).

1.4.2 Research undertaken and/or promoted by the project team till date and its findings[19]

As no definition of small and large classes was available in research literature on the question of class size, it was perhaps appropriate for the project team to start the study of large classes with an attempt to define their basic unit of analysis i.e., large classes. There was also the need to find empirical support for the assumption that teachers were indeed concerned about large classes. Thus the second area of research focused on finding out what problems teachers faced in teaching in large classes. Two questionnaires were developed to find out what constitutes large classes in terms of numbers (hence referred to as the numbers questionnaire) and the teachers' difficulties in teaching large classes (the difficulties questionnaire). The two questionnaires were administered widely by team members to teachers in different parts of the world.

1.4.2.1 Findings of the numbers questionnaire

Coleman (1989c) analysed 201 responses to the numbers questionnaire of teachers from 13 countries. He found great variation in teachers' experience and perception of small, ideal and large classes. However, it was observed that the size of the classes that most teachers taught regularly was larger than the point at which classes were defined as large by them. In other words, the majority of teachers were teaching classes which they perceived as 'large'. On the other hand, very few respondents seemed to have any experience of teaching what they considered small classes. An analysis of the relationship between teachers' experience and perception of class size also revealed that:

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[19]The working procedure and the initial findings of the LCRP were criticised widely by Tickoo in his closing address to the RELC seminar on Language Acquisition and the Second/Foreign Language Classroom held in Singapore in April, 1991. However, it needs to be remembered that the LCRP has stimulated a series of research efforts by teachers in their large classes in different parts of the world including Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Kenya and Nigeria.

1) the relationship between teachers' experience of the largest class they teach and their perception of classes which are intolerably large was stronger than that between their usual class size and the same perceptions; and

2) the largest class which the respondents had taught strongly influenced their perception of small, ideal and large size classes.

Later, the findings of other studies supported Coleman's conclusions that large classes were not definable in terms of a single number (Coleman:1989d; Coleman:1991b; Peachey;1989; LoCastro:1989).[20] However, it was found that there was no relationship between the largest class size experienced and teachers' perception of small classes which appeared to be well outside the experience of the teachers (Peachey: op. cit.).

LoCastro (1988, 1989) included students' experience and perception of class size in her study of the large class situation in Japan. The two questionnaires administered separately to teachers and learners aimed to find out their experience and perception of varying class size or more specifically the numbers at which classes were perceived as small, ideal and large and the numbers at which classes became intolerably small or intolerably large. Her research findings in terms of learners' experience and perception of variations in class size indicated that 'students would prefer classes which are smaller than the 40 or 50 students per class which they are accustomed to' (p. 14).

1.4.2.2   Findings of the difficulties questionnaire

The difficulties questionnaire comprised a number of open ended questions. The aim was to find out what problems teachers face in large classes, what instructional/management techniques they use in large classes and what techniques they would use if they had an ideal number of students in their class. A number of researchers (McLeod:1989,

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[20] Shamim (1991a) used a slightly modified version of the numbers questionnaire to investigate teachers' experience and perception of class size at different levels and in different kinds of institutions in Pakistan. The findings of this study are reported in chapter 3.

Peachey:1989, Sabandar:1989) looked at the responses in terms of only the first and second questions. Different categories were devised by each researcher to analyse the data.[21] Coleman (1990) felt that the various problems identified in different studies could generally be grouped under five categories as problems of control, discomfort, evaluation, individual attention and learning. (The beliefs of teachers and learners about teaching-learning in larger and smaller size school classes in Pakistan will be discussed in relation to the findings of the LCRP in chapter 5.)

1.4.2.3 Reasons for the occurrence of large classes

LoCastro (1989) also sought to discover some reasons for the occurrence of large classes in Japan through a 'policy' questionnaire. According to her it seems that 'the class size takes into account the number of students admitted, the number of teachers, the number of available classrooms and the number of seats in the classroom' (p. 17). However, she believes that bureaucratic tradition has a large part to play in the standard class size being 40-50 in schools in Japan.

1.4.3 Specialist conference on large classes

In September 1991, a Specialist Conference on Current Research in Large Classes was organised by the LCRP and hosted by the Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers (SPELT) at Karachi, Pakistan. Twenty-one participants, representing nine different countries and working in thirteen countries at the time of the conference, came together for the first time to discuss their various problems, concerns and research interests vis-a-vis the teaching and learning of English in the context of large classes, particularly in developing countries. The conference provided an opportunity to teacher-researchers to share their mutual concerns about teaching ESL and EFL in classes ranging in size from 50-2000 students. The participants represented varied research interests such as

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[21] Sarangi (1989) discusses the difficulties of devising categories for analyzing the problems of teachers in large classes.

strategies of learners in large classes (Coleman: 1991d; Pengpanich:1991), training teachers for large classes (Holliday:1991a; Baker:1991), the class size question in terms of politics and pedagogy (Shamim:1991b), instructional and management techniques for large classes (Cabraal:1991; Collins: 1991, Husain:1991), and class size as a socio-cultural variable (LoCastro:1991).

During the conference some important decisions were also made which can have far reaching implications for the study of large (and small) classes in different parts of the world. They are as follows:

1) **The establishment of an International Network for Class Size Studies(INCLASS):** It was decided that the network will replace the LCRP. The tasks of the network will include the compiling and publication of a register of the interests of network members, publication of working papers (replacing project reports), and the publication of an INCLASS Newsletter.

2) **Organising a follow-up Specialist Conference on Current Research in Large Classes:** It was also agreed that a follow-up Specialist Conference will be organised in September 1993 to provide a forum for exchange of ideas between teachers and researchers currently involved in research on class size, particularly in developing countries.

1.5 The class size question: Politics and/or pedagogy?

As discussed in sections 1.2 and 1.3 above, traditionally, research on class size has largely been concerned with finding proof or objective and empirical evidence for what is considered the age old wisdom i.e., small classes are better than larger classes. Most of this research has been conducted in North America mainly at the behest of Ministries of Education (e.g. Ryan and Greenfield:1975, Word et al.:1990), or of

organisations interested in educational issues (Educational Research Services:1978; 1986).[22] Further, most of the research findings on the effect of class size on learning and achievement are either contradictory or inconclusive. Consequently, it has been suggested that perhaps class size has only a 'small effect' which requires more sophisticated research designs that are able to control for other, and probably more important, confounding variables (Erickson:1976).

Whatever the effects of class size on learning and achievement may be, it is a fact that class size comes up as an important issue in decision making about distribution of resources and allocation of funds. In countries where teacher organisations are more aware, the question of class size also gains importance in discussions of teacher stress and teacher workload. However, while it seems that there is accumulating evidence of the advantages of small classes especially in elementary grades and for basic skill subjects such as reading and mathematics, the majority of teachers, particularly in developing countries, have to face large classes as a fact of life in their everyday teaching-learning situations (e.g. Naidu et al.:1992; Valerien:1991; Shamim:1991a; Coleman:1989c, 1989d, 1991c). Thus teachers of large classes are, on the one hand, beginning to voice their concerns regarding the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes. On the other hand, however, they have started developing 'coping' strategies or ways to deal with large classes in their specific teaching-learning situations (see section 1.6 below).

In this section, I will look at the class size question from both the perspectives of politics and pedagogy. I will begin with a brief account of the 'politics' of the class size question in terms of the role of class size research in policy making in North America.

Next, some implications of the findings of research on class size will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the nature of the class size question in the context of developing countries.

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[22]Educational Research Services is believed to have largely political overtones as it is funded mainly by administrators (cf. Glass et al.: 1982).

1.5.1 The role of class size research as a guide to policy making: Use or abuse?

It is true to say that reducing class size is a 'reform' that is more costly than any other educational intervention. According to a conservative estimate in the U.S. in the mid 70's, the cost of reducing class size by one student in each class in a middle-sized school district would be US$500,000 alone in terms of teachers' salaries without taking into account other costs such as buildings for provision of additional classrooms (Hyer and Mclure:1974 in Ryan:1985). At the same time this reform is the most elusive in terms of easily identifiable and quantifiable benefits per unit cost of expenditure of public money. The recent findings of W.W. Cooley at the University of Pittsburgh in co-operation with the Pennsylvania Department of Education reached the conclusion that, 'Paying teachers more results in fewer students who are not learning the basic skills. Reducing class size does not have a positive effect on student performance' (Bolsin:1990:417).

The contradictory and confusing nature of the research on class size has added to the complexity of the problem. Though the belief held by teachers and parents alike, that smaller is better, is intuitively plausible, it is difficult to allocate huge sums of tax payers' money to reducing class size without any empirical evidence to support this belief. Thus the history of the class size debate reveals a conflict of interests between the teachers and administrators though both the parties are ostensibly concerned with maximising learning and achievement in the classrooms. Thus there are administrators, on the one hand, who have to justify budgetary allocations for different educational reforms, while there are teachers' organisations, on the other, who have been campaigning for reducing class size in order to improve the work life of the teachers. As a result, nowadays, class size regularly enters any discussion about teacher workload and working conditions.

There is a long history of compiling reviews of research on class size for the purpose of facilitating decision and policy-making (e.g., Odden:1990; National Education Association:1986; Larkin and Keeves:1984; Cotton and Savard:1980; Porwell:1978;

Templeton:1972; Smith:1971; Lindbloom:1970). As reducing class size has wider and far reaching financial implications, the research reviews have often been undertaken at the request of senior administrators and policy makers (e.g., Shanon:1990). More often than not, the purpose of these reviews is to find evidence for supporting existing policies on class size. However, it is significant, as will be discussed later, that the different reviewers have come to different conclusions using the same research evidence.

The 'legitimatory' nature of research in this important area of policy making is particularly noted by Keeves (1989). When class sizes in Australia had to be markedly decreased as a result of continuing pressure from the teachers' unions in the late 1960's and early 70's, the Australian Educational Council realized that it was important to contain pressure from teachers to reduce class size any further. Hence, first a review of research was commissioned (Lafleur et al.:1974). Then in 1978, a study of 'Staffing and Resources' of the eight educational systems in Australia was commissioned 'to examine the costs of education and in particular, relationships involving the contribution of reductions in class size to the costs and to the benefits, if any, in terms of achievement outcomes and students and teachers' attitudes' (Keeves:1989:462). Keeves notes that from the beginning there was tension between those who were seeking to legitimate existing policies and innovative educational practitioners emphasizing the need for change. Thus though a number of reports were published, 'By and large the reports of the study were made to serve the purpose of reducing the rate of change in the eight systems' (op. cit.).

Coleman (1971) expressed his dissatisfaction over the way research findings on class size were used in educational policy making. Without making any explicit reference to any research studies on which he based his conclusions, he stated thus:

> The research findings on this issue [class size] . . . are virtually unanimous in finding that minor changes in ratio are insignificant. Yet policy makers in education do not seem to acknowledge these findings and teachers' official spokesmen continue to press for reduction in class size (p. 1).

The researchers' bias is evident in the fact that while, on one hand, he criticises the Coleman report (1966) for its findings because they 'conflict with other studies', on the other, he uses other findings of the same report to advocate an increase in pupil-teacher ratio. This bias towards increasing class size is further expressed in his final recommendations as follows:

> An examination of alternative ways of using professional staff is one feasible technique for schools boards, *given the desire to raise pupil-teacher ratio* and hence cut costs, and a re-allocation of personnel to administrative and other non-teaching duties is another possibility (p. 11) (my emphasis).

One single piece of research that has had wide acclaim from both teachers and policy makers is the meta-analysis of Glass and Smith (1978), Smith and Glass (1980) and Glass et al. (1982). As mentioned earlier (section 1.3.1.1) the findings of their meta-analysis favoured smaller classes. However, it was concluded that while small classes were better than large classes, there was no significant difference in the achievement level of students in large and very large classes.

The Glass and Smith meta-analysis (1978) was hailed by the teachers as it proved what teachers had believed for a long time i.e., small classes are better than large classes. At the same time, however, the same findings from this study were used as an argument by policy makers for maintaining present class size. It was thus argued that the cost of reducing class size by a few students, while being a great burden on financial resources, will not achieve the benefits outlined by Glass and Smith in terms of improving learner achievement.

Tomlinson (1988) provides a typical example of using research on class size (in this case, the findings of the Glass and Smith meta-analysis) as an argument for maintaining the present class size.[23] The argument, outlined in terms of costs and benefits, went as follows: If, according to Glass and Smith, there is no change in student achievement

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[23]See also Tomlinson (1990).

between 20-40 students and there is only a 10% increase in achievement when class size
is reduced to 15 students, is a 40% reduction in class size for 10% increase in
achievement feasible? Thus Tomlinson questioned the benefits of investing vast sums of
money into an 'inefficient and unreliable method of school improvement'. It was
recommended that, available school resources should instead be diverted to improving the
'quality of instruction and teachers' ability to manage the demands of classrooms as they
are currently configured' (p. 2). Other evidence from research on class size was cited to
observe that reducing class size by itself does not affect the instructional process.
Tomlinson also pointed out that, though there is a general feeling amongst teachers that
they can do more effectively in smaller classes what they were doing earlier in a large
class, this is not always borne out by research evidence.[24]

Tomlinson also argued against further reductions in class size by citing data from
national standardised tests of achievement i.e. Scholastic Aptitude Test and American
College Tests. According to him, evidence from different states suggested that,

> ... the observed association between class size and test scores seems more likely an artifact of the
> circumstances in which instruction takes place than of the number of pupils taught per teacher.
> Where there is a history of educational neglect and economic privation in company with an
> academically indifferent milieu ..., low achievement is the predictable consequence. In contrast,
> populations characterised by stability, homogeneity, and a tradition of strong educational
> expectations and support, typically produce high achievement (p. 28).

He further supported his case by citing data on learner achievement in mathematics in
schools in Japan where the average class size is 41 students. However, despite having
large classes Japanese students are leading the world in math achievement. On the other
hand countries such as Luxembourg with one of the smallest class sizes (19) ranks 18th
on the list.

Jamison (1982) also used the research findings of Glass and Smith (1978) as an
argument for presenting alternatives to reducing class size.[25] Jamison pointed out that

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[24]For example, Cahen et. al. (1983) and Wright et al. (1977).
[25]See also Cullen (1979).

large amount of funds would be required to reduce class size to 20 or below, a number at which reduction in class size was shown to result in significant gains in achievement. He argued that the same amount of money could, however, be spent better in introducing other educational innovations such as the use of computers in the classroom.

Teachers who have been involved in developing instructional and management techniques for handling large classes have expressed concern about the possibility of the success of their experiments in large classes being used negatively by the administrators, as an argument for maintaining the present class size (e.g., Bolton:1988; and Long:1987). More recently the work of the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project has been quoted as one of the arguments for 'slightly increasing class size' as a way of meeting the rising costs of education in the nineties.[26]

The New York State Teachers' Association after noting the contradictory and inconclusive nature of research on class size recommended, as early as 1959, that, as research had failed to provide any definitive answers in regard to class size, teachers' judgement should be considered in determining class size. Consequently it demanded that class size should be reduced to 25 thus:

> Teachers tend to consider classes between 10 and 15 as too small. They tend to identify classes over 30 as too large. Thus, the figure of about 25 is synonymous with a range of 15-30 students (1959:14).

However, during the last two decades there has generally been a trend in the U.S. towards decreasing class size (Glass et al.:1982). Therefore what was considered small in 1959, i.e. 25 pupils in a class, is now considered large.[27] Hence the present recommendations of teachers in the United States is to reduce the size of school classes, particularly at the elementary level, to 15 students. For example, the National Education Association in its draft resolution,1986 (first adopted in 1969) states:

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[26]Report of the meeting held to discuss the proposals of Colclough and Lewin (1990).

[27]cf. the results of the National Education Associations' research division poll on optimum class size in Sitkei (1968).

The National Education Association believes that excellence in the classroom can best be attained by small class size, particularly in grades K-12, which allows for the optimum development of a student's potential. Class size and daily student-teacher contacts must allow for individual attention to each pupil. The association urges its affiliates to seek an optimum class size of 15 students (In Tomlinson:1988).

Similarly more recent research evidence favours smaller classes of 13-15 students against regular size classes with a teacher aide (Word et al.:1990).

1.5.2 Implications of research on class size: Finding alternatives to reducing class size

According to the World Bank (1980 in Ryan:1985) 'class size remains the most important variable in realizing efficiency (obtaining maximum output at minimum costs)'. Smaller classes require more teachers and additional classrooms. In developed countries, 75% of all budgetary allocations in each school district are spent on teachers' salaries. The amount spent on teachers' salaries is even more (80-90%) in developing countries (op. cit.). The costs of reducing present class sizes to a level anywhere near that at which it has been shown by research to produce a significant effect on achievement and other non-cognitive variables, would be prohibitive, to say the least. Hence, instead of reducing class size, often, an increase in class size is recommended for saving total per pupil expenditure. It is suggested that the money thus saved can then be diverted to schemes for providing 'Schooling for All' (Colclough and Lewin:1990).

Ryan (1985), says, rightly in my view, that:

In developing countries in particular, and in all countries in general, the attention of educational policy makers and administrators may be expected to focus more and more in future on alternative ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education at the lowest possible costs. This is not likely to result in smaller classes (p. 735).

Thus if reducing class size is fiscally an impractical solution to the problem of large classes, what alternatives can be found to improve the effectiveness of teaching-learning in large classes without a concomitant increase in costs per pupil?

Noli (1980) suggested a number of alternatives for creating small class conditions without reducing class size. They include team teaching, pull-out programs, 'staggered scheduling' and the concept of an extended school day. The use of teacher aides and other para-professionals for non-teaching work and small group instruction was also recommended as a way of improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes.[28]

Thus, nowadays, it is widely suggested that it would be more useful to devote attention to different staffing patterns, and better use of present staff to create small instructional groups for a part of the school day for teaching basic subjects such as mathematics and reading, than reducing the size of the class per se (Mitchell et. al.:1989). However, there is little research evidence on the potential advantages of these proposals. Garforth and Lydiat (1988) report the findings of a project to place an additional teacher in 15 primary schools in the Sheffield area in the UK. The teacher often worked with small groups of children inside the classroom liaising with the class teacher (team teaching) whose pupils she was working with. Alternatively she took them to a separate area out of the classes for some of the time she was working. The research findings indicate that, 'The extra teacher often made the difference between maintaining a fragile situation and creating the conditions under which sensible educational experience could be offered to difficult and vulnerable children' (p. 215).[29] On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the research findings of project STAR (1985-1989) show that a small class with 13-15 pupils, though a more expensive proposition than hiring teacher aides, has more advantages than a regular size class of 22 pupils *with* a teacher aide.

The above alternatives to the class size problem have been suggested for educational environments in Britain and North America where the present class sizes are already very 'small' in comparison to countries such as Pakistan, Nigeria, India and Japan. Hence we

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[28]Similar recommendations were also made by Cotton and Savard (1980).

[29] Also see Grittner (1977).

need to think of some other ways of managing large classes, particularly in developing countries, while remaining within the constraints of their limited resources and present budgetary allocations for education.

1.5.3   The question of class size in developing countries: Moving from politics to pedagogy

To summarize, traditionally, the class size question has appeared as an important issue on the negotiating table between teachers and administrators or policy makers, particularly in North America.   Though the confusing and contradictory nature of research literature on class size has not helped in resolving the question of optimum class size, it seems that over the last two decades there has been a steady decline in class size in both the elementary and secondary schools in North America and other developed countries.[30] At the same time there has been a rapid increase in class size in developing countries. In fact, 'overcrowded urban classrooms' have been identified as one of the two major problems in what are described as 'difficult educational contexts' (UNESCO:1989). The commitment of many governments in developing countries to provide universal education for their growing populations without a concomitant increase in budgetary allocations for education has resulted directly in very large classes in these countries (cf. Valerien:1991).[31]

Thus in recent years the question of class size has begun to assume great importance in developing countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Nigeria and Kenya. However, while the question of class size with increased amount of teacher stress and teacher workload is more of a political issue in developed countries, in developing countries, it assumes a different focus i.e., how to teach large classes well. Thus the focus is on

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[30]In UK though class sizes in schools are much smaller as compared to developing countries, they seem to be considered large by the teachers (National Union of Teachers:1991). However, there seems to be a recent trend of increasing enrolments in Colleges of Higher Education and Universities in Britain (Gibbs and Jenkins:1992).

[31]Pakistan Education Statistics (1979; 1986) shows an increase in enrolments at the Primary level from 0.77 millions in 1947-48 to 7.4 millions in 1984-85. A similar increase in enrolments can be noted at other levels also.

finding pedagogic solutions to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes. As will be discussed in section 1.7 below, this shift in focus from the 'politics' of the class size question to 'pedagogy' has important implications for future research on class size.

1.6 Practitioners' response to large classes: Developing 'coping' strategies[32]

There exists a large body of literature in teachers' journals and newsletters, often with limited geographical distribution (cf. Coleman:1989b),separate from research studies and reviews of research discussed in sections 1.2 to 1.5 above.(for example, two special issues of 'The Language Teacher'[33], a journal of the Japanese Association of Language Teachers, and the recent issue of 'Focus on English' (March 1993) published by the British Deputy High Commission in Madras, India.) This includes practical tips for large class teachers as well as accounts of teachers' experience of teaching and learning and their efforts at introducing innovative classroom methodology in large classes in different educational contexts. In this section I will look at this literature on large classes and outline, briefly, the major trends in introducing innovations both in ESL/EFL and other subject classrooms in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes.

1.6.1 ELT practitioners' response to large classes

It seems that while researchers are still busy trying to find out the relationship between class size and achievement, practitioners, who have to face, every day, the problem of handling large numbers in their classes have taken up the challenge of teaching large classes by developing 'coping strategies'. However, there seems to be little connection

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[32]The term 'coping strategy' has been used here in terms of Hargreaves' (1978) definition of coping strategies as 'creative and constructive' but also 'adaptive' in regard to experienced constraints.

[33]The two special issues of 'The Language Teacher' on large classes are edited by Christensen (1988) and Helgesen (1986).

between the findings of the class size studies and the innovations developed by teachers in their large classes.

The various approaches to classroom management, found in the literature, were first classified by Coleman (1989e) into three categories as follows:

A Plenary approaches

    A.1 There is no alternative

    A.2 Let the people sing!

B Interactive approaches

C Compromise approaches

Coleman (op. cit.) also made the following observations about the three approaches identified above:

1 Most positive approaches 'see large classes as a reason for employing interaction or other innovative techniques'.

2 'Both the interactive and compromise approaches indicate that large classes require that more responsibility be given to learners.'

3 In compromise approaches, 'Classroom is not seen as a place where learning happens but, instead, as a place where administration is dealt with, where learners are advised and given feedback, and where learners are inspired to go out and do their own learning'. (pp 23-24)

Coleman's classification, though extremely useful, fails to explain why these approaches developed as they did. In other words, the specific constraints of the large class context which necessitate the development of strategies, to cope with these constraints, is not considered. Also the social context of the strategies developed i.e., in large-scale projects or by individual teachers in their own classrooms, which allow different forms of creativity within given parameters (cf. Hargreaves:1978) is not taken into account. The alternative classification, offered in this section, is therefore an attempt

to complement Coleman's earlier survey of approaches to the management of large classes.

It seems that large classes, despite their specific constraints, do not always have a negative effect on teaching/learning in the classroom. In fact, once teachers accept the inevitability of the large class situation large classes can become a motivation for introducing methodological innovations or developing 'coping strategies' for dealing with large numbers effectively. As new ideas and pedagogical solutions begin to arise from the constraints of the large class situation, large classes are viewed more positively both by teachers and learners (Bolton:1988; Moore:1977; Saraswathi:1990). As mentioned in section 1.5 above, this important shift in attitudes towards large classes is often a cause for concern amongst the teachers who have introduced innovations to deal with the reality of large numbers in their classrooms. It is quite likely, they believe, that their success in large classes could be misinterpreted by other teachers and administrators as a way of legitimating the existence of large classes.

1.6.1.1 Large scale projects

Let us now examine how large classes have often been instrumental in initiating change in some large scale projects, thereby affecting more than one class in an institution or even a number of institutions; what the nature of this change is and how teachers' and learners' attitudes have changed in response to these methodological innovations.

Burgess(1989) found herself faced with a situation in which a large number of students varying largely in their background and ability levels were involved in learning English at the University of La Laguna, Tenerife, in Spain. She began with the assumption that anything one can do in a class of 15 students can also be done with a class of 100 students. She believed, however, that the large class context required the use of different strategies for managing instruction in large groups from those that were traditionally being used by the teachers. In her retrospective account, she describes the experiment which was undertaken to deal with the problem of teaching English to large

heterogeneous groups of students at La Laguna University. The students were organised in groups of 20 students each, consequently reducing the number of contact hours from 3 to 1 in each group. A system of 'revolving roles' was developed in the small groups where there was equal sharing of four basic roles in the classroom i.e the role of the teacher, the materials selector/designer, the observer and learner participant. A short 'debriefing session' was held at the beginning of each class for feedback on the previous session. Although the groups were kept informed of each others' activities through teacher prepared poster displays, students expressed the need for occasional meetings in large groups. (This was later built into the overall plan of the course.) Hence for Burgess the problem of teaching English to large groups served as a 'catalyst in a process of rethinking which has been a creative and rewarding experience for both teachers and learners' (p. 1).

Bolton (1988) also repackaged his existing groups of learners but in a very different way from Burgess in Spain. Bolton created a Megasection of 75 students by combining three groups of 25 students each. The large group met for only part of the time, i.e. for 5 hours a week. The time in class reduced by the creation of the Megasection format was used for small group tutorials and group and individual conferences. The results of the performance measures tabulated for 50 students from the experimental group and an equal number from a conventional group indicated that '. . . Megasection students do just as well one year later - in some cases better - than their counterparts from conventionally scheduled and conventionally taught classrooms' (p. 13). According to Bolton, the added advantage of the Megasection for the teachers was less 'wear and tear' and generally a higher degree of satisfaction with their work.

Coleman (1987a, 1987b) developed a task based approach in response to the problems of teaching large classes and a ritual mode of interaction at Hasannuddin University in Indonesia. Once it was discovered that limited time and large classes were 'unavoidable facts of life', the 'risking fun' project was undertaken to develop tasks that could be used with large crowds without allowing them to slip back into their ritual roles

of teachers and learners as in their traditional classrooms. The project was successful in developing a series of task types that could be used with a variety of interaction modes (for example, learner and text, intragroup interaction or pair work) using different sources of data (the students, the environment, the teacher) and with different degrees of interaction predictability.

Another example of introducing innovations on a large scale in response to the necessity of teaching large classes is the experiment reported by Long (1987) of teaching writing to large groups of 120 students at Hong Kong Polytechnic. The 'rethinking' instituted as a result of drastic cuts in staff produced SHOP - a self study English Language Writing Course. The SHOP experiment was based on the principle of learner autonomy and cooperative learning in small groups. The students were divided into groups of three with different students taking up the role of the group leader in the three phases of the programme. The tutor variously played the role of a counsellor, social event-maker, evaluator and exhorter.

Holliday and his team members developed a 'Distance-Learning' methodology for handling large classes at the Centre for English Language Teaching at Ain Shams University in Cairo, Egypt (Holliday:1991b). The development of the methodology was based on an ethnographic study of classroom culture (Holliday:1991c). The new methodology was designed to overcome the specific constraints in large classes i.e. the physical distance between the teacher and the taught, poor acoustics and related problems. Further, the methodology depended on the ability of the students to work independently in groups, something the learners had been observed to do in any case, even when traditional methodology was being used in their classrooms.

Two observations need to be made about the above experiments in large classes:

1) The innovations grew in response to the reality of teaching large classes in different teaching-learning situations.

2) The 'coping strategies' could only be developed after the teachers had accepted the inevitability of their large class situation.

1.6.1.2 Individual classrooms

The innovations developed on a smaller scale, in terms of one teacher or a single classroom, to cope with one or more problems arising out of the large class context can be grouped in three areas as follows:

1) Instructional techniques (general as well as for teaching specific language skills)

2) Strategies for classroom management

3) Techniques for evaluation and feedback in large classes

a) Instructional techniques[34]

Anderson (1987) developed a set of 'creative strategies' for teaching large classes in Japanese colleges and secondary schools. These strategies include the use of 3 x 5 index cards, one for each student to function both as 'an efficiency device and as a means of personalizing the classroom' (p.11) for enhancing student motivation. According to Anderson, these indexing cards can be used to take rolls and also to call on the students randomly during conversation exercises.[35]

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[34]A number of adaptations of different instructional methods and techniques have been suggested for use in large classes, for example, Adams (1986), Allard (1986), Adamson (1986), and Griffee (1986). Durant (1991) discusses the feasibility of techniques for using literature in language teaching in large classes. Kunwar (1991) looks at the possibility of adapting communicative methodology for use in large school classes in Pakistan. Azer (1990) discusses whether a communicative methodology can cope with the teaching of grammar in large classes.

More general accounts of problems and suggested solutions for teaching English in large classes in different educational contexts can be found in Cross (1992), Clinch (1991), Otagburuagu and Enuesike (1991), Cabraal (1991) Kowitz (1991), Nolasco and Arthur (1988) and Reinelt (1988). For specific techniques, see Qian (1992), Gaudart (1991), Uche (1991), Brims (1990), Shamim (1989), Criper (1986), Christensen (1984), Singh (1980), Palmer (1979), Taska (1978), Forrester (1964a, 1964b) and Mohanraj (n.d.).

[35] For further ideas on individualisation of learning, see Sarwar (1991).

Oral practice in large classes has often taken the form of chorus drills[36]. However, Crowe, Jackson and Viswat (1988) experimented with dividing the total time for English conversation classes (90 minutes) into two halves to focus on listening and speaking separately. In the light of this experiment, the authors plan to restructure class time again into three chunks of 30 minutes each - the first 30 minutes for listening practice, the next 30 minutes for working in controlled and semi-controlled grammar drills and the last 30 minutes for giving out a variety of tasks to permanent groups of 3-4 students each. The groups will be required to work together on tasks and homework assignments throughout the year and will be awarded group grades on their work.

Teaching of writing is usually seen as a problem in large classes. Hence a number of techniques have been developed to provide practice in writing to students in large classes e.g., Christensen (1986) and Collins (1991).

b) Strategies for classroom management

Group work has been suggested by a number of teachers as a way of handling different activity types in large classes at all levels.[37] Organising students into small groups is also recommended by several practitioners as a way of lowering the teacher-student ratio in a large class (e.g. McGreal:1989; Littlejohn:1987; Hubbard et al.:1983; Sarwar:1983; Taska:1978; Long:1977).

c) Strategies for evaluation and feedback in large classes

Several teachers have identified marking written assignments and essays as a major problem in teaching writing in large classes (see chapter 5). Consequently, different procedures have been developed based on the principle of 'cooperative learning'

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[36] For example, Barker (1976), David (n.d).

[37] For different ways of organising students in small groups see also Luckett (1988), Heath (1982), Samuda and Bruton (1981), Bibic (1974a, 1974b) and Forrester (1965a, 1965b, 1968). For using group work for reading comprehension and writing tasks see Cabraal (1991), Egbujor (1991).

(Edge:1980) or 'devolution' (Baxter:1989) by involving the learners in correcting their own essays as a way of handling the marking of a large amount of writing assignments in large classes.[38]

Johnson (1988) felt that, due to large classes and time limitations, most teachers find it impossible to test students individually and resort to using written or listening tests to assess the conversational competence of their students.[39] She, therefore, suggested two methods of evaluating communicative competence, which are based on the discussion format. Johnson claimed that the two evaluation instruments were easy to score and could therefore be used with a large number of students in a 'reasonable time'.

Providing feedback on group work in large classes can also be very time consuming and people generally tend to lose interest very soon. Allwright (1982) developed a procedure for reporting group work, using blackboard response charts and posters, for use with large groups (60-80) of trainees in teacher training workshops. The same technique can also be used with students in a large class.

1.6.2 Coping strategies of teachers in other subjects

According to Sundgren(1986) teaching the mass class can be both 'exciting' and 'rewarding', and a 'terrifying experience'. Aronson (1987) feels that one of the rewards of teaching a large class successfully is that, 'Your colleagues will treat you with great care, admiration and respect' (p. 31). However, a large class could also be a 'pedagogical monster' (Baker:1986) which needs to be overcome for effective teaching and learning to take place in the classroom.[40]

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[38]For further ideas on evaluating compositions in large classes, see Chimombo (1986) and Dixon (1986).
[39]See also Dobbyn (1976).
[40]See Jenkins and Ward (1992), Gleason (1986a), and McGee (1986a) for personal accounts of teachers' problems in large classes.

Some practitioners believe that though radical changes like reduction in class size are not easy to achieve (e.g., in introductory courses at the tertiary level in North America),[41] it is realistically possible to alter the attitude of the faculty and the students towards large classes. For example, Dunham and Gleason (1984) are of the view that, 'a destudentized classroom is not a function of size and can [also] occur in a seminar or large lecture' (p. 46). Thus they are confident that by using certain skills and strategies, the classroom climate can be made 'intimate, interactive and investigative' even in classes of 350-400 students. (See also Frederick:1987; Monk:1983 and Bowman:1979.)

Consequently a number of coping strategies have been offered by different practitioners, always based on their own experience of teaching a large class, for others who might have to face the challenge of teaching large classes (e.g., Weimer:1987; Ardnson:1987; Brooks:1987 and Gleason:1986b).

Kain (1986a) uses the analogy of a theatre to emphasize that large class teachers need different kinds of skills than those required by teachers in smaller classes. He offers 12 suggestions based on insights from the theatre to increase the probability of success in large classes or to make it into a 'hit production'. Weaver and Cotrell (1987) also discuss ways of managing instructor anxiety, using presentation time efficiently, motivating students and organising content for teaching in large classes.

A number of practitioners have offered innovative techniques for improving the traditional lecture method to overcome the passivity of the learners, for better communication and generally for more active learning in large classes. Some of the alternatives offered are: structured lectures (Jenkins:1992), using the theatre model not only to reduce the monotony of the lecture but also to illustrate concepts and ideas

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[41]'Introductory courses and large enrollments seem to be linked as inextricably as the bell and food in Pavlov's conditioning experiments' (Spear:1984:7).

(Bain:1986), team learning (Michaelson:1983), and canned lectures, demonstrations and lecture experiments and computer simulations (Brooks:1984).

Other alternatives include efforts to individualize mass instruction through offering students a set of options for teaching-learning and exam formats to suit their individual needs and learning styles (Baker and Behrens:1986; Bruton:1986) and other curriculum innovations (Tribe and Tribe:1987).

A way of organising and managing a large introductory course of 1000 students at the tertiary level in North America is discussed by Parrot (1986)[42]. McKeachie (1980) also describes different methods to structure large courses of up to 500 students for effective teaching and learning.

One problem in large courses is the difficulty in assessing a large number of students and providing them with feedback on their performance. Some problems in assessing groups of 50-350 students are identified by Buchanan and Rogers (1990). They also offer a number of solutions such as giving students options for assessment, abolishing make-up exams and encouraging students to generate test items. Lowman (1987) believes that student feedback can also improve learning in large classes. Consequently he describes ways of providing feedback to students in large classes as a way of promoting learning[43]. Murray (1987), on the other hand, describes some ways of obtaining student feedback during the course, as a way of improving teaching in a large class.

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[42]See also Knapper (1987) and Eberts (1986) for a discussion of factors necessary to consider before organising a large course to make learning in large groups more effective. Kain (1986b) describes the use of a micro-computer as an aid to the administration of a large class.

[43]For some other ways of improving student performance in large classes, see Wales and Nardi (1981).

1.6.3 A comparison of the coping strategies of ESL/EFL and other subject teachers

Even a cursory glance at the 'coping' strategies of ESL/EFL teachers and teachers of other subjects in large classes shows the similarity in concerns. It is significant that all the accounts of experiments/innovations in large classes in other subject areas described above deal with teaching at the tertiary level (often introductory courses in North America) when learners have already acquired the basic language skills. Thus the major problem for these teachers seems to be overcoming student passivity in large lecture-halls where the physical distance between the teacher and the learners hinders effective communication and individualization of learning. On the other hand, English language teachers seem to focus on developing ways of giving individual and group practice for teaching basic language skills, such as reading and writing.

However, the aim of both ESL/EFL and other subject teachers in large classes seems to be the enhancement of learning by engaging the students actively in the teaching-learning process in the classroom.

1.7 Need for reorienting research efforts on the question of class size: A case for using different nets in fresh waters

The review of literature on class size in sections 1.2 to 1.6 above, seems to point attention to the following factors:

1) Almost all the research studies on class size have been quantitative in nature despite the fact that 'small' and 'large', the two basic units of analysis in class size studies, cannot be defined in a 'universal' manner for the purpose of comparison.

2) The bulk of research on class size has been done in North America where the educational environment and availability of resources for education are vastly different

from those in developing countries. Moreover, as pointed out by Coleman (1991b) there seems to be no tradition of class size studies in ELT classrooms.

3) The research studies on class size seem to be based on two underlying assumptions: a) small and large classes are different in terms of their effect on teachers, learners and/or learning and achievement; and b) small classes are better than large classes in terms of both enhancing learning outcomes and for a generally favourable effect on the teachers and learners in the classroom. In other words, it is assumed that an increase in numbers makes the large class somehow unique from other 'normal' classrooms. However, the available evidence is not enough to make us believe the truth of these assumptions. Moreover, there is very little evidence about what, if anything, makes 'small' classes better than larger classes.

4) The results of the research studies on the relationship between class size and achievement have been largely inconclusive due to problems of definition (which includes operationalising class size in terms of numbers only), the difficulty of isolating class size as an independent variable, quality of research designs and other out-of-class factors.

5) The research on class size does not provide any unqualified support for the 'smaller is better' hypothesis. More importantly, whatever evidence is available about the positive effects of smaller classes seems to point attention to the fact that the effect is not consistent across different kinds of student population, levels and other teacher/learner variables.

6) Though varying class sizes have been found to influence teachers' expectations quite significantly there is some evidence to suggest that class size per se does not have any significant effect on learners' perceptions or their attitudes towards large classes. Moreover, the teachers have also been found, by and large, to continue using the same instructional methods in their 'small' classes that they were using earlier in their larger classes.

7) Teachers who have to face the hard reality of teaching large numbers in their everyday teaching/learning situation have started meeting this challenge by developing 'coping' strategies, i.e., instructional and management techniques to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their large classes.

It is significant that teachers in developing countries have traditionally used the lecture method for transferring knowledge even to large numbers of students in their classes. However, with recent developments in educational thinking and philosophy, the concept of teaching and learning has undergone a change from transmission of knowledge and facts to developing more enabling and higher-order cognitive skills in the learners. Consequently, there is now a greater concern both about the quantity and quality of teacher-pupil interaction in large classes and its effects on learner motivation and achievement. At the same time, however, it is increasingly being recognised that some forms of classroom management are more acceptable in some cultures than in others (Holliday:1991c, 1984; Holliday and Cooke:1982). Also, in order for innovative management and/or instructional techniques to take root in large classes in different educational environments, it is necessary to be cognizant of present educational practices and the view of teaching and learning prevalent in the community (see chapter 9).

Thus we need to reorient our research efforts on the question of class size, particularly in developing countries. What is needed are class size studies in classes of varying size *as they are* in different educational contexts. We need to know what happens in classes of varying size (both 'small' and 'large') before we can begin the 'rethinking' on the management of large classes and develop 'pedagogical solutions' for different socio-cultural contexts that are also congruent with the ways of thinking and perceiving in the community. In other words, to carry on the analogy of fishing used by Erickson (1976) earlier, we need to use different nets in fresh waters. The present study is an attempt in this direction.

1.8   Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the literature on class size. I began by outlining some issues and concerns in the study of class size. Next, some selected studies from different types of research traditions were reviewed in an attempt to identify the major themes and directions in the study of large (and small) classes. The recent work of the Language Learning in Large Classes research project was then presented as significant in terms of being the first concerted effort undertaken by teachers and researchers together, in different parts of the world and particularly in developing countries, for investigating teaching-learning in large classes. This was followed by a brief discussion of both the 'politics' and 'pedagogy' of the class size question in developed and developing countries. Next, some 'coping' strategies developed by practitioners to deal with teaching in large classes were described. Finally, a case was made for the need to reorient research efforts on class size from 'proving' that smaller is better to 'understanding' the process of teaching and learning in classes of varying size. It was argued that a reorientation of research efforts on class size was necessary for improving the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process in the classroom, while remaining within the present configurations of class size and financial and other constraints in developing countries such as Pakistan.

CHAPTER 2

THE APPROACH, DESIGN AND PLANNING FOR THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has been organised in two parts. In part one, I will describe the need and general purpose of the study. The specific research questions and working principles that guided the design and conduct of the study will also be outlined. This will be followed by a description of the approach and design of the study and an explication of general principles of qualitative inquiry in relation to their suitability for studying the phenomenon of large classes. The rationale for choosing the case study approach within the qualitative paradigm and some issues in using the qualitative research strategy will also be discussed. In part two (sections 2.4-2.7), I will describe briefly my research design and initial planning for fieldwork and on-site data collection. Next, I will look at how the research plan evolved and was modified in response to the conditions in the field during the actual process of research. Finally, the implications of these changes for data collection will be discussed. The actual process of research will be described in chapter 3.

2.2 Need and general purpose of the study

2.2.1 Rationale for undertaking the study

The present study was undertaken mainly for three reasons which are as follows:

2.2.1.1 Class size as a feature in the social context of second language learning

Any classroom can be viewed in terms of two dimensions: the cognitive and the interpersonal. According to Breen (1985), it is both the social and the cognitive aspects

that make the classroom a unique communicative event with its specific culture and learning environment thus,

> The classroom has its own communicative potential and its own authentic meta-communicative purpose. It can be a particular social context for the intensification of the cultural experience of learning (p. 154).

Gardner(1985) proposed that second language learning should be viewed as a social-psychological phenomenon. As such, 'it is important to consider carefully the conditions under which it [second language learning] takes place' (p. 4). He lamented that,

> Too many educators and researchers view second language acquisition as a single phenomenon without recognizing the importance of the context in which acquisition takes place ...This is not to imply that the processes are necessarily different, but simply that the contexts are different, and thus different variables come into play. The important point is that considerable attention must be directed toward the contexts in which language proficiency is developed ... (ibid.).

In the classroom, a learner is engaged in the process of language learning both in terms of being an individual learner but also as a part of the crowd which is one of the essential facts of classroom life (Jackson:1968). Breen (1985:140) draws attention to these two dimensions of the experience of language learning in the classroom - the 'individual subjective' and the 'collective intersubjective' - thus:

> The subjective experience of teachers and learners in the classroom is woven with personal purposes, attitudes, and preferred ways of doing things. The intersubjective experience derives from and maintains teacher and learner shared definitions, conventions, and procedures which enable a working together in a crowd.

The more learners there are in a classroom, the more diversity in individual purposes can be expected. Though the specific nature of the classroom requires 'working together in a crowd', there is always the danger that with an increase in numbers the crowd could turn into a mob (cf.Waller:1932), consequently limiting the opportunities for teaching and learning. Conversely, this might motivate the learners to use different learning strategies or to do more out of class work (Allwright:1989a).

2.2.1.2 Pedagogic considerations

According to Lorenz (1971, cited in van Lier:1988) there are two main reasons for engaging in research: wanting to know and wanting to help. Van Lier (op. cit., p. 22)

suggests that classroom research can be seen as a 'knowledge gathering' or a 'problem solving' activity. However, classroom centred educational research is often undertaken both with the aim of gathering knowledge (an academic aim) and with the wish to help practitioners improve the effectiveness of their teaching and learning in the classroom.

As mentioned in chapter 1, large classes are a 'hard reality' in Pakistan and other developing countries. In such situations an increase in class size is often recommended as a way of increasing enrollment without increasing the amount of expenditure per pupil. Thus we need to think about ways of improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes.

2.2.1.3 Teachers' concern with large classes

Despite the failure of research to show the relationship between class size and achievement in varying size classrooms, large classes are cited by teachers as a major problem or one of their major problems (see chapter 1, section 1.3.2). Thus we need to investigate not only how large classes are seen by teachers (and learners) but also how they cope with teaching and learning in large classes.

2.2.2 Purpose of the study

The study was initially undertaken with the following general aims:

1) To gain an understanding of teachers and learners' perceptions of teaching and learning in large ESL school classes in Pakistan.

2) To look at what happens in large school classes in terms of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes.

3) To investigate how the large class context is related to the participants' perceptions of the opportunities for teaching and learning available in large ESL classes in secondary schools in Pakistan.

However, as is usual in qualitative research, several further issues were identified during the process of data collection and analysis. The general aims of the study were, therefore, refined and rewritten as specific research questions as follows:

1) How do teachers and learners define varying size school classes in Pakistan? What factors contribute to their varied perceptions (and therefore definitions) of class size?

2) What are teachers' and learners' beliefs (based both on their perceptions and experience) about larger and smaller size school classes in Pakistan? What parameters are used by the participants for describing their beliefs about the teaching and learning of English in classes of varying size?

3) What happens, in terms of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes, in large school classes in Pakistan?

4) How does the large class context (e.g. the location of learners in the front or the back of the classroom) relate to the participants' perceptions and experience of the opportunities for teaching and learning available in large school classes in Pakistan?

5) What is the nature and scope of innovations in large school classes in Pakistan? How do they relate to the experiences of other teachers in introducing innovations in large classes in different parts of the world? What can we learn from this cumulative body of knowledge on innovations in large classes for developing a model of innovations for large school classes in Pakistan?

6) What are the determinants of teachers' and learners' difficulties in large classes?

7) What are the reasons for the similarities and differences in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan?

2.2.3 Working principles

The proposed study was based on the following working principles derived from a review of class size studies in chapter 1 (particularly sections 1.2 and 1.3) as well as my personal experience of teaching and learning English as a second language in different size classes, and as a teacher trainer in a variety of settings in Pakistan:

1) Class size is best conceptualised as a continuum ranging from one learner at one end of the axis to as many as 5,000 learners or more (cf. Itzen:1986). Each teacher (and possibly each learner) has his/her own perception of what numbers (in relation to other factors) constitute small or large classes. They also have their own 'threshold levels' of class size, towards both ends of the axis, after which class size is perceived as problematic (large/intolerably large/intolerably small) and/or helpful (ideal/small).

2) Teachers' perception of large classes is related to: a) their view of teaching/learning and other norms of classroom behaviour; and b) the specific characteristics of the large class context, for example less space and difficulty of movement.

3) Learners' perception of large classes is related more to the instructor variable (personal characteristics, competence, attitude towards the learners) and the quality of instruction than the specific nature of the large class context.

4) The variable of class size is neither necessary nor sufficient to have an effect on classroom dynamics. In other words, class size is not a controlling variable but can potentially interact with other teacher-learner variables to limit or enhance opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom in a decisive way.

5) The effect of class size can be observed in small discrete teacher/learner behaviours.

6) The effect of class size is felt most dramatically at extreme ends of the continuum. In between there is a wide grey area of 'standard' or regular size classes in which class

size ceases to be an important variable in relation to other variables in the teaching-learning situation.

2.3 Reconceptualising the study of class size

2.3.1 Towards a qualitative approach

As mentioned in chapter 1, research on class size has mainly been conducted in the quantitative paradigm. Furthermore, it has been characterised by two things: 1) treating class size as a controlling variable despite the difficulty of isolating it as an independent variable, and 2) varying definitions of 'small' and 'large' classes by different researchers. There has been a conviction underlying most of the research on class size that class size is an objective reality with specific indicators (numbers), the effects of which can be studied by a skilful manipulation of experimental techniques and control of variables. However, as is shown by the work of the Large Classes Research Project (see, for example, report No. 4), there is no universal definition of large or small classes. In fact, the varying experience and perceptions of the participants point to the multiple nature of this reality.

Ryan and Greenfield (1975), in the light of their extensive review of class size studies, recommended a comprehensive approach to the study of class size. Thus, five kinds of research styles were proposed for undertaking research on class size. They are as follows (pp 275-280):

1 Descriptive studies

2 Descriptive-interpretive studies

3 Evaluative studies

4 Analytical studies

5 Experimental studies or 'field experiments'[1]

Ryan and Greenfield were convinced that there can be

> no research study or a group of studies which will immediately and unambiguously resolve the
> question of how many children should be placed in a classroom and how many people of what
> kinds should be responsible for helping them to learn there effectively (p. 287).

They argued further that material resources such as class size, in and of themselves,

cannot produce learning. Instead,

> it is the action people take within such an environment, their perception of opportunities and
> limitations, and their feelings of frustration or accomplishment which ultimately account for the
> human transactions we call teaching-learning (p. 295).

In order to understand the effects of class size it is important, according to Ryan and

Greenfield, to view varying size classes from the experience of the participants, as,

> an environment may have "one" effect or another depending upon how the people within it see the
> possibilities for action. For example, one teacher may see only one method of instruction as
> appropriate to a particular class - a class of a specific size with certain materials and facilities -
> while another may see quite different possibilities for method and procedure within the same
> situation (ibid.).

Thus, it is likely that the possibilities for action may be perceived differently by

different actors in seemingly similar situations e.g. classes of 50 students. Conversely, a

great similarity might be found in participants' perceptions of opportunities for teaching

and learning in varying size classes. Hence, in order to find out what makes a class

'large' or 'small' and how it feels to be in classes of varying sizes, it is necessary, in my

opinion, to gain the insider's view of the situation. Moreover, it is important to study not

only the behaviour of the participants but also their motives and aims in terms of their

definition of the situation and the complexity of the interrelationship of class size with

other teacher-learner variables. A qualitative approach seems best suited to address these

issues.

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[1]Field experiments were to be conducted by varying 'a number of significant variables concomitantly in an effort to design a setting similar to that of other existing settings in a "natural" state' (p. 279).

The essentials of qualitative inquiry (cf. Burgess:1985a; Erickson:1986; Sherman and Webb:1988; Vulliamy et al.:1990; Patton:1990) which make it particularly suitable for studying large classes, are as follows:

1) **Naturalistic context of inquiry:** The natural context for study is one of the essential characteristics of qualitative inquiry as against quantitative research where the focus is on manipulation of variables to create an artificial or laboratory setting through a process of 'context stripping'. As it is difficult to isolate the variable of class size to study its effect on different achievement and non-achievement variables, we need to look at how class size is perceived by teachers and learners in the natural context of the classroom.

2) **Holistic rather than atomistic view of events and experiences:** A holistic account can be achieved either through long term participant observation in the field (Wolcott:1987) to gain a thick description (Lutz:1981), or by gaining depth in data analysis, as in micro ethnography (e.g., Erickson and Mohatt:1982), or by conducting a multi-site case study (Stenhouse:1985a). It is important to gain a holistic picture of large classes in terms of the interaction of class size with other variables in the teaching-learning context.

3) **Emic or 'native's view of reality':** In contrast to quantitative research, the aim in qualitative inquiry is to get the insider's view of reality as against imposing a framework for interpreting events from the outside. The latter, or the view of the researcher, derived from some scholarly tradition in the social sciences is often referred to as the 'etic' view in contrast to the 'emic' view of the participants. As there is no universal definition of 'small' or 'large' classes, it is best to study a range of class size in order to gain an insight into why classes are perceived as 'small' or large' and how teachers and learners feel in classes of varying size.

4) **Nature of the research process and role of theory:** Qualitative research is characterised by a flexibility of research design as the inquiry is essentially guided by emerging themes in the data. Though usually, there are no explicit theoretical orientations at the outset of the research, researchers often have an epistemological bent of mind according to the discipline or scholarly tradition in social sciences which they ascribe to, such as anthropology or sociology. Moreover, 'grounded theory' can emerge during the joint process of data collection and data analysis (Glaser and Strauss:1967). The research process is thus conceived of as dialectical rather than linear in nature. As the aim of the present study is to look inside classes of varying size in order to understand the process of teaching and learning in large classes (as reflected in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes), an open-ended approach which allows for flexibility of research design for data collection seems best suited for undertaking this study.

2.3.2 The case study approach in qualitative inquiry

In the above section, I discussed the suitability of qualitative inquiry as an approach to studying the question of class size in contrast to quantitative methods. In this section, I will try to locate the case study approach (cf. Merriam:1988) within different 'traditions' or 'approaches' in qualitative research strategy. Next, I will present a rationale for using the case study approach for the present study.

Wolcott (1992) uses the analogy of a tree to discuss the similarities and diversity in the different approaches in qualitative inquiry.[2] Thus according to Wolcott, the thick trunk or 'core' of the 'tree' of qualitative inquiry represents the three basic research techniques in qualitative research, i.e., Experiencing, Enquiring and Examining. These 'core' techniques are shared by all the approaches to qualitative inquiry. However, the

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[2]See also Jacob (1987) and Atkinson, Delamont and Hammersley (1988) for a discussion of different traditions in qualitative research.

tree branches into different traditions according to a number of factors including the history of their development and use in educational research. The educational researcher is faced with conscious choices as he or she goes up the tree, for example, between participant and non-participant observation and between ethnography and field study. As each choice is informed by a tradition in the area, it provides a different perspective on the same event.

Where does the case study approach fit into the varying 'models' of qualitative inquiry presented by ? Wolcott explains why case study did not find a place in his 'tree' of qualitative inquiry:

> Heretofore, I have regarded case study as a way to conduct research and, thus, have included it in any discussion of strategies or methods (Wolcott,1982, 1990:65). In trying to situate case study on the "tree", however, it seemed to fit everywhere in general, yet nowhere in particular. Although every strategy identified can be reported in case study format, case study does not implicate any particular approach (p. 36).

He suggested further that case study should be seen in terms of the end-product of field oriented research, as a 'format for reporting qualitative/descriptive work' (ibid.) instead of a method in qualitative research.

Rudduck (1984:202) also defined the case study (as opposed to a case record) in terms of the end-product. Thus, according to her, a case study is:

> an interpretive presentation and discussion of the case, resting upon evidence gathered during field work. It is constructed at the culmination of a period of field work and is a public statement by the field worker about the case and a public presentation of the case. It is a subjective statement which its author is prepared to justify and defend.

According to Merriam (1988), a lot of confusion exists about what a case study is. Thus case study research has been equated, variously, with 'field work, ethnography, participant observation, qualitative research, naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory, exploratory research, phenomenology and hypothesis generation' (p. 5). However, she defines a qualitative case study as: 'an intensive, holistic description of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit'. In addition, 'Case studies are particularistic, descriptive,

and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning and handling multiple data sources'
(p. 16).

Merriam says, rightly in my opinion, that,

> The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon (p. 32).

Stenhouse (1980, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1985d) was perhaps the most ardent supporter and active exponent of the case study method in educational research in the UK. He identified four kinds of case study in terms of their precedents and history of development (1985a). They are: ethnographic case studies, evaluative case studies, educational case studies, and case studies in action research. Stenhouse argued that there was a close relationship between the case study method and educational practice, in that

> It [a case study] appeals to the experience of participants in education rather than to educational theory and holds to the vernacular because it recognises 'the task of entering into the consciousness and the convictions of citizens prepared to act' (Habermas:1974, 75). It aims to strengthen judgement and develop prudence (1985a:28).

A case study perhaps bears the closest resemblance to educational ethnography in terms of its focus on a single event or programme for study. While both the case study approach and ethnography seem to share the belief in the insider's view of reality as taking precedence over any other view derived from theory, and focus on conducting the inquiry in the natural context, the following differences can be noted in the two kinds of research:

1) The case study method favours 'condensed fieldwork' (Walker:1980). This seems to be a result of the history of its development and use in curriculum and evaluation studies where, 'the research enterprise is forced to move at the pace of the action it is commissioned to study' (Stenhouse:1985a:7). On the other hand, in ethnography, it is generally assumed that the researcher will spend one to two years in the community he/she wishes to study.

2) The case study method offers the possibility of studying a phenomenon in a number of cases or at different sites, either by one researcher or a team of researchers. (A collaborative research effort in which more than one researcher is involved also provides an opportunity to share research findings and discuss the interpretation of data.) In contrast, as Stenhouse (1985a) points out, 'Generally the ethnographer studies one case at a time, largely because it is virtually impossible to achieve participant observation in two cultures simultaneously, but also because of a respect for the structure of each culture' (pp 5-6).

3) The tradition of case study research developed at CARE in the University of East Anglia in the UK has typically focussed on helping the practitioners to take account of and evaluate the success of the implementation of educational reforms etc. in terms of their own teaching/learning situation. This gave rise to the teacher-as- researcher movement and the development of action research (Atkinson, Delamont and Hammersley:1988), where the practitioners are not treated as sources of data but actually participate in the process of investigation. Educational ethnography has, on the other hand, been more concerned with finding out how participants make sense of their social world in the classroom and how classrooms and schools are related to the society in which they operate (op. cit.).

Thus, on the one hand, case study has been used as a generic all-inclusive term to describe studies that focus on a single event, programme or person. On the other hand, case study method has been defined as a distinct approach to the design and conduct of studies undertaken in the qualitative tradition. However, in view of the above discussion of some essential differences in the design and conduct of a case study and educational ethnography, I believe that case study is a distinct approach which has consequences both for the kind of data collected and its analysis and final presentation.

It was decided to use the case study approach for the present study for the following reasons:

1) its focus on a single phenomenon for inquiry (in this case, large classes)

2) the need for multi-case or muti-site study, particularly as it was felt that in the absence

of any definition of large classes to begin the process of investigation, it would be

necessary to study school classes of varying size in a number of schools.

2.3.3 Issues in qualitative inquiry and case study research

The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education (LeCompte et al.:1992) identifies

three basic issues in qualitative research. They are: ethical concerns, and issues of

validity and subjectivity. In this section, I will discuss each of these issues briefly to

point out the change in perspective in recent years from seeing them as problems (in terms

of criteria for judging quantitative research) to essential ingredients in the qualitative

research process.

2.3.2.1 Ethical concerns

In educational research ethical issues

> range from findings assessing the real impact of the researchers' presence on their subject
> population (both for methodological veracity and for sociological and psychological impact) to
> examining the nature of the relationships that result from their research effort (Deyhle, Hess and
> Lecompte:1992:616).

The ethical issues span across the entire research process from the early field work

phase to publication and dissemination of findings and even in the post field work years

(op. cit.).[3] Most of these issues arise from the need, in this kind of research, for the

researcher to play the dual roles of both 'friend' and 'stranger' (cf. Agar:1980). While,

on one hand, the researcher is required to get into a close relationship of trust with the

informants, on the other, there is the necessity of maintaining a sufficiently objective role

of the 'researcher'. Further problems arise due to the possibility of the subjects being

recognised (despite use of pseudonyms) and their consequences for them once the

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[3]Also see Burgess (1985b).

findings of the research become public through research reports and other publications. (The team of researchers working at CARE, University of East Anglia in the UK, believed so firmly in the control of data by the subjects of a study that no research findings were released without the prior agreement of the people who were involved in the study.)

Lewin (in Vulliamy et al.:1990) draws attention to an added dimension in regard to ethics in qualitative research which arises out of a trend for researchers from the developed 'West' doing qualitative research in developing countries. He questions the ethics of this trend, thus:

> What defences are there to the charge that much research in developing countries on education is another kind of cultural imperialism where the spoils are the capture of data and the enhancement of status of the researcher in the world of international publications? (p. 212)

2.3.2.2 Validity

There are two kinds of validity in quantitative research:

> Internal validity . . . pertains to the credibility of inferences that experimental treatments (factors) cause effects under certain well-defined circumstances . . . External validity pertains to generalizing the effects observed under experimental conditions to other populations and context (Eisenhart and Howe:1992:644-45).

However, as qualitative research employs different kinds of procedures from quantitative research Van Lier (1988) is of the opinion that qualitative research should not be judged by criteria developed for research in the positivist tradition. Hymes (1982) believed that 'intersubjective' validity in qualitative inquiry was more important than other kinds of validity. Consequently, he underlined the need for developing ways of obtaining respondent validation such as, audio-visual recordings of classroom events. (A recording of classroom events also makes it possible to share the interpretation of these events with other researchers.) Stenhouse (1980) recommended the preparation of case records for verification purposes. He suggested that data archives of 'contemporary history' in education should be established so that the case records could be used by other researchers both for the purpose of verification and for development of theory.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Eisenhart and Howe:1992) proposed several techniques for increasing the credibility (validity) of naturalistic inquiry. Eisenhart and Howe (1992) argue for setting up some general standards and some design specific standards 'which are subsumed by the general standards and which articulate the particular evidence, knowledge, principles and technical skills that differentiate alternative designs' (p. 656), for purposes of validity in qualitative inquiry. They offer five general standards, three of which are concerned with the technical quality of the research design and procedures used for data collection and analysis. They are:

1   'The fit between research questions, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques. . .

2   'The effective application of specific data collection and analysis techniques. . .

3   'Alertness to and coherence of prior knowledge' (pp 657-659).

The fourth criterion involves 'value constraints' in terms of improving educational practice (external value constraint) and ethical issues (internal value constraints) that deal with 'the way the research is conducted vis-a-vis research subjects' (p. 661). The fifth and the last general standard is comprehensiveness of the study in terms of 'overall theoretical and technical quality' and 'a balancing of the overall technical quality, the nature and importance of the study and the risks involved in the study'. It also includes the ability 'to employ knowledge from outside the particular perspective and traditions within which one is working and being able to apply general principles for evaluating arguments' (p. 662). The design specific standards require a study to be assessed with reference to a subarea of scholarly research tradition before its technical quality can be judged.

2.3.2.3 Subjectivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the prime instrument for data collection. As such, it is important to recognise that,

> the researcher always has some impact on the setting he or she is studying, that the selectivity necessarily involved in research activity will shape the data and findings, and that researchers are by no means immune to the effects of interests and values. These three features open up researchers to a wide range of potential threats to validity, from reactivity of one kind to bias on the part of the researcher in interpreting the data (Hammersley:1984:41).

Jansen and Peshkin (1992) identify two kinds of subjectivity - subjectivity in the conduct of research and subjectivity in the construction of text. While they recognize the importance of self reflection of the researcher to see how personal qualities affect data collection and interpretation of events, the importance of gaining an understanding of the events from the view of the participants is emphasized. They describe the recent change in the approach to subjectivity in qualitative research tradition as a move from considering subjectivity as a problem (having a negative effect on data collection and analysis) to an essential characteristic of the nature of qualitative inquiry, thus:

> The old concern with subjectivity is that it renders findings untrustworthy. The new interest in subjectivity, as we see it, is considerably less with whether or not our work is trustworthy (which virtue we do not scorn) and considerably more with how self and subject have intersected and with what effect (p. 717).

They are optimistic that this view of subjectivity 'as a personal quality - as the involvement of self' (ibid) - will soon gain general acceptance in the research community.

To summarise, in part one I have presented the rationale for undertaking the present study and discussed the suitability of the case study approach for investigating large classes. Three major issues in qualitative research, i.e., ethical concerns, validity and subjectivity, were also looked at briefly. In part two, I will outline my research design, the research methodology used in the present study and my planning for field work. Some changes in the research plan will also be discussed in regard to their implications for data collection.

2.4   The research design

It was decided to use two kinds of research design, a within-school research design and a multi-site design to study the phenomenon of large classes. It was believed that while the within-school design would provide an opportunity to study large classes in relation to varying size classes at the level of an institution, a cross-site design would make it possible to study large classes (in comparison to other size classes) in a variety of educational settings. A secondary purpose of this two-tiered design was to find out the nature of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes which are specific to large classes and those which form the general culture of teaching, both at the institutional level and at a more general level of school classes in Pakistan.

As the aim of the study was to look at the 'reality' of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in large classes from the perspective of the participants, it was decided to undertake the investigation in varying size classes *as they are,* i.e., without any manipulation of variables in the research setting or the present teaching-learning situation.

Further it was decided to focus on the secondary level only. This decision was informed by two considerations:

1) The fact that English is taught from class VI, the first year in secondary schools, in all government schools which cater for the bulk of student population even in urban areas;[4] and

2) A survey of teachers' perceptions and experiences of class size including teachers at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) revealed that an overwhelming number of

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[4]Under a recent directive from the government the teaching of English now begins in class I in all kinds of schools in Pakistan. However, in primary classes, English does not have the same status as other subjects. This is evident from the fact that students are not tested in English during the end of year exams in primary school.

secondary school teachers (88%) considered class size as either their major problem or one of the major problems (Shamim:1991a).

In the light of the author's general familiarity with the education system in urban areas in Pakistan, the schools were broadly divided into three categories, for the purpose of the study, as follows:

1) Government schools

2) Government-nationalised schools, i.e., private schools that were nationalised by the government in 1972

3) Private schools that have sprung up, particularly in big cities, since the early 1980's after the ban on establishing private schools was lifted by the government.

It was decided to include one school each from the three categories above in order to get a range of class size as well as a variety of educational environments at the secondary level in Pakistan. It must be emphasised that though the three kinds of institution mentioned above were initially identified by the researcher, the specific criteria for selection of sites within each of these categories derived from participants' views, which were arrived at through the ongoing analysis of data in the field (cf. Glaser and Strauss:1967). (See chapter 3, section 3.1 for a detailed discussion of the procedure used for selection of sites for the study.)

It was planned to undertake the study of each institution in three different phases (two weeks each), spread over a period of six months. As the teaching-learning process undergoes a number of variations during the school year from the settling in phase at the beginning to the pressure of the end of year exams at the end (Ball:1983), it was decided to visit each institution at different times during the school year. It was hoped that this would provide an opportunity for time triangulation also (Cohen and Manion:1989). The three phases of the study in each institution were also seen as beginning with an exploratory stance, for example, unstructured observation in Phase I to a gradual

focussing of issues in terms of emerging themes in Phases II and III of the fieldwork (Spradley:1980). The process of data collection and data analysis were perceived of as going hand in hand as is usual in a lot of qualitative research.[5]

It was also decided to work closely with two teachers who, it was hoped, would volunteer to participate in the study after an initial meeting with all teachers of English in an institution. I believed that working with two teachers only, in each school, would facilitate the forming of a closer relationship with these teachers. Moreover, it was hoped that, during Phases II and III of the fieldwork, it might also be possible to work with some of these teachers as teacher collaborators.

2.5   Research methodology

As discussed earlier, Wolcott (1992) identifies the three basic techniques of qualitative research as: experiencing, which includes watching and listening; enquiring, when the researcher takes on a more active role than a 'mere observer'; and examining, which has often been described as using documents or archival research. It was decided to use all the three techniques to get a triangulation of methods (Cohen and Manion:1989). Moreover, these techniques seemed to be suitable in terms of the aims of the study, i.e., to look at the events and experiences of the participants in varying size classes as they are, from the 'native's' point of view, in order to arrive at a holistic picture of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in large classes.

2.5.1   Classroom observation

It was planned to observe a number of classes during all the three phases of the fieldwork, beginning from a relatively unstructured observation of classes in Phase I to a

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[5]The three-phase research plan matches the three field trips of Vulliamy to Papua New Guinea. During the first trip he was 'looking around' while the research questions became more focused during the second trip. In the light of his knowledge of the field, in the third trip he was able to prepare a well organised research plan and very specific research questions before going to the field (Vulliamy et al. :1990).

progressive narrowing of focus in Phases II and III of the field work (see plan for on-site data collection below).

The nature of classroom processes is so complex that it is very difficult to observe everything that is happening at any one time, especially in a large class. Hence it was decided to make an audio-visual recording of the classroom events, wherever possible, to complement the field notes.[6] As an audio-visual recording enables the researcher to revisit the scene, as it were, I believed that, with the help of audio-visual records, it might also be possible to discover some significant events which could not be observed in real-time. Moreover, I planned to organise joint video viewing sessions with the teachers (time and other factors permitting), as a way of getting their views and to compare their perception of events and experiences with the ongoing interpretations of the researcher to gain intersubjective validity or validity according to 'natives' view of meaning' (Hymes:1982) of the research findings.

2.5.2 Interviews

It was decided to conduct semi-structured interviews of both participating teachers and learners at each site, mainly for two reasons:

1) to get complementary data on classroom events and processes; and

2) to serve as a kind of check on data collected from classroom observation.

More specifically, the aim of teacher-learner interviews was to find answers to the following questions:

1) How are the different patterns of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan perceived by the participants?

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[6]The use of audio-visual recording has been described variously as an 'enstrangement device' (van Lier:1988:317) and as a means of retrieving data after the period of observation for indepth analysis or 'immersion in the data' (Erickson:1981).

2) What are teachers and learners' perception of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching and learning English in larger and smaller size classes?

3) How does teacher behaviour in the classroom relate to one or more of the following factors:

- Teacher's biography/personal commitment and other instructor variables

- Constraints in the educational context (general)

- Constraints of the large class context

- Pedagogic tradition in the immediate educational environment

- Views of teaching and learning prevalent in the wider community?

It was planned to conduct the teacher interviews in the pre-and post observation phase in each institution. On the other hand, it was decided to hold learner interviews in Phase III of the field work. It was considered desirable to interview the learners in groups, each group possibly comprising some weak and strong learners identified by the teacher for the purpose of the interview.

2.5.3 Examining documents

Documents that are not prepared for the purpose of research (e.g. examination papers, school notices and newspaper articles) are often significant in terms of throwing light on different aspects of the teaching-learning process. Hence, though I did not plan to do an 'active' search for different kinds of 'formal' documents, I decided to include in my data all documents that I would come across during my visits to different institutions.

2.6 Planning for field work

The following plan was prepared to guide in the different phases of data collection and to use as a working document for negotiating access to different schools with Heads and participating teachers.

Phase I - two weeks(12 working days)[7]

1) Preliminary meeting with the principal and teachers in the selected institution to explain/discuss research design and answer any other queries.

2) Interviewing the principal and/or the administrator of the institution (see appendix 2 A).

3) Conducting a pre-observation interview of the two teachers (one hour each) who volunteer to participate in the study after the preliminary meeting (see appendix 2 B)

4) Observing each teacher in his/her classroom for two weeks as follows:

- Focus on the teacher - 5 class hours (a minimum of one class hour per day for 5 days)

- Focus on the learners - 3 class hours (a minimum of one class hour per day for 3 days)

5) Selecting 3-5 students per class, or conversely, asking the teacher to select some students on the basis of ability level for more focussed observation in Phases II and III.

It was planned to complete Phase I for sites 2 and 3 also by following steps 1-5 above, before going back to the first institution for Phase II of the study.

Phase II- two weeks (12 working days)

1) Observing each teacher in his/her classroom as in Phase I above.

2) Making an audio-visual recording of some classes (at least two classes per teacher, one focusing on the teacher and the other focusing on the learners).

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[7]One week equals six working days in all government institutions and some private schools also.

3) Organising a joint viewing session with each teacher to explore reasons for teacher behaviour (strategies, decisions, etc.). (Three five-minute segments could be selected for this purpose - one from the beginning, one from the middle and one from the end of the class hour. Conversely, the whole video tape could be played and the teachers asked to comment on any part they wished.)

Phase II would be completed for sites 2 and 3 also by following steps 1-3 above before returning to the first institution for Phase III of field work.

Phase III (two weeks or 12 working days)

1) Observing each teachers' classroom as in Phases I and II above.

2) Interviewing some learners from each class in small groups (see appendix 2 C).

3) Conducting post-observation interviews of the two participating teachers (see appendix 2 D).

Phase III would also be completed for sites 2 and 3 by repeating steps 1-3 above.

2.7 Changes in the research plan and their implications for the kind and quality of data collected

In this section, I will discuss briefly some changes in the research plan which proved significant in terms of their effect on the kind and quality of data collected. Firstly, due to the unfamiliarity of the participants with the nature of qualitative inquiry (see chapter 3, section 3.5), and consequently their suspicions about my motives for wanting a relatively long term association with their institution, I decided to reduce the time spent in each school from six weeks (three two-week cycles) as originally planned, to three weeks in two phases (two weeks and one week respectively). As mentioned above, the first visit to each school was largely exploratory in nature. I planned to do more focused classroom observations during my second visit to the same schools in terms of 'emerging themes' in

the data. However, unfortunately the second visit to most of the sites in Phase II of the fieldwork was cut shorter due to unforeseen circumstances such as rain or subject mortality (see chapter 3, section   3.6.3). This, along with the problem of re-negotiating access in Phase II, did not allow me to do much follow up work on 'emerging' themes as planned earlier. Consequently, a number of hunches remained 'untested'. However, a positive aspect of this was that I was able to study six sites instead of three sites as planned earlier. This made it possible to study a wider range of class size both in relatively similar and in different educational environments at different sites.

Secondly, the initial plan was to work closely with two teachers in each institution. However, when faced with the selection of teachers for observation, I decided to observe the classes of three and sometimes even four teachers teaching at different levels (class VI, class VIII, and class X). This gave me an opportunity to work with a range of teachers from the older, very senior and 'good' teachers in class X to the relatively younger junior teachers in class VI (also see chapter 3, section 3.2.3). Observing more than two teachers was also useful in terms of the high rate of teacher absenteeism (especially during November, the second month of the study, when all teachers wanted to use up their 'casual leave' allowance before the end of the year). Thus, if one of the participating teachers was absent, it was still possible to observe the classes of the other teachers.

It had also been planned to do audio-visual recording of at least two lessons per teacher in Phase II of the field work. This was mainly to be used for respondent validation of the interpretations of the data while also allowing the researcher an opportunity to re-visit the data without constraints of real time. However, when I observed the discomfort of the teachers with any form of 'permanent' record, I decided against even mentioning the possibility of audio-visual recording of the lessons in the different schools visited. Moreover, as the teachers had neither the time nor the inclination to give up their free time for follow-up discussions on their lessons, any

discussions that did take place were very informal and were usually held on the stairs and in the corridors while going to or coming back from their classes.

Another major change in the research plan outlined above was in the timings of the two interviews of the participating teachers. The original plan was to conduct the first interview in the pre-observation stage and the second interview in phase III, after the observation of their classes had been completed. However, it was not possible to hold the first interview in the pre-observation stage, as often it was not possible to ascertain in advance which school would be visited next and, more importantly, which teachers would be participating in the research. Similarly, there was no way of finding out, till the last day of my first visit to a school, if I would be allowed entree for a second visit to the same site. Thus the two interviews were held during the first and second weeks in Phase I only as 'Interview 1' and 'Interview 2' respectively. Consequently I was unable to follow up 'emerging themes' as they arose during the course of my field work, except only in informal discussions with the teachers.

2.8 Summary and conclusion

I began, in part one, by outlining briefly the need and general purpose of the study. Next, the general approach which guided the design and conduct of the study was presented. It was argued that the case study method, within the qualitative paradigm, is best suited to study the question of class size, for three reasons, i.e., the need 1) to study large classes in their natural context, 2) to study them from the perspective of the participants, and 3) to arrive at a holistic picture of the perception and experience of the participants in varying size classes, in order to gain an indepth understanding of the phenomenon of large classes in relation to other teacher-learner variables. Some issues in qualitative inquiry and the case study method, such as subjectivity, were also discussed. In part two, firstly the research methodology for the present study was outlined. This was followed by a brief description of the initial planning for fieldwork and on-site data collection. Finally the changes in the research plan during the process of data collection

were discussed particularly in relation to their effect on the kind and quality of data collected for the study.

In the following chapter, I will describe the process of research such as modes of access used for gaining entree into the schools and the selection of sites for the study. Several aspects of the research experience will also be discussed in terms of the socio-cultural context and other characteristics of the research setting in which the investigation was undertaken.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROCESS OF RESEARCH: A SOCIO-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE[1]

3.1 Introduction

The fact that research is more than a matter of applying some research techniques has increasingly been noted by researchers working in the qualitative tradition. Burgess (1984) argues for the need to raise questions about 'the actual problems that confront researchers in the course of their investigations' and 'the ways in which techniques, theories and processes are developed by the researcher in relation to the experience of collecting, analyzing and reporting data' (p. 2). The acceptance of this view is particularly noticeable in the burgeoning of autobiographical accounts, in recent years, of the social dimension of the research process, for example, Margot et al.:1991; Vulliamy et al.:1990; Littlejohn and Melouk:1988; Burgess:1984; and Dingwall and Mann:1982.

The following account of my research process is an attempt to discuss some issues that seemed to affect both the kind and amount of data collected during field work. I will begin by describing the process involved in the selection of sites. Next, the modes of access used for gaining entree to different sites in the field will be discussed with specific reference to the socio-cultural context of the community in which the study was undertaken. Thirdly, the role of the researcher will be described in terms of the response of the stakeholders to the presence of the researcher in their schools and classrooms. This will be followed by a discussion of the essential characteristics of the research environment in Pakistan and its implications for data collection. Finally, some other factors affecting the process of data collection, such as the role of luck and chance, will be presented.

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[1] The observations in this chapter are derived mainly from the daily entries in my research diary which was kept through the entire period of my fieldwork.

As the process of qualitative research is more dialectical than linear in nature, with the process of data collection being continuously informed by emerging themes in the data, the following discussion does not reflect any 'temporal order' of events or stages in the research process.

3.2 Selection of sites

3.2.1 Issues of sampling in case study method

In ethnographic research which focuses on a single institution or programme, a school is usually selected according to convenience (Hammersley:1984) though sometimes the typicality of the case is also considered (Ball:1984). Woods favours the selection of a typical case as, 'the more representative the school the greater the chances of external validity of the results' (Woods:1986:50). Glaser and Strauss (1967) propose 'theoretical sampling' which is,

> the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next, and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is *controlled* by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal (p. 45).

The case study approach offers, in addition, the possibility of studying a wide range of variables in regard to a single phenomenon by doing a multi-case or a multi-site case study. Stenhouse (1985a) advises that the cases should be selected

> to cover the range of variables judged to be important in relation to the theme of the study. This tends to maximise the differences within the collection of cases, but it is important to bear in mind the need to look for differences within apparent similarity. The principle should probably be to build the collection from similar pairs (or threes) of cases and try to see that this collection of pairs covers as wide a range of relevant variables as possible (p. 12).[2]

According to Stenhouse, the sampling procedure followed by a case study researcher is, in essence, similar to that of a researcher working in the quantitative tradition. However, the difference is that, in case study research, the focus is on gaining a depth of

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[2]See Stenhouse (1984) for an illustration of this procedure.

understanding instead of generalising findings from the sample to the population. While in random sampling inclusion and exclusion of cases is based on some pre-defined criteria, in case study research it is an ongoing process whereby new samples are selected in the light of emerging themes in the data. Thus sampling in qualitative research, and particularly in the case study method, is recommended as a procedure for understanding a phenomenon in all its complexity rather than as an attempt to generalise the findings of the study.

3.2.2 The secondary school system in Pakistan

Before I look at the process of selection of sites for the present study, I will give a brief description of the secondary school system in Pakistan. As mentioned in chapter 2 (section 2.4) I entered the field with a broad idea of looking at three kinds of schools: a) the state-run or government schools, that were (or are) originally established as government schools, b) government-nationalised schools, i.e., schools which were established as private schools but taken over by the government in 1972;[3] and c) private schools.

The ban on setting up of private schools was lifted by the government in the early 1980's. Thus the private sector in primary and secondary education has seen a boom during the last decade or so. As a result, a number of private schools have sprung up in big cities with high-sounding names such as Crescent Grammar School, and Whitehouse Grammar School. (No recent figures are available for the number of private schools in Pakistan. However, it was estimated to be 1,000 in 1986 (British Council:1986).)

When I mentioned my plan to visit government schools to some officials in the education department, I was advised to study private schools instead. One senior official told me, 'These days everyone, even my driver, sends his children to private schools.' It

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[3]Government-nationalised schools often retain their original names prefaced by the word 'government', for example, Govt. Pakland Secondary School for Girls.

is true that private schools attract a large section of the population by promising to provide an English medium education to the children, thereby preparing them for the highly competitive job market in Pakistan where proficiency in English is still considered an important 'virtue'. However, as private education is very expensive (the fee structure ranges from Rs.100 to Rs.800 per month and above), only the middle and upper class people can afford to send their children to these schools. Thus despite the recent proliferation of private schools, particularly in major cities in Pakistan, the state-run system of schools continues to provide education to the majority of the student population even in urban areas.

Almost all schools run by the state use Urdu as the medium of instruction[4] and are known as 'Urdu-medium' schools while English is the medium of instruction in private or 'English medium' schools (with a few exceptions in the case of welfare or charity schools). The labels 'Urdu medium' and 'English medium' are interpreted, by the layman and teachers and students alike, in terms of the social status of the participants, the resources available and the focus on learning English as well as the differential quality of education imparted in these schools.

This general classification of schools which I had arrived at as a result of my experience of working as a teacher and teacher trainer in a variety of educational settings in Pakistan, prior to beginning the research study, can be seen more clearly in figure 3.1.

However, the actual selection of schools was informed by an ongoing process of data collection and data analysis in the field. As a result, the essential characteristics of the three categories of schools mentioned above were greatly refined during the process of research.

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[4]Recently some government schools have begun to introduce English as the medium of instruction in some of their classes, for example, site 4.

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Secondary school│
                    │   system in     │
                    │   Pakistan      │
                    └────────┬────────┘
              ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
    ┌─────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────┐
    │Government Schools│          │ Private schools │
    │  (Urdu medium)   │          │ (English medium)│
    └────────┬─────────┘          └─────────────────┘
      ┌──────┴──────┐
┌───────────┐  ┌───────────────┐
│Government │  │  Government-  │
│           │  │  nationalised │
└───────────┘  └───────────────┘
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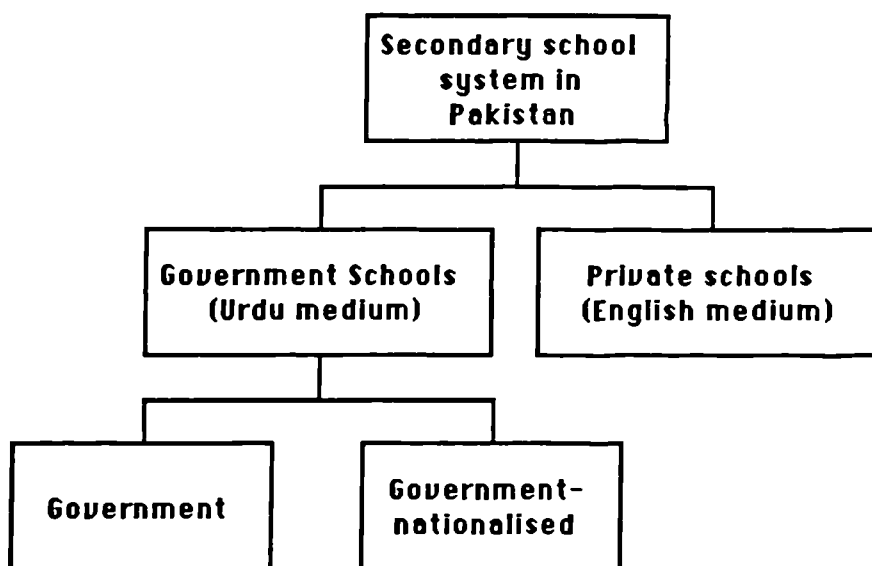
Figure 3.1:   Different kinds of secondary schools in Pakistan

The following is a description of the different kinds of schools in terms of participants' views of similarities and differences in these schools. It is essential to remember that this description merely represents an attempt to 'freeze' and 'crystallize' the process (cf. Dingwall:1982), which helped me to gain an indepth understanding of the specific categories mentioned above, during numerous discussions with the participants in the field.

3.2.2.1   Location

The size of classes, the reputation of the school and the general work 'ethos' in the school depends a great deal on the locality in which the school is situated.

Thus the government schools vary in terms of average class size from 30 to 100 and above students according to the locality in which they are situated. The size of the class is smaller in government schools which are located in the middle and upper-middle class areas where most of the parents can afford a private 'English medium' education for their children. On the other hand, overcrowded classes are common in 'unpopular' localities which also include the suburbs and outlying areas of the city. There are very few private schools in these areas. Thus during recent years, with the growing awareness about

education in the lower-middle and working classes, there has been a sharp increase in enrollments in the government schools in these areas leading to larger classes (e.g. sites 5 and 6).

There has also been a sharp rise in the student population and consequently class size in government-nationalised schools, which are located mostly in middle class areas, for two reasons: a) the insurgence of 'katchi abadis'[5] in the city as a result of an inflow of migrant population from different parts of Pakistan, and b) the relatively 'better' reputation of government-nationalised schools compared to government schools.

The private schools are located mainly in the middle class and upper middle class areas. Children are also bussed great distances from different parts of the city to the few missionary and 'good' private schools in these areas. The class size in private schools ranges from 20-45 students. It is very rare to find a private school where the average class size is 50 or above.

3.2.2.2 Reputation of the school

At the beginning of my field work when I asked some senior officials in the Directorate of Schools about their advice regarding which schools to visit, I was told to visit 'good' government schools only. (I discovered that all the 'good' government schools recommended to me for study were located in middle class areas.) It seems that the reputation of a state-run school depends largely on the location of the school (and consequently the socio economic status of the school population), the administrative experience of the Head and the school results in the Board (matriculation) examinations.

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[5] A 'katchi abadi' is an unplanned settlement of small houses (or house-like structures) which springs up on any vacant space available in different parts of the city.

3.2.2.3 Gender

In Pakistan all the government schools are single sex schools while the private schools mainly have co-education. The private schools that were nationalised in 1972 were changed into single sex schools soon after nationalisation either by redistributing the school population in neighbouring schools or by establishing second shift schools in the same building e.g., site 4.

3.2.2.4 Socio-economic background of the participants

The fact that government schools are single sex, i.e., girls or boys only, while private schools have co-education reflects the difference in the home backgrounds of the school population in the two kinds of schools. In government schools, the students come mostly from the uneducated lower income strata of society with a more conservative background. In most cases there is no history of even basic literacy skills in the family. It is significant that there is not much difference in the socio-economic background of the students who attend the government schools in different parts of the city, mainly due to the proliferation of 'katchi abadis' or small shanty towns in all localities.

On the other hand, the students in private schools belong to the relatively well-off 'progressive' educated middle and upper middle class families. However, the private schools seem to be divided into at least three categories according to their fee structure,[6] which reflects the socio-economic background of the student population, i.e., high income, middle income and low income. The 'elite' in the high income group prefer to educate their children in the few missionary (private) schools in the city where the socio-economic background of the children and the status and education of their parents are also considered for admission purposes.

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[6]This distinction in the different types of private schools was brought home to me in a meeting of the representatives of private schools.

The socio-economic background of the teachers in different kinds of private schools usually matches the type of school in which they are teaching. Often the teachers in private schools are themselves the products of the same system.

The three kinds of schools, mentioned above, can further be differentiated in terms of the 'ethos' of these schools, i.e.,varying emphasis on discipline, school uniform and punctuality of teachers and learners; length of the school day and class periods; tolerance of and, therefore, the rate of teacher-learner absenteeism;[7] teacher-learner attitudes and their expectations of success in learning English; and even acceptable norms of behaviour, such as, leaving the class in a line or rushing out of it together for recess or at the end of the school day.

It was also revealed that the participants perceive their 'work culture', such as their expectations of their performance and their commitment to improving the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process in their schools, in relation to their membership of different kinds of schools.

Thus it was found that the government and private schools differ mainly in regard to the location of these schools, the range of class size, preference for single sex or co-education, the reputation of the school, the socio-economic background of the participants and the work ethos in these schools. However, despite the differences in the outer 'cultural artifacts' between different kinds of schools mentioned above, there seemed to be a number of similarities in both government and private schools. Some of the major

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[7]It was observed that at least 10-12 children were absent every day in each class in government schools. On the other hand, the rate of absenteeism was very low in private schools where the children were required to submit a leave application, signed by their parents, to explain their absence from class. Also in private schools, due to having fewer children in the class, the teachers found it easy to notice the absentee children and call them to account the next day. Similarly more teachers were found to be absent every day in government schools than in private schools perhaps due to the easy availability of leave allowances, such as 'casual leave' and 'medical leave' etc. in the government sector.

similarities that were observed across different institutions are in regard to the definition of teacher-learner roles, activity types used in the classroom, and other instructional and management techniques. These similarities in the culture of teaching and learning in different kinds of schools will be explored further in chapter 6.

3.2.3 Selection of schools, teachers and classes for observation

As mentioned in chapter 2, I began my study with the aim of studying one 'representative' school each from the three kinds of schools described above i.e., government schools, government-nationalised schools and private schools. This was mainly to cover as wide a range of class size as possible in a variety of educational contexts in secondary schools in Pakistan. However, as new categories emerged differentiating the different kinds of schools, they were included in the process of ongoing sampling and selection of sites for the study. Moreover, following the advice of Stenhouse (1985a), an attempt was made during data collection to select sites in pairs of the same kinds of schools to minimise differences, while selecting different kinds of pairs to maximise differences. Hence the following pairs of schools were selected for the study:

1) Two government-nationalised schools (one male and one female), one of which was located in a prestigious area and the other in a middle class area, both with adjoining 'katchi abadis' - (sites 1 and 4).

2) Two government schools (one male and one female), both located in a lower middle class area with adjoining 'katchi abadis' - (sites 5 and 6).

3) Two private schools with co-education and housed in the same building. (In fact the two schools came under the same management but were run in two shifts (morning and afternoon)[8]- (sites 2 and 3).

The details of the six sites selected for study can be seen in table 3.1.[9]

When I went to any school I was always asked which classes I wanted to observe. The first time I was asked this question, I improvised an explanation showing my intention to observe classes at three different levels i.e. class VI, the first year of secondary school when English is introduced in government schools; Class VIII, because students are selected for Arts or Science groups on the basis of their performance in this class; and Class X, the last year of secondary school at the end of which students have to sit for the matriculation exam conducted by the Board of Secondary Education. This proved to be a blessing in disguise as on one hand, it satisfied the Heads and participating teachers (to the extent that they could be satisfied) and on the other, it provided me with an opportunity to observe a range of teachers from the senior and experienced teachers in class X to relatively younger and inexperienced teachers in class VI. Thus there was a 'natural selection ' of teachers as a result of which the 'markedness' of the participating teachers was also toned down to a great extent. Moreover, the fact that senior teachers were also being observed lent a degree of confidence to junior teachers, who were otherwise not confident about their teaching skills or their proficiency in English.

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[8]Unlike government schools, private schools are normally run in a single shift only (and consequently have a longer school day as compared to government schools). However, recently due to an increase in demand for admission to private schools, some schools are either beginning to consider or have already started afternoon or second shifts also.

[9]As mentioned earlier the selection of sites was informed by a growing awareness of different variables considered important by the participants in differentiating between different kinds of schools as well as other logistic reasons such as, the attitude of the Head, the availability of classes for observation, etc.

Site/Type of school	Medium of instruction	Location	Range of class size	Reputation	Gender	Socio-economic status of SS
1 Government-Nationalised	Urdu medium	a prestigious locality	12-65	very good	girls only	lower and middle class
4 Government-Nationalised	Urdu medium	middle class area	27-55	good	boys only	lower and middle class
5 Government	Urdu medium	lower middle class area	38-93	not so good	girls only	lower and middle class
6 Government	Urdu medium	lower middle class area	47-74	not so good	boys only	lower and middle class
2 Private	English medium	middle class area	19-50	good	co-education	middle income
3 Private	English medium	middle class area	24-45	good	co-education	middle income

Table 3.1:   Different features of the six sites selected for the study

3.3 Gaining access to schools

3.3.1 Modes of negotiating access

Gaining access to schools is often considered a 'technical' process where one needs to be familiar with the hierarchical structure in the education system, such as, who to talk to for permission to conduct research. However, often when access has been negotiated through the official channel i.e., formal permission granted, relevant letters obtained,etc. the real process of gaining access begins (e.g. Porter:1984). This informal stage of gaining access (which does not necessarily follow the getting of formal permission from the official authorities) is more of a socio-cultural process which has to be negotiated by the researcher alone. (Others can help facilitate the process but basically it is the lone researcher who has to go through this process.) The only help available to the researcher at this stage is the accounts of other researchers and his/her own understanding of the norms of behaviour in the culture of the community in which he/she is working.

I was told that in order to gain access to government schools, I would first have to get permission from the Director of Schools. However, I was advised by an educationist friend that as this process would take a long time (it took me a week just to get an appointment to see the Director of Schools), I should simultaneously begin my research work in a 'good' government school where she knew the Head very well. As I went to the school with her letter of recommendation, I discovered that the Head had recently been promoted as District Education Officer and transferred to the district education office. However, when I met the new Headmistress, she seemed to be in an extremely buoyant mood.[10] It seemed that the Director of Schools, during a recent surprise visit to the school, had described it as 'excellent'. Moreover, the recent matriculation result

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[10]The Headmistress being a senior administrator knew the staff in the Directorate of Schools very well and later helped me in getting the letter of permission from the Directorate without further delay.

showed a hundred percent pass rate for students from this school. Hence feeling confident about the standards in her school, she agreed for me to visit the school to observe classes and talk to the teachers and learners.

After my meeting with the Director of Education, I was given a copy of the letter that had been issued to the eight District Education Officers (D.E.O) in Karachi, advising them to cooperate fully with me for my research. I was told that the next step would be to get a letter from the D.E.O in whose jurisdiction the school which I wanted to visit was located. I realised that this would entail a number of trips to the D.E.O's office and would consequently waste a lot of time. Also, after I visited two schools with a D.E.O (a friend's friend), I felt that the teachers identified me immediately with the government hierarchy. Thus though they were very polite, I knew I would not be able to build a relationship of trust with them. (I did not go back to these schools for my field work although I had been assured full 'cooperation' by the Heads.) Hence I decided to use more informal ways of gaining access through teacher friends who were known to me through the network of the Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers. Once I had negotiated with them, informally, to visit their schools they introduced me to their Heads and other colleagues in the staff room as a friend. I was asked only by one Head (out of the four government schools I visited) to get a letter of permission from the D.E.O. However, here also, I was assured that this was merely a formality and that I could begin my visit to the school whenever I wanted.

Thus my access to different schools was negotiated in a number of ways as follows:

1) Through a well-known educationist/friend of a friend (sites 1 & 5)

2) Through two teacher friends, who were senior teachers of English and who also enjoyed important positions in their schools i.e., language counsellor and teacher trainer (sites 2 and 4). They helped me in gaining cooperation from other staff members and allaying their fears about my role as a researcher. As they had agreed

for me to observe their classes also, it reassured other teachers who were less confident about their teaching skills.

3) On the basis of building up a general credibility as a person who had been allowed access to other schools and could, therefore, be trusted (site 6).

I was almost forced to select site 3 (the afternoon shift of site 2) after the management of the school suggested that I should visit classes in their afternoon shift school also (probably because the Head of the morning shift school, which I was visiting, felt marked in some way). However, this proved to be a blessing in disguise as later, when I realised that I would not be able to visit each school in three two-week cycles as originally planned, it gave me the idea of visiting two similar kinds of institutions in the same area and preferably housed in the same building. (See also chapter 2, section 2.7 on changes in research plan.)

One thing was particularly noticeable: The Heads of schools that were reputed to be 'good' were very concerned about keeping a 'front' and were, therefore, not happy for me to visit their school for a long period. In contrast, the schools which did not enjoy such a good reputation were more open in their attitude. This could be due to the fact that while the 'good' schools were concerned about protecting their reputation, showing their feet of clay, as it were, the latter did not have much at stake. However, the presence of the researcher in the 'not-so-good' schools seemed to cause stress for teachers in other ways; for example, they felt obliged to take their classes regularly during the period of my visit to their school. (I experienced a similar defensive attitude in teachers who were reputed to be 'good' teachers in each school.)

3.3.2 The initial meeting with teachers

As each school has a number of English teachers, I had originally planned to ask for two teacher volunteers after explaining my research plan to all the teachers in an introductory meeting. I found this impossible to do as, first of all, the logistics of organising a

meeting with all English teachers at any one time were daunting, to say the least. I discovered that teachers had a very busy schedule. If they were not teaching (which they were during most of the school day) they were busy correcting exercise books, doing substitute work for other teachers who were absent, or were otherwise engaged in some kind of administrative work.

Even if an introductory meeting with all the English teachers was arranged at my request (as in site 2), special arrangements had to be made by the Head for other teachers to 'keep busy' the classes of teachers who were with me in the meeting. This required the disruption of the normal teaching schedule and was resented by both the Head and other members of the staff who had to give up their free periods to do this extra duty. In fact it was because of this that the Head at site 2 was initially so wary about my visit to her school. She had arranged for me to meet all the English teachers during class hours. Not being familiar with the school routine and how teachers resent giving up their free periods (though I realise now that I should have known this), and after being reassured by the teachers that their classes were being looked after, I carried the meeting over two class periods discussing my research plan and answering teachers' questions. I discovered later that the Head had had to undergo great strain in arranging for other teachers to take the classes of the English teachers who were with me in the meeting.

Secondly, the fact that the meeting had been arranged at my request identified me with the administrators and put me into an evaluative role. As a result there was an immediate wave of doubt and suspicion about my role amongst the teachers. Also the general impression, at least in the beginning, was that a negative reporting from me might cost the teachers their jobs. Thus several teachers sent me a message, through my teacher friend at site 2, to not to be 'after their jobs'. (This was not a problem in government schools as the promotion of government school teachers depends on their years of service and consequently their position in the 'seniority list' rather than an evaluation of the quality of their teaching.) Thus instead of being helpful, the initial formal meeting with the teachers at site 2 reinforced my role as an outsider - as someone who was privileged enough to be

allowed access to their classrooms and who could, therefore, be identified with the administration and the 'high-ups', as described by one teacher.

Thirdly, when I discussed my research plan with the teachers in the introductory meeting (site 2 above) it proved intimidating for another reason also. I was told by my teacher friend, the next day, that the teachers were impressed with my 'knowledge' but that by discussing my research plan, I had inadvertently alienated myself from their 'culture', i.e., the culture of the practising teachers. Therefore, despite reassurances to the contrary, the general feeling amongst the teachers seemed to be that here was a researcher (an academic) from the university who wanted to observe their classes to find faults with their teaching. And of course no one was happy to be exposed in this way.

At site 4 my teacher friend also arranged for me to meet the teachers but only informally, during the recess, so that the teachers could get to know me before I went to observe their classes. At site 5, it was not possible for me to meet the teachers informally before beginning my visit to the school. Therefore, I just had to enter the system as a new teacher would, full of trepidation and uncertainty about whether I would be accepted or rejected by the teachers in the staff room. This was a very exhausting experience but my 'low-profile' helped me in gaining general acceptance. However, even though I was soon accepted as a conversational partner for small talk in the staff room, till the end of my visit I was no one's friend and very few confidences were exchanged with me about personal life. However, it was easier to be accepted at site 6 as, soon after I was introduced to a senior English teacher in the Head's office she seemed to take a liking to me and became my mentor of her own accord. Hence I was introduced in the staff room as her friend and was, therefore, quickly accepted by other teachers.

3.3.3 Efforts to come 'clean'

Another mistake I made during my visit to the first two schools was to put all the cards on the table at once (my intention to visit the school in three two-week cycles etc.) as a result of my belief in the ethics of coming 'clean' in ethnographic research. What I failed to

realise at that stage was that a discussion of the research plan could be intimidating in more ways than one. At site 1, my very 'open' discussion about my research plan with the Head did not do a lot of harm because, as mentioned earlier, the Head was feeling very confident about the excellent reputation of her school (and therefore a little reckless perhaps), particularly due to receiving favourable remarks from the Director of Schools during his recent visit to the school. In contrast, at site 2 my openness of attitude and willingness to share the details of the research plan with the teachers seemed to make them very uncomfortable and it was only, I think, by virtue of my teacher friend interceding on my behalf that I was not denied access to the school.

I learnt my lesson after this experience. After that whenever I went to any school, I simply asked for permission to visit the school for two weeks only, vaguely stating my objectives as 'to talk to teachers about their problems and visit their classrooms to look at learners' problems in learning English'. However, in each school visited, I categorically (and quite emphatically) made it clear both to the Heads and the teachers, that my role in the school would be non-judgemental and non-evaluative. Besides that I offered only as much information as was asked by different people and often, till the end of my visit, the teachers and learners had very little idea about my research interests. In fact once I was accepted as a 'friend', my research did not hold much interest for the majority of the teachers in the staff room.

The possibility of a second visit was mentioned only after I had gained a degree of trust in each school. This was usually at the end of my second week in the school. Then the possible dates for the second visit were negotiated with the Head, after first confirming the schedule of teaching and other activities in the school with the teachers.

There was no wilful deception intended on my part at any stage (cf. Burgess:1985b), but it seemed that I needed to get accepted as a non-threatening figure before the possibility of a longer association with the teachers and the institution could be discussed. And by the end of two weeks in each school, I was generally viewed as a nice sort of a

person - more like a friend than a stranger. This method of gaining access proved more useful than my earlier attempts to disclose my research plan etc. at the outset as it seemed to be less intimidating and more congruent with similar events (asking a friend for a favour) in the culture of the wider community.

3.3.4 Reciprocity in research

In the beginning, I also tried to put forward the possibility of 'research exchange' to the teachers - the idea that participation in the research process could also help them in their professional growth (Stenhouse:1975; Florio and Walsh:1981). This was regarded with a great deal of suspicion and seen by many teachers as an insincere move on my part. It seemed to be difficult for the teachers to imagine how *they* could gain from *my* research. Hence it was suggested that if I wanted their help to collect data for my thesis (i.e. come clean about my motives!) they would be willing to help me as they would help a friend. In fact some teachers who had done a project or a thesis for their higher degrees (M.A or M.Ed) realised just how difficult it was to collect data for research and were very sympathetic. Some even went to the extent of offering to do demonstration teaching for me so that I could get the required data. (See also section 3.4.3 on authenticity of data below.)

I felt that I owed something in return to the institutions that had allowed me to visit them for my research. Hence, right at the beginning of my visit I indicated to the Heads that I would be willing to offer a discussion-cum-workshop session for their teachers at the end of my field work. This offer was made formally through a letter at the end of my second visit to each school. However, it was taken up by the management of the private schools only. I was requested to keep the discussion at a general level as the school management did not want the teachers whose classes had been observed to feel 'victimised' in any way.

Thus I learnt, through bitter experience, that while trying to follow the modes of access described by different researchers, who were working, for example, in schools in

Britain (Ball:1984; Stenhouse:1984) - a socio-cultural context which is vastly dissimilar to that in Pakistan - I had almost become an 'alien' in my own culture. As a result, my initial modes of gaining access, which were not congruent with the socio-cultural traditions in Pakistani society, proved extremely frustrating instead of facilitating my access to schools in Pakistan. More importantly, they served to alienate me from my respondents. It was only after I started using culturally acceptable ways of gaining access as a 'friend' or a 'friend of a friend' that I was able to dispel the fears of the teachers and begin to be accepted as one of them.

3.3.5 Re-negotiating access in Phase II

I had assumed that once the fears of the teachers had been allayed in Phase I, I would be able to gain entry into the same institutions quite easily for Phase II of my research. Though, technically speaking, the official access to these institution caused no problems in Phase II, it seemed that teachers had to, once again, get used to having an observer in their classes. Their discomfort could also have been due to the pressure of the final exams building up (this certainly seemed to be true at site 6). The fact that teachers had to undergo a process of readjustment or 'accommodation' for my visit was clear when, after my second visit to a school was disrupted due to heavy rains, I suggested to my teacher friend that I could resume my visit to their school after completing my visits to other schools. However, she advised that it would be best for me to complete my work now, as teachers might not agree for me to visit their classes a third time.

During the second phase of my field work it was also very difficult to constantly have to change the schedule of my visits to different schools to fit in with the changing structure of events in these schools, such as, practice for the Inter-school sports competition. I also discovered that most of the schools functioned with a very roughly planned academic schedule. For example, no one was sure when the annual exams would be held and the usual reply was: in March or April. (According to the government notification the annual exams were to be held from 24 April but some Heads and teachers

told me they would hold their exams earlier.) I only had seven weeks before Ramadan was due to begin when, I was told, the school hours would be reduced (officially) and no regular teaching would take place (unofficially) in the schools. This made it very difficult to negotiate my visits to the schools in the second phase. Moreover, I often found that once I arrived in a school, there was disruption in the academic schedule for various reasons (see section 3.6.3 below).

3.4 The role of the researcher

In qualitative research the role of the researcher assumes great importance as he or she is the prime research instrument. The researcher takes on various membership roles from being a peripheral member to a complete participant (Adler and Adler:1987). He/she is both a 'friend' and a 'stranger'. As such the presence of the researcher not only influences the setting which he/she observes but the definition of his/her role by the participants can, to a large extent, affect the kind and quality of data collected. The perception of the role of the researcher is also related closely to the nature of the research environment in which he/she operates (see section 3.5 below).

As there are very well defined functional roles for the participants in a school, I seemed to be the only person 'hanging around' without any set role to perform. (Other researchers have also noted this problem, e.g., Ball:1984.) The possibility of the researchers' 'carving' out roles for themselves in such a situation has been suggested (Adler and Adler:1987). However, the limited time available in each school did not allow me to 'carve' a role for myself. Thus sometimes, during a conversation when someone spotted me sitting around, I was almost made to feel like an eavesdropper: 'Oh, you are also sitting here'. However, my marginal role also allowed me some privileges that were denied to the other participants such as, ease of going in and out of school at any time while the teachers had to stay till the end of the school day even if, as at one site, the learners had gone home in recess to watch the World Cup cricket match. Moreover, my punctuality (I was in school very early in the morning) and 'perseverance' won me

respect and admiration from the teachers. One teacher tried to rationalize it in terms of gain for the self, thus: 'We come early to school out of duty. You come because you have to do your thesis' (Research diary: 5.1.91).

3.4.1 Perceptions of the role of the researcher by stake holders

The perceptions of the participants about the role of the researcher were reflected, at each site, in their overall reactions to my visit to their school, but more importantly, in their response to my presence in the classrooms as well as the staff room in different schools. The varied perceptions of the role of the researcher by different stakeholders such as the Heads, teachers and learners are evident in the following discussion.

3.4.1.1 Perceptions of the Heads

Some Heads who felt that display teaching should be done (or would be done) by the teachers due to my presence in the classroom viewed my proposed visit as a source of disruption of normal teaching activity in their schools. One Head told me apologetically that if I found the performance of some teachers in her school 'less than perfect', I should remember that teachers were under great pressure generally ('some of them are also class teachers') and particularly during those days, due to extra duties in preparing the students for their annual sports day (Research diary: 13.11.91). (Incidentally the sports day was to be held at least two months after my proposed visit). At least some of the Heads felt obliged to ensure that all teachers took their classes regularly during the period that I was visiting their school (sites 2, 3, 5).

A few Heads were of the opinion that my visit could also have a positive effect on the teachers by making them prepare better for their lessons, thus: 'It will make our teachers work hard, make them more alert' (Research diary: 30.10.91).

Some Heads felt the need to put their best foot forward during my visit as they were suspicious of my 'telling tales' about their school. A striking example of this was when a Head stormed into the staff room one day, while a particularly lively (and noisy)

discussion was going on, to remind the teachers in a very stern tone, that they should not forget that there was a visitor amongst them. The teachers were advised to behave with decorum so that the visitor (referring to me) should leave with a good impression of their school. They were also reminded that visitors cannot be trusted as 'they can either be friends or enemies who have come to report on our weaknesses' (Research diary: 25.11.91). The same Head, who had recently been transferred to this school and was trying very hard to improve the image of the school, thanked me profusely at the end of my visit: 'Thank you for not telling tales about our school' (Research diary: 28.11.91).

3.4.1.2 Perceptions of the learners

The learners considered me an evaluator or an inspector in the beginning. The teachers felt in no hurry to dispel this idea as they thought that it would help in keeping them [the learners] quiet and well-behaved. Hence, the teachers preferred not to introduce me to the learners, despite my request for them to do so. When one teacher finally succumbed to my request, after three days, to tell the children that I was not there for inspection, a visible difference was noticeable in the classroom atmosphere. The teacher had felt it too because she commented after class, 'The children seemed happy to know that you were not an inspector' (Research diary: 8.1.91). Generally once the learners knew that I was not there to 'check' their classes, they seemed more relaxed and I also started getting more friendly smiles from them.

Moreover, once the learners were sure that I would not report on them, they began to trust me and did not mind my observing their class. There were instances when I observed learners, particularly those at the back of the class, using a 'guide book'.[11]

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[11] A guide book is like a 'key' to the answers to all the questions and exercises in the textbook. Till recently guide books were used by the students to prepare for board exams only, i.e., at the matriculation and tertiary level. However, during my school visits, I discovered that guide books were now available for all course books used in private schools also. I observed the learners using guidebooks in the classroom in different kinds of schools at all levels, usually in an effort to participate in classroom activities, which were mainly of the type,' Teacher asks set questions from the textbook

While they would try to hide the guide book from the teacher, they would give me an embarrassed smile when I spotted them using it, while continuing to do so. Soon, I was welcomed profusely in their classes and I also started getting invitations from other learners, whose classes I was not observing, to visit their classes also. Once when a teacher was absent I got permission from the Head to go to her class instead, to 'talk to the learners' and was greatly touched to see written in bold letters on the blackboard: 'Welcome to Miss Fauzia'. The learners greeted me warmly when we sometimes met in the corridors or in the ground outside. They gave me flowers and asked for my autograph. Indeed in one class I was even 'invited', though not explicitly, to become their ally against the teacher (site 2).

Once the learners were convinced that I was not in their classes for inspection, they wondered if I was visiting their school for my B.Ed teaching practice. (I learnt later that these were the only two 'outsider' roles that the learners were familiar with in the context of their school situation.)[12] Not being sure of my status, they did not always stand up when I entered the class though it was compulsory to do so for a teacher. Whenever a 'critical incident' took place in the class e.g., a student was punished by the teacher, there were surreptitious glances in my direction to see my reaction to the event.

At some sites the role identification (Who is a researcher?) finally took place in relation to a leading character (a woman researcher) in a popular T.V. series called 'Tan Sain'. (I was referred to as 'Miss Tan Sain' by a group of students at one site). Also some learners asked me, 'Are you writing a book?' In answer to my question, 'How do

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- students answer'. I was told that guide books were used widely by teachers also, particularly by those teachers who had a low proficiency in English.

[12]One group of learners in case 2 actually went to the Head to find out whether their teacher, who they all seemed to like a lot, was leaving and if I was going to take her place.

you know?' there was an embarrassed (sometimes cheeky) answer: 'Because she (the woman researcher in the television programme) is also writing a book in 'Tan Sain'.'

Though generally there was a great deal of curiosity about my person (e.g., my age, whether I was married or not, where I lived etc.) and what I wrote while observing their classes, the need to identify my role became so urgent in one case that a group of learners started their own investigation about my personal history. Thus one learner changed his regular place in the class to sit next to me for a few days. When someone in the class asked me anything about my background he would assure them, with a knowing look, that he would tell them about it later. He asked me, on the last day of my visit to their school, if I had assumed a 'fake persona' (referring to my low profile) for my research, so as not to appear threatening to my respondents. He confessed that some learners had actually followed me to my house as part of their research on my person.

The warm welcome awarded to me by the learners during the second phase of my fieldwork more than compensated for the guarded welcome given by the teachers. It seems that the learners had accepted me as a friend. For example: one day one of the teachers went to warn a class that someone else would be taking their class that day instead of their teacher who was absent, and that they should, therefore, put their chairs straight and behave properly. However, when the students learnt that it was no other person than 'Miss Fauzia', they did not seem overly anxious about making preparations for the visitor. This worried the teacher because she construed this 'familiar' behaviour of the learners as a mark of disrespect for me and reported it to their teacher the next day. Though the students' acceptance of my role as a friend made it difficult for me to maintain discipline in the class during the absence of their teacher, it showed they had begun to treat me as an 'equal' rather than someone who was superior in status. When I asked the students, during their interviews, about how they perceived my role as an observer in their classroom, they told me that they did not even realise any more that an outsider was sitting in their class: 'It's like you are just another friend' (LI 3.4.1). However, some

learners admitted that, in the beginning, they were more conscious of my presence and wanted to leave a good impression on me.

The students often invited me to teach them a lesson especially if a teacher was absent. However, I never took this offer and went to a class to 'talk to the students' only after I had taken prior permission from the Head or been told by the absentee teacher to do so. I was careful not to 'teach' as I felt that it would make the students compare me both favourably and unfavourably with their own teachers, but spent the class hour encouraging them to ask me questions or playing a language game. One student, who was very bright and was also the class monitor, asked me several times to join their school as a teacher. Finally she seemed to work out the reason for my continuously evading the issue: (It's because) 'You'll be paid less in a school' (Research diary: 19.1.92). After my visit to one school was over, the learners told their teacher, 'We knew she [a university teacher] wouldn't stay in our school', implying a mismatch between the students' 'low' and my relatively 'high' status (Research diary: 26.10.91).

3.4.1.3   Perceptions of the participating teachers

The teachers' perception of the role of the researcher, at least in the beginning at each site, was that the researcher was either an evaluator or an 'expert' in the field as she had been allowed access to the private domain of their classrooms. In either case, I was seen as someone who was there to evaluate the performance of the teachers in order to report it to the higher authorities. This was evident in the questions that were asked by the teachers. For example:

- What will you judge?
- Who will you report to?
- Do you want to come and check my class also?

As soon as the teachers cast me into the role of an evaluator they felt the need for 'display' teaching, consequently leading to a lot of stress for them. The following dialogue was overheard in the staff room between two teachers at one site:

Do we need to teach B.Ed style?[13]

'You can't teach that way for two weeks.' (Research Diary: 5.1.91)

Fortunately the fears of the majority of teachers were soon dispelled.

Teachers sometimes felt obliged to change their teaching style (e.g., use more innovative techniques) due to my presence in their class. It seems that the students were quick to notice this change in their teachers' behaviour. For example, one teacher told me that some students in her class asked her, after Phase I of my visit was over: 'Miss, now that Miss Fauzia [the visitor] is not here, can we stop this business of newspapers (she had used newspapers to teach passive voice during my visit) and get on with some real work', i.e., preparation for their matriculation exams (Research diary: 26.10.91).

Teachers also felt obliged to be more punctual and to take their classes more regularly during the period of my visit. This proved to be a source of great stress for teachers who were either in the habit of going late for their classes or sometimes missed them altogether. At site 6, the teachers in the staff room joked about this and urged me to stay longer in their school, 'Only if to make Mr. Mughal more regular in taking his classes'. At another site, a teacher was extremely grateful when I told her she should not feel obliged to take her class because of me. (She was the assistant mistress of one of the four houses in the school and wanted to coach her students for the forthcoming inter-house throw ball match during that period.) However, when she went to tell the Head about this, the Head insisted that she should take her class probably because I was still there. Later, I was not surprised when she wore a sullen look and shouted at the children through most of the class hour.

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[13]This refers to the style of teaching that is recommended during the B.Ed (initial teacher training) course. This qualification is a pre-requisite for getting a job in the government sector. However, the majority of teachers considered this training totally irrelevant to their present teaching-learning situation and used the 'B.Ed style' of teaching for 'demonstration' purposes only, particularly on the day of the annual inspection.

As mentioned earlier, at first there was great doubt and suspicion amongst the teachers about my role. However, later, though their initial fears were greatly allayed some teachers still seemed to be under constant pressure during my visit. Farhana, a new teacher, was literally counting the days, I was told, for my visit to be over. She was absent for two or three days during my first visit and told me later that she did not want me to think it was because of my observing her classes (in fact, her mother was very ill). The teachers, generally, were highly apologetic for their learners' low proficiency in English. Moreover, their own insecurity seemed to stem largely from what they considered to be their 'lacks' i.e., their low proficiency in English, and lack of confidence in their own teaching skills and/or the uncertainty about whether they were using the 'right' teaching methods or not.

Teachers used different ways of showing their resentment to my presence in their class, e.g., quietly slipping to their class when we were together in the staff room, changing their class time without informing me, or leaving the class quickly at the end of the class period without waiting for me to join them. This usually happened on days when they were ill prepared for the class, the lesson had not gone well, or they felt obliged to teach because of me. Fortunately, this was a constant pattern only with one teacher who told me, pointedly, one day, 'Why don't you visit other teachers' classes also?' (site 5)

Sometimes my informal discussion with teachers also seemed to lead to their having a heightened awareness about various aspects of their teaching. There was at least one teacher who, after we had talked about opportunities that students get by virtue of sitting in the front or back of the class, spent an entire class period trying to teach reading aloud to a student from the back row while the other students had a field day. It was a very painful process both for the teacher and the learner and it was quite clear that it had never been done before. The teacher told me after the class with a 'I told you so' look that

students at the back did not volunteer to answer questions or participate in classroom activities in any way because they were very weak.

Generally, as mentioned earlier, teachers who were reputed to be 'good' were under greater pressure, just like Heads of good schools, as they were concerned about protecting their reputation. I found that the majority of teachers in government schools were more open and willing for me to observe their classes and to discuss their problems, particularly when they did not have either their own or their school's reputation at stake.

Like the learners above, many teachers found it very difficult to combine the two sides of my personality i.e., my credentials (a university professor, working for her Ph.D) and my very low profile in the staff room. I took special care to dress up in such a way that I didn't appear very smart or fashionable but kept to 'the middle ground'. The teachers at each site were very surprised to see me wearing a 'chaddar'[14] the first day. However, it seemed to help them to identify with me more easily as it showed two things about me: 1) Despite being a university teacher I did not belong to the elite class and was, therefore, not very different from them, and 2) I had a respect for traditional values. Hence I was seen as a person who could be trusted. I also began to keep track of popular T.V programmes (it provided a good topic of conversation in the staff room) and picked up local speech patterns (e.g. referring to the Head as 'Head Sir') which often made the people remark in disbelief: 'You seem to be one of us'. However, they often reminded each other of my other 'researcher' role: 'Don't tell her all the secrets of our school' (site 5), 'You are telling her all our secrets' (site 6). My outsider status was also emphasized in other small discrete behaviours in the staff room, for example, when remarks such as the following were addressed to me, 'Teachers don't talk like that in the University (a teacher referring to a particularly noisy argument in the staff room)' (site 5).

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[14]A "chaddar", which literally means a big sheet of cloth, is used by women in Pakistan to cover themselves when they go out of their house. It is used mostly by women from middle class and lower middle class families and symbolises female modesty and conservatism in values.

3.4.1.4 Perceptions of other teachers and school personnel

Some teachers deliberately chose to misunderstand my role in the school. For example: one day when one of the teachers talked excitedly in the staff room about how her students had responded so well that day, 'probably because Fauzia was there', her friend told me sarcastically that I should perhaps *teach* that class every day so as to keep the learners active. However, being the assistant mistress in the school, she knew perfectly well (this was confirmed by my teacher friend later) that I was *not* teaching but only observing classes in their school.

Sometimes when I went to a school, there was an initial excitement amongst the teachers with their wanting to tell me all their problems (e.g., site 5). This turned later to 'benign neglect' (Delamont:1984) after I was accepted in the staff room.

The teachers in the staff room were generally willing to accept me as their friend or their friend's friend though, in the latter case, some of them were unhappy at the amount of time/attention their friend was giving me both inside and outside the staff room. It was common to hear them complain jokingly to their friend, 'These days you don't have any time for us', or 'Oh! Fauzia is here today. No wonder we haven't seen you since morning'. (Research Diary: 11.2.92)

The non-teaching staff in the school (cleaners etc.) considered me either a new teacher, 'one of us' (site 6), or a visitor from the district education office.

3.4.2 Ways of building trust with participating teachers

I used a number of ways to build a relationship of trust with participating teachers. Thus when teachers showed a curiosity about what I wrote while observing their classes, I offered to share my observation notes with them. Some of them showed surprise at the 'accuracy' of my account ('The class seems to be taking place all over again'), while others felt a bit disconcerted at the number of things I had noted. However, they

generally felt relieved at the non-evaluative nature of my observation notes. Interestingly, none of the teachers showed any interest in reading or discussing my observation notes more than once.

I was often asked the question, both by the Heads and teachers in the staff room: 'What do you think of our English teachers?'; 'What is your opinion about the standard of English teaching in our school?'; 'How do you find our school in comparison to other schools you have visited?' etc. However, I felt that it was more of a ploy to 'test' my trustworthiness than a genuine interest in finding out the state of English Language Teaching in their institution. Hence, I became adept at using evasive strategies and/or some stereotype 'diplomatic' answers when I was unsuccessful in avoiding the issue altogether.

I refused quite openly to share the views expressed by the students, in their interviews, with their teachers who often asked me to do so. This was, perhaps, reassuring for the teachers in that they felt that the information they had given me would also be kept confidential as promised.

3.4.3 Authenticity of data

The idea for teachers to continue to teach normally, while I was collecting my data, was something I found most difficult to put across to both the Heads and the participating teachers. Some of the teachers did not seem convinced till the end and tried to do display teaching whenever possible . However, interestingly when they did this they told me how they would have taught the same lesson under 'normal' circumstances.

I discovered that display teaching was done for a number of reasons: 1) because the teachers wanted to try a new technique and felt reassured by my presence (Nighat, site 2), 2) they wanted to display their knowledge of a particular technique for me (Salima, site 4), or 3) they did not want me to feel bored (Mr.Harris, site 3; Bina, site 2). That the teachers felt a 'moral responsibility' to keep me sufficiently entertained during their

lessons was brought forth when Bina apologised to me for repeating one lesson in her second group on the same day. Thus I discovered that for the last three days she had been making an extra effort to do different things with the two groups so that I should not feel bored.

Sometimes teachers seemed to feel a sense of guilt if they thought that their lesson had not provided any 'data' for me. For example, one day one teacher decided, on the spur of the moment, as we were attending a birthday party of a girl in her class during recess, that she would ask the students to write about 'Farah's birthday party' in her next class which was immediately after the break. After the class, she told me that she had been feeling very bad about this decision throughout the class period as 'there was such little [observable] activity going on in the class'. She said, however, that she had felt slightly reassured when she saw me writing as profusely as I did in her other classes. She was curious to see my notes and after reading them said, 'You note so many things that I'm not even aware of in class' (Research Diary: 13.2.92).

Teachers also referred, in their interview, to their problems in large classes etc. with reference to one or more lessons that I had observed in their classes. Thus it seemed that they found it easier to talk to me about these issues due to my 'insider' knowledge of teaching and learning in their classrooms than it would have been if I had been an 'outsider' in regard to my lack of familiarity with their teaching-learning situation. Also it helped me to view the classroom events in terms of the teachers' definition of the situation rather than my own knowledge of ELT concepts, such as peer correction, which were interpreted differently by different teachers.

Regarding learner interviews, the teachers felt happier if they were asked to select the students for the interview. Hence teachers in each class were requested to identify a group of 'average' ability students for the purpose of the interview. It turned out that the selected students were invariably the best students in the class. Though it was possible to ask for student volunteers the second time round, i.e., if more than one group of learners

were interviewed from the same class, once again the students who volunteered were usually the 'better' students from the front of the class (cf. chapter 8). Once an effort was made by the researcher to select students from different parts of the classroom, i.e., both the front and back rows. However, during the interview the students from the back rows were either very quiet and unwilling to talk or simply agreed with everything said by the other students. Similarly the efforts to hold separate interviews for groups of students from the back rows only did not meet with success as these students were generally very shy and lacking in confidence to agree to be interviewed. However, informal talk with the students in the back rows (during classroom observation the researcher always sat at the back of the classroom) confirmed most of the things mentioned by the teachers and other students in group interviews, such as problems in large classes (cf. chapter 5 and 8).

The students were careful at the beginning of the interview not to say anything against their teachers. (In fact, my first question encouraged them to say positive things only: 'Tell me three things you like about your English class'.) They were also assured that the information would not be shared with their teachers. The interviews were conducted in a very informal manner with the talk flowing freely and I simply followed the cues from the learners. Although I had the questions in front of me to remind me of some essential areas I needed to talk about, I tried my best not to use the paper. By this time, i.e. my second visit to each school, I was also more familiar with their classroom situation and found it easy to share jokes, give a humorous comment etc. which helped to ease the situation. We tried to sit in a small circle, wherever possible, with a small tape recorder in the middle which no one seemed to notice after the first few minutes. Also, it was quite easy to draw out the learners from a class, after getting the permission of their teachers, most of whom I had come to know quite well by then. Even if the bell rang for the next class period the learners invariably showed their readiness to carry on with the interview, if required. Some learners in the first group from each class were a little apprehensive about what kinds of questions would be asked but the next groups, who

had presumably learnt from earlier groups that it was after all safe to be interviewed, were more at ease. Perhaps it was due to the gender of the researcher that the girls were more forthcoming and willing to talk than the boys who were more shy and reticent (contrary to their popular image in Pakistani society).

3.5 The research environment in Pakistan and its implications for data collection

Vulliamy (in Vulliamy et al.:1990) has noted the relative absence of a qualitative research tradition in developing countries (see also Shaeffer and Nkinyangi:1983). Moreover, most of the research in developing countries is either undertaken by aid agencies or individual researchers from the developed 'West'. This creates a suspicion regarding the motives of the outside researcher (cf. Lewin in Vulliamy et al.:1990). Research by indigenous researchers is still rare in developing countries and very few published accounts of these efforts are available (e.g., Lewin and Stuart:1991). Thus, it is still unknown whether the implementation of research strategies in the qualitative tradition, which focus more on the interpersonal and 'human' aspects of the relationship between the researcher and the respondents, are universal or specific to the context in which the research is undertaken. However, in the light of my experience I feel that researchers, particularly indigenous researchers, need to adapt the more 'universal' techniques in qualitative inquiry to their specific socio-cultural setting. At the same time they need to develop further strategies for ethnographic investigation in response to the 'environment' or the 'culture' in which the research is being conducted.

3.5.1 Participants' perception of the nature and purpose of research

In the context of the research environment in Pakistan, it seemed that, firstly, the participants were familiar only with the survey type of research. This kind of research where the focus is on finding out 'How much?' and 'How many?' rather than 'Who does what?' and 'Why?' (which usually informs the quest of qualitative researchers) is also

relatively non-threatening as it provides the anonymity of numbers. Thus, when I visited different schools, the usual expectation was that I would visit the school for a couple of days, administer some questionnaires and leave. However, the proposed length of my visit (two weeks) immediately put everyone on guard because of the difficulty of 'keeping a front' for so long. I was repeatedly asked why I could not get all my data in a few days or a week's time. The other suspicion was about the kind of data I would be collecting (if there were no questionnaires) during my two-week visit to each institution. Another expectation was that I would be visiting a number of schools which, once again, would have lent a degree of anonymity to the participants. Following are some of the 'nagging' questions which were asked repeatedly during my field work:

1) Why have you chosen our school?

2) What can you find out by observing our classes?

3) How many more days will you be coming?

4) How many other schools have you visited/will be visiting?

These questions seemed to be a part of the attempt made by the participants to make 'sense' of the nature and purpose of my research.

Secondly, due to a lack of any research tradition in schools in Pakistan, the participants could understand the purpose of my research only in terms of self-enhancing, i.e., as a means of getting my degree or as a way of enhancing my professional career. The usefulness of research for feeding into policy decisions was spurned openly ('Do you think the government will pay heed to your research findings?') while the role of research in extending knowledge was clearly a new idea. Similarly, the teachers could not see the relevance of my research (or any research, for that matter) for their immediate classroom practice.

3.5.2 Importance of finding mentors/patrons

Though mentors presumably facilitate the process of access in all cultures (anthropologists frequently mention the importance of finding key informants)[15], the importance of finding mentors seemed extremely important in the socio-cultural context in Pakistan. In a place where the culture of research is almost non-existent (particularly qualitative research) I could not assume the role of a 'professional' researcher as recommended by Walker (1980). In fact, as mentioned above, the role of the researcher was suspect in most cases. In contrast, the role of a friend is not only recognised socially but there is a general tradition of doing 'favours' for friends without expecting anything in return. Hence I was able to collect 'rich' data in the three schools in which I found mentors or patrons (sites 2,4 and 6) rather than in those places where I was left to fend for myself after the initial recommendations. The presence of the mentors facilitated the process of data collection in various ways, for example: finding a place for me to conduct interviews (often there was just no quiet place available in the whole school to conduct the interviews); reminding me of norms of behaviour ('The Head Sir was asking after you'); 'getting' students for me for interviews as at site 6 where most of the learners, particularly during Phase II, usually went home much earlier than the scheduled time for the school to be over; advising me and negotiating on my behalf with the Head and other teachers.

It seems that the teachers had to define my role and categorise me in some familiar 'role' before they could interact with me freely. They seemed to find it easier to accept me as an 'equal' if I was introduced as a friend or a friend's friend. At site 5, I was under great stress as I was no one's friend i.e., not 'adopted' by anyone in the staff room, though the two assistants to the Head were very helpful.[16]

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[15]See also Burgess (1985c).

[16]A bond of solidarity developed immediately with one of them when she came to know that I was teaching in the English department at Karachi University as her son was

3.5.3 Balancing power relationships during the field visits

For me the balancing of relationships between the different power structures in the school (Head, teachers, students) was very exhausting and gave me the feeling of always walking on a tight rope - one false move and the whole game would be over. It required a great deal of interpersonal skills and I had to be constantly aware of the norms of interaction in the school, such as: 'How often and for what reasons do teachers visit the Head's office?' and 'How are frequent visitors to the Head's office viewed by other teachers?' Thus I discovered that visiting the Heads' office too frequently would alienate me from the teachers while the 'normal' demands of courtesy required me to see the Head occasionally as a mark of respect for his/her authority.

The teachers were also conscious of my popularity with the learners despite the fact that as a learner complained, 'We never get an opportunity to talk to you outside class'. A teacher rationalised it thus: 'You're not like other teachers who are always punishing and beating them' (Research Diary: 14.1.92).

Once, while the class was going on, a student at the back offered me sweets that he was eating. This was interpreted as a mark of disrespect for me by other students in the class who consequently reported it to the class teacher. The teacher told me later that the miscreant had been punished for his misbehaviour with me the previous day. This distressed me greatly as I seemed to have betrayed the student in some way.

In the light of the above discussion it can be said that the process of research comprises both techniques, which can be found in methods books, as well as an

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also doing his masters from the same department. Though I did not know her son at all, she brought his photographs to show me the next day, and after that never failed to talk about the university whenever we met. Similarly the fact that the son of the headmaster at one of the sites was also a lecturer in the university helped to build my credentials with him rather quickly.

individual interpretation and implementation of these techniques in different research environments. I believe that we, as researchers, should continue to discuss (and compare) the universal or the 'eco-transferable' aspects of our research experience. At the same time, however, we need to highlight the issues which seem to be 'eco-specific' (cf. Holliday:1991c) or particular to the socio-cultural context of a research setting.[17] This is necessary for improving the validity and reliability of our qualitative data.

3.6 Some other factors affecting data collection

3.6.1 The importance of stages in access and methods to match

According to Woods (1986) there are different thresholds or stages in access and it is important to match research methods to the stage of access reached in a particular situation. When I visited the first school I realised that a pre-observation interview would only get me stock responses at the most.[18] So I decided to conduct the first interview with the teachers during the first week of my visit . However, I did not use a tape recorder as by that time we were still at the first level of access and the participants were wary of providing any hard data that might be used to their discredit. In contrast, by the second week of my visit, a degree of trust had begun to develop between us and the teachers happily agreed to my using a tape recorder for the second interview. However, I still got very stereotyped answers from one of the teachers at site 6. This was probably because I did not have an opportunity to reach the 'second order' stage with her as she taught in the afternoon shift.[19] (It was easier for me to reach this stage with the teachers

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[17] Holliday (1991c) discusses the process of introducing innovations in his curriculum development project at the Centre for Development of English Language Teaching at Ain-Shams University, Egypt, in terms of aspects that are 'eco-transferable', i.e., they can be used in other situations also, and those that are 'eco-specific' or particular to the socio-cultural context in which the project was developed.

[18] As mentioned earlier, there were other logistical problems in arranging pre and post observation interviews also.

[19] At site 6 due to shortage of rooms classes VIII-X were held in the morning shift while classes VI and VII were held in the afternoon shift. I stayed on in the school, after the morning shift was over, only to observe her class which was held in the first period of the afternoon shift.

in the morning shift because I met them informally in the staff room everyday and we often shared jokes over a cup of tea during the recess.)

During the first week at each site it seemed that anything said to me by any teacher or vice versa was reported to the Head. For example, one teacher had complained to me in the staff room about the noise outside her classroom. (The students played football in the ground just outside her class and if the door was left open due to hot weather, the ball often came into the classroom along with the noise.) Next day she told me that it had been overheard by someone and reported to the Head who had taken exception to it and conveyed her unhappiness to her about discussing these problems with an 'outsider'. This did not seem to be a problem after the first few days in each school.

Regarding learner interviews I asked the teachers at site 1, during the first week of my visit to their school, if I could talk to some of the students in their classes. This, I realised later, was a mistake as teachers were still extremely suspicious of what information the learners would disclose to me and how this information would be used. I had mentioned this to the teachers very casually during our conversation in the staff room but one of the teachers reminded me the next morning in her class and instructed two students (who, I learnt later, were the brightest girls in class and also class monitors): 'Go and sit with Miss Fauzia. She wants to ask you some questions and take your copies [exercise books] with you in case she wants to look at them also'. The girls were clearly bewildered but did as they were told and came to sit next to me at the back of the class (their usual place was in the front row).

After the class, we went to the library for the interview. However, even before I had started asking any questions the two girls began to sing praises of their teachers, particularly their English teacher. The girls seemed so careful about telling me anything that when I assured them that any information they provided me would be kept confidential one of them said quite aggressively, 'We are not saying anything about which we need to be worried'. I soon gave up the idea of interviewing them. Instead we

spent the next half hour discussing my 'motives' for visiting their school and also chatting about some popular T.V programmes. This seemed to put them at ease and by the end of the 'session', they seemed less suspicious of my motives and more willing to 'talk' to me, though informally only. However, by the end of my second visit to their school they had developed such a degree of trust in me that one of the same girls invited me to join their school as a teacher. When I tried to avoid the issue by telling her that it was very difficult to get jobs these days, she replied indignantly: 'If they can take Miss Farhat [their English teacher] they can certainly take you'.

In contrast, negotiating learner interviews was much easier during my second visit to each school when the learners clearly welcomed an opportunity to talk to me and the teachers were confident that even if the students said negative things about their performance, it would not be reported to anyone.

3.6.2 The role of luck and chance

The role of luck and chance in research has been discussed by Ball (1983). It seemed to have important implications for the kind and amount of data collected in the present study also. For example, despite my initial abortive attempts to put across the idea about the professional development of teachers as a result of participating in the research process, I decided to propose teacher-researcher collaboration to at least two teachers (sites 2 and 4) who have a good background in English Language Teaching and who were very enthusiastic about introducing changes in their classrooms (see chapter 9). However, my visits to their institutions seemed wrongly timed, more by luck and chance than any lack of planning on my part. For example, during my first visit to Nighat's school, she was worried about the teacher training course she had recently been asked to run by her District Education Officer for teachers of English in her district and which was due to begin the next week. However, during my second visit, she agreed to write her lesson plans and share them with me before her class. We also found some time later to compare notes and talk about reasons for certain decisions she had taken before and

during the class. (These discussions were also tape recorded.) Unfortunately my second visit to her school was cut short due to heavy rains in the city. Despite that, in the light of our mutual discussions earlier, she agreed to co-present with me a seminar on Large classes for the monthly academic session of SPELT (Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers). She clearly considered this as professional development for her which took place as a result of participating in the research process (personal communication).

In the case of Bina, the second teacher, we were able to hold one discussion session only.[20] She had had some personal problems at home during my first visit and her brother arrived from the U.S for a short stay during my second visit to their school. Thus she could not find time to formally plan her lessons or discuss them with me later.

3.6.3 Unforseen circumstances

There were several disruptions in the academic schedule due to unforseen circumstances, such as:

1) Annual inspection of schools (sites 1 and 4)

2) Schools becoming exam centres (sites 1 and 6)

3) Extra-curricular activities, for example, sports (sites 2, 3 and 5) and the school picnic (site 5)

4) Preparation for practical exams of classes IX and X which were scheduled to begin from 14 April,1992 (site 6)

5) Natural elements, i.e., heavy rains in the city (site 4)

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[20]This discussion, which was also recorded, was about two lessons based on a reading text from the prescribed textbook, which she had given to her 'smaller' and 'large' class on the same day.

There were also some incidents of 'subject mortality' in Phase II of the research due to changes in the timetable (site 4) or personal reasons (one teacher broke her leg, Farhana went on leave as her mother was ill (site 4), Sheeba left school to study for her A level exams (site 3) etc.).

3.7 Summary and conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the socio-cultural dimension of the research process and also to raise some issues for consideration in regard to doing qualitative research in developing countries. I began by describing my 'individual' adaptations of some universal issues in qualitative inquiry such as, the selection of sites and gaining access to different sites in the field. Next, the role of the researcher, as perceived by different stakeholders, was described. This was followed by a discussion of some characteristic features of the research environment in Pakistan (where the present investigation was undertaken) and their significance for the kind and quality of data collected during fieldwork. They are: the participants' perception of the nature and purpose of research, the importance of finding mentors, and an intimate knowledge of the norms of behaviour in the immediate educational context as well as the community outside for balancing of power relationships in the field. Some other factors, such as the role of luck and chance (which have also been noted by other researchers) were also mentioned for their effect on the process of data collection.

To conclude, the process of qualitative research is characterised by specific 'techniques/methods' of research but, more importantly, by the individual interpretation and implementation of these techniques in varied research settings. Thus while it is useful to discuss and develop the 'universal' aspects of our research methodology, it is essential, in my opinion, to continue to share our individual experiences in the field in order to enhance our understanding of different socio-cultural contexts and their implications for the collection and interpretation of our data.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT IS A LARGE CLASS?

4.1 Introduction

Before any discussion can take place on the phenomenon of large classes, it is essential to look at what counts as a large class and what are the determinants of participants' perception of their classes as 'large', 'very large' etc. In this chapter I will begin by looking at the different ways in which 'large' and 'small' classes have been defined by researchers and practitioners in different educational contexts. Secondly, I will present the results of a survey of teachers' experience and perceptions of class size at varying levels in both government and private schools in Pakistan. Thirdly, an alternative approach to defining class size, which was used for the present study, will be described along with sample responses from teachers and learners. Finally, the likely determinants of participants' perception of class size will be discussed.

4.2 Problem of defining 'small' and 'large' classes

Class size has been defined variously by researchers and practitioners in the field. Often, 'small' and 'large' are defined arbitrarily in relative terms as difference in numbers, for research purposes. Thus sometimes they overlap in different studies. Moreover, there is a great variation in teachers' perceptions of 'small' and 'large' in different educational contexts and also at different levels within the same teaching-learning situation. Thus what might be a small class for one teacher/researcher may be seen as a large group by other teachers and researchers.

4.2.1 Definition of 'small' and 'large' in class size studies

Glass et al. (1982) observed that 'smaller' and 'larger' is a relational property of the class sizes in a comparison which has no absolute meaning. They found a great deal of

variation in the definition of 'small' and 'large' classes in different studies of class size, thus:

> ... in one study in which classes of 30 and 50 were compared, S=30 and L=50; in another study in which classes of 20 and 30 were compared, S=20 and L=30 (p. 44).

Consequently in their meta-analysis, in some comparisons, classes of 24-34 students were considered 'large' while in others the same size classes were treated as 'small' against 'large' classes of 35 students or more. However, it is significant that the largest class did not exceed 40 in most of the studies.

Wright et al. (1977) studied the effects of four class sizes (16, 23, 30 and 37) on teachers' expectations, the attitudes and opinions of participants, students' achievement in different subjects and a variety of classroom variables such as, teacher-pupil interaction. They provide a detailed rationale for selecting different class sizes for the study; but the perception of 'small' and 'large' is based mainly on received wisdom instead of any objective criteria that could be applied uniformly in other educational contexts also:[1]

> The four sizes were spaced to permit some variation due to transfers. The size 40, which has very negative connotations, is avoided. The largest class size, however, would be larger than 35. This size is found sometimes in Toronto elementary classes, although administrators call it 'large' and 'more than desirable.' Class size 30 appears to be a common size. On the other hand, it was felt that teachers saw a class size of 25 or smaller as ideal, and the Columbia Teachers College studies on 'quality of education' suggest that 25 is a size below which quality increases. The smallest class size was debated at some length; the feeling was that a class must have fewer than 20 pupils to be 'small.' It seemed that the study would appear incomplete if a size this small were not included (pp. 36-37).

However, in most of the studies on class size, no justification is provided for choosing one rather than another number as a unit of analysis.

Thus if 'small' can be any number from 1 as in the 1-1 group for individual instruction (Moody et al.:1972) to 34 and 'large' can vary from 2 (see Glass et al.:1982:43) to 2000 students as at Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok

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[1] See also the survey of class size conducted by the National Union of Teachers in schools in UK in September 1991.

(Pengpanich:1991), it is not surprising that research findings have failed to show conclusively the effect of class size as a key variable in learning.

4.2.2 Practitioners' definition of 'small' and 'large' classes

McGee defines a 'mass' class in terms of absolute numbers as:

> . . . one with an enrollment exceeding 250 students who meet together as a class group at least part of the time. One could argue that any class exceeding one hundred enrollments, or even seventy-five, is, in effect a mass class, and indeed classes of such size share some of the characteristics of larger ones. (p. 2)

His definition of a 'large' class derives from his experience of teaching large groups for a number of years. On the other hand, Weimer (1987) in the introduction to her book 'Teaching Large Classes Well' defines a large class as one with 100 students. However, the basis for this decision is neither identified nor discussed.

The Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project, in its initial years, focussed largely on ascertaining 'How large is large?' on the basis of teachers' experience and perception of classes of varying size. However, the results of the numbers questionnaire developed by the research group and administered extensively to groups of teachers in different countries have established quite clearly that teachers' perception of class size varies from country to country and at different levels within the same country. Thus, 'There is no evidence that teachers share a universal conception of the size of the ideal, large and small classes' (Coleman:1989c:35). Consequently Coleman (op. cit.) calls for studying large classes both across different educational contexts (horizontally) and at different levels i.e., vertically, within the same teaching-learning situation.

4.3 Defining 'large' classes in Pakistan: A preliminary survey

Husain and Sarwar (1989) in their discussion of the English Language Teaching scene in Pakistan, identify large classes as one of the eight factors affecting the current ELT situation in Pakistan. They point out that:

... large numbers of students are a reality that will remain so for a long time to come. The need then is for innovative classroom management techniques ... rather than expecting class numbers to go down (p. 11).

Similarly, Sarwar (1991) identifies large classes as one of the three major problems in the teaching and learning of English in Pakistan. Thus, in order to find out the extent of the phenomenon of large classes in Pakistan, a slightly modified version of the Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project's numbers questionnaire (see appendix 4) was administered to teachers at all levels in some major cities in Pakistan. The purpose of the study was to find out (1) teachers' experience and perception of varying size classes in Pakistan; and (2) the extent to which large classes are perceived as a problem by these teachers.[2] In particular, the study aimed to find out teachers' experience of the largest and smallest class taught, their usual class size, their ideal class size, and the numbers at which classes are perceived by the teachers as 'large' and 'intolerably large', and 'small' and 'intolerably small'. Furthermore, the survey was undertaken to provide comparative data about varying size classes at different levels and in different types of institutions (government or private sector) within the relatively homogeneous educational environment in Pakistan. It was hoped that this data could then be compared to similar data from other developing countries to find out the similarities and differences in teachers' experience and perception of class size across different educational contexts.

4.3.1 Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered, through the network of the Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers (SPELT), to teachers of English at all levels in both the government and the private sector in Pakistan. Out of a total of 201 responses, only 93 could be termed as valid according to the criteria used by Coleman(1989c). However, due to the very high number of respondents who gave 'no response' to questions about 'experienced smallest class', 'perceived small class' and 'perceived intolerably small

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[2]For details about the extent to which large classes are considered a problem by teachers in Pakistan, see Shamim (1991a).

class', it was decided to include these respondents' questionnaires also in the final analysis, thus raising the total number of valid responses to 146. (The number of missing cases for each of the three variables mentioned above are noted against the results wherever relevant.)

The distribution of respondents by level and sector (valid responses only) can be seen in table 4.1 below.

Level	No. of respondents		Total No. of resp.	Total % of resp.
	Govt.	Private		
Primary	6	10	16	11.0%
Secondary	31	23	54	37.0%
Tertiary	58	1	59	40.4%
Others	14	3	17	11.6%
Total	109	37	146	100.0%

Table 4.1: Total number of respondents and their distribution by sector and level

Thus 11% of the respondents were primary school teachers, while 37% of the teachers were teaching at the secondary level. The tertiary level respondents comprised 40.4% of the sample, while 11.6% belonged to other institutions such as language centres and teacher training colleges. Furthermore, 109 teachers belonged to the government sector while 37 teachers were from the private sector. (Note: There are very few colleges and institutes of higher education in the private sector in Pakistan.)

4.3.2 Discussion of results

The data were analysed using basic descriptive statistics. The results indicate that, overall, the average size of teachers' 'experienced largest class' (69.08) is considerably greater than the size at which they perceive a class to be large i.e. 45.73. Similarly, the

(Table 4.2)

average size of the 'usual class' (54.75) is greater than the size (45.73) at which classes are perceived to become large (see table 4.2 below). These results are in agreement with Coleman's conclusion (1989c) that the majority of teachers seem to be teaching classes which they consider as 'large'. At the same time the high number of missing responses for the variables 'perceived small class' and 'perceived intolerably small' suggests that small classes are perhaps outside the experience of many respondents[3]. This is also evident in some of the comments given by teachers in response to these questions (see questions 5a and 5b, appendix 4). For example:

- Not applicable

- Never had the experience

- This is a utopian thought in our context

- No experience of having class below 90

- Never came across such a problem [of intolerably small classes]

- Not so lucky etc.

It is interesting to note that the size of the average reported 'experienced smallest class' (40.46) is larger than the size of the largest class in most studies of class size conducted in North America (for example, Wright et al.:1977; Glass et al.:1982; Word et al.:1990).

A breakdown of the results according to both level and sector (see tables 4.3-4.6) reveals that :

1) The size of 'experienced large class' is highest at the tertiary level (90.73) while it is considerably lower at the secondary and primary levels (54.72 and 46.06 respectively).

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[3]Coleman (1989) first made this observation in his study of responses of 147 teachers from different countries. The survey of teachers' experience and perception of class size in Pakistan seems to confirm his observation.

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	Range	Valid No.
ELC	69.08	35.49	16	175	159.00	146
ESC	40.46	23.84	1	98	97.00	138
UC	54.75	27.94	10	150	140.00	146
IC	30.13	9.41	10	65	55.00	146
PLC	45.73	18.66	20	125	105.00	146
PIL	61.27	25.68	21	200	179.00	146
PSC	13.75	7.18	2	40	38.00	115
PIS	8.37	5.46	1	25	24.00	101

Table 4.2: Teachers' experience and perception of class size in terms of 'experienced largest class'(ELC), 'experienced smallest class' (ESC), 'usual class size' (UC), 'ideal class size' (IC), 'perceived large class' (PLC), 'perceived intolerably large class' (PIL), 'perceived small class' (PSC) and 'perceived intolerably small class' (PIS).

(2) The experience and perceptions of the teachers about class size seem to vary in the two kinds of schools in Pakistan i.e., private (English medium) schools and government (Urdu medium) schools. Hence while in private schools, the average 'experienced largest class' at the secondary level is 45.43, it is considerably higher (61.61) in government schools. Similarly the 'usual class size' in private schools is 41.87, while in government schools it is 50.74. The same pattern can be observed in the variables 'perceived large class' and 'perceived intolerably large' i.e., the size at which classes are perceived by the teachers as becoming 'large' or 'intolerably large'. However, there seems to be less variation in teachers' perception of 'ideal class size', 'perceived small class' and 'perceived intolerably small' in government and private schools. This could be due to the fact that, as mentioned earlier, small classes are outside the experience of many of these teachers.

3) A positive correlation between teachers' experience and perception of classes of varying size is also evident at all levels. For example, the size of the 'experienced largest class' is highest at the tertiary level. Similarly the size of the 'experienced smallest class', 'usual class size', 'perceived large class' and 'perceived intolerably

Primary level

Sector	ELC	ESC	UC	IC	PLC	PIL	PSC	PIS
Govt	59.66	43.33	43.67	33.00	49.16	57.50	18.84	15.00
Private	37.90	26.00	35.70	25.20	35.50	42.60	13.30	9.00
Total	46.06	34.00	38.69	27.80	40.62	48.19	15.37	10.85

Table 4.3: Teachers' experience and perception of average class size in government and private sectors at the primary level in Pakistan

Secondary level

Sector	ELC	ESC	UC	IC	PLC	PIL	PSC	PIS
Govt	61.61	41.13	50.74	32.29	45.97	59.10	16.55	10.68
Private	45.43	28.20	41.87	26.00	36.21	47.87	13.52	9.79
Total	54.72	35.96	46.96	29.68	41.81	54.31	15.28	10.30

Table 4.4: Teachers' experience and perception of average class size in government and private sectors at the secondary level in Pakistan

Tertiary level

Sector	ELC	ESC	UC	IC	PLC	PIL	PSC	PIS
Govt	91.90	48.90	71.79	32.88	53.27	73.77	10.66	4.63
Private	23.00	13.00	17.00	12.00	20.00	25.00	10.00	10.00
Total	90.73	48.28	70.86	32.53	52.71	72.97	10.64	4.82

Table 4.5: Teachers' experience and perception of average class size in government and private sectors at the tertiary level in Pakistan

Others

Sector	ELC	ESC	UC	IC	PLC	PIL	PSC	PIS
Govt	69.36	36.21	43.36	27.43	42.36	60.86	14.57	7.71
Private	23.00	12.00	16.67	15.33	21.67	28.33	8.00	4.00
Total	61.18	31.94	38.65	25.29	38.71	55.12	13.75	7.25

Table 4.6: Teachers' experience and perception of average class size in government and private sectors in language centres, teacher training colleges, etc. in Pakistan

large class' is also higher at this level than the class sizes reported for the same variables at the primary and secondary levels.

As there is no tradition in Pakistan of redistributing class size for different types of learning activities (except for laboratory work in science subjects like physics and chemistry), both teachers and learners experience the same size classes, large classes in most cases, in their educational life.

To summarize, the results of the survey of teachers' experience and perception of class size in Pakistan support Coleman's (1989c) earlier conclusion that there is no universal definition of 'small' and 'large' classes. In fact teachers' perceptions of class size differ considerably in regard both to the level at which they are teaching and the different kinds of institutions (i.e., government and private) in Pakistan. However, almost all the teachers seem to be teaching in classes they consider as 'large'. Moreover, it seems that while large classes are a part of the experience of all respondents, the majority of teachers do not have any experience of teaching in smaller classes.

4.3.3 Limitations and usefulness of the survey

The very high number of 'no response' to some questions, e.g. perception of numbers at which classes become intolerably small, revealed that these questions were difficult to

answer as, by and large, 'small' classes seemed to be outside the experience of many teachers. Moreover, the concept of 'class size' was sometimes misinterpreted as physical size of the classroom by the respondents. Thus their responses had to be declared invalid. More importantly, the questionnaire was found to be limited by its focus on defining class size in quantitative terms only. Thus the various questions, by their focus on numbers, seemed to force the respondents into a particular mind set, i.e., to think of class size in terms of numbers only. However, informal talk with several teachers revealed that other factors such as the size of the room were at least as important, if not more, than the number of students in the class in influencing perceptions of the size of a class as 'large' or 'very large'. Thirdly, the questionnaire focussed on the perceptions of teachers only; these may be different from the perceptions of the learners in the same classroom.

However, the survey of class size was useful in that it showed that the occurrence of large classes is a 'hard reality' in the context of teaching and learning in Pakistan. Also, a question that arose at this stage was whether class size should be operationalised in terms of numbers only. In other words, it made me rethink if numbers in themselves were both necessary and sufficient for defining the size of a class - whether it be a 'small' or a 'large' class; this in turn influenced the research methodology used for the main study (see section 4.4 below and chapter 2 for further details).

4.4 Defining 'large' classes: Towards a qualitative approach

4.4.1 Procedure

Large classes cannot be taken as a universal phenomenon comparable in terms of their nature, composition and function in different socio-cultural contexts. Thus for the purpose of the present study it was decided to look at 'large' classes in terms of participants' definition (both teachers and learners) of the size of their present classes. This was mainly for three reasons:

1) The traditional approach to the study of class size seems to be informed by the belief that 'class size' is a single objective reality. However, it has been found in recent years that a great degree of variation exists in teachers' experience and perception of 'small' and 'large' classes. Thus, it seemed essential to devise a methodology which would allow the researcher to gain the teachers' and learners' or the 'insider's view' of reality, in the context of school classes in Pakistan.

2) It was felt that while the participants' definition of class size would necessarily be related to numbers in some way, numbers in and of themselves are not sufficient for defining 'small' and 'large' classes. Thus it was hoped, that by using a qualitative approach, both teachers and learners would be encouraged to define the size of their classes in terms of their own criteria rather than the quantitative terms of the researcher only. Further, a discussion of the various contributing factors with the participants, which makes them perceive and, therefore, describe their classes as 'large', very large' etc., would help in identifying the determinants of teachers' and learners' perception of class size.

3) It was assumed that teacher-learner behaviour in classes of varying size would be affected by their 'definition of the situation' (cf. Waller:1932, pp 292-93), in this case, the perception of the size of their classes as 'large', 'very large', 'neither small nor large' and 'small'. Hence it was considered necessary to arrive at a definition of classes of varying size in the participants' own terms instead of imposing this definition arbitrarily from the outside.

Therefore, 20 teachers of English, who were teaching classes of varying size in six secondary schools in Pakistan, were interviewed for the main study. Furthermore 21 groups of learners from the same classes (3-5 students in each group) were also interviewed to find out their perceptions of the size of their present English classes. (For further details about the research procedure used in the study see chapter 2.) During the interviews the participants were asked to describe, amongst other things, the size of their

present English class (the class which was also being observed by the researcher at that time) using a four point scale as follows:

Very large	Large	Neither small nor large	Small

They were also encouraged to discuss the reasons for their perception of the size of their class as 'large', 'very large' etc. The participants were further asked to indicate their preferred class size while also discussing the reasons for their preference in relation to the size of their present class.

This approach to defining class size allowed the teachers and learners to describe the size of their present classes in terms of their own subjective reality or their experience of teaching-learning in these classes. As a result, it was discovered that the factors determining participants' perception of class size derive as much, if not more, from their biography and specific teaching-learning situation as from the number of students in the class.

4.4.2 Teachers' and learners' perceptions of class size in secondary schools in Pakistan

The following tables show teachers' perceptions of the the size of their classes as 'large', 'very large' *and* 'neither small nor large (OK)' in relation to the perceptions of one or more groups of learners in the same class.

A look at tables 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 shows both similarities and differences between teachers' and learners' perceptions of the size of their present classes. The students seem to differ from their teachers largely in regard to their perception of the size of their classes as 'large'.

Site/level	No. of students	Teachers' code/name	Teachers' perception of class size	Learners' code@	Learners' perception of class size
2/ VI	45 (43)^	2.1 Ghayur	Large	Missing data	
2/ X C	49 (38)	2.3 Bina	Large	2.3.1 2.3.2	Large Large
4/ VI	56 (51)	4.1 Mehnaz	Large	Missing data	
4/ IX 4/ X	50 (45) 44 (39)	4.2 Nighat	Large Large	4.2.1 4.2.2	OK 'Medium'
5/ VIII	93 (76)	5.3 Saira	Large	5.3.1 5.3.2 5.3.3	Very Large Very Large Very Large
6/ IX	74 (61)	6.1 Shahida	OK* (Large)	6.1.1 6.1.2 6.1.3	Large Large Large
6/ X	59 (40)	6.3 Mughal	Large	6.3.1	'Normal'
6/ VIII	58 (43)	6.4 Mehtab	Large	6.4.1	OK
6/ VIII	59 (49)	6.5 Farida	OK* (Large)	Missing data	

Table 4.7: Comparative data showing teachers' perception of the size of their present class as 'large' in relation to learners' perception of the same classes

@ As mentioned earlier the learners were interviewed in groups of 3-5 students each. The learners' code, for example 2.3.1, shows that they belong to the class of the teacher whose code number is 2.3; and that they comprise the first group of learners interviewed from this class.
^ Figure in brackets denotes the actual number of students present on a day at the time of the investigation.
* These two teachers described their classes as 'neither small nor large' on the four point scale of class size. However, throughout their interview they talked about problems in teaching the large number of

students in their class. Therefore, their perception of the size of their class has been reinterpreted as 'large' for the purpose of the present study

Site/class	No. of students	Teachers' code/ name	Teachers' perception of class size	Learners' code	Learners' perception of class size
1/ VIII	65 (52)	1.1 Farhat	Very large	Missing data	
5/ VI	75 (64)	5.1 Midhat	Very large	Missing data	
5/ X	85 (63)	5.2 Sughra	Very large	5.2.1 5.2.2	Very Large Very Large
5/ VIII	88 (63)	5.4 Salima	Very large	5.4.1 5.4.2	Large Very large

Table 4.8: Comparative data showing teachers' perception of the size of their present class as 'very large' in relation to learners' perception of the same classes

Thus a number of students describe the size of their class either as 'very large' or 'neither small nor large' while their teachers perceive the same classes as 'large'. For example, the learners in classes IX and X at site 4 consider the size of their English classes as 'neither small nor large' and 'medium' (table 4.7) while the teacher perceives the same classes as 'large', probably because she was trying to introduce innovative classroom methodology in these classes (see chapter 9). Similarly, all the three groups of students in class VIII at site 5 perceive their class as 'very large' while the teacher describes it as 'large' only. At site 6, the students in class IX describe their class of 40 students (the number of students who attended the class regularly) as 'normal' (6.3.1) while the teacher describes it as 'large', presumably on the basis of the number of students enroled in the class, i.e. 59. (In fact this teacher mentioned that he would prefer to have fewer or 40-45 students in his class. But this was the actual number of students present in his class every day.) This important difference between teachers and students in their basis for defining the size of their class, i.e., the number of students on the rolls

or the number of students actually present in the class, also explains the difference of opinion between teacher 6.4 and her learners at site 6.

Site/class	No. of students	Teachers' code/ name	Teachers' perception of class size	Learners' code	Learners' perception of class size
1/ X	51 (39)	1.2 Ferheen	OK	Missing data	
2/ VII	44 (37)	2.2 Farhana	OK	Missing data	
2/ X B	27 (26)	2.3 Bina	OK	2.3.3	OK
3/ VIII	28 (24)	3.3 Kiran	OK	3.3.1	OK
3/ X C	42 (38)	3.4 Rafiq	Optimum	3.4.1	OK
3/ X B	26 (25)			3.4.2	OK
4/ IX	50 (43)	4.4 Shahida	OK	Missing data	
6/ X	47 (33)	6.2 Ghani	OK	6.2.1	OK ('But all don't come')

Table 4.9: Comparative data showing teachers' perception of the size of their present class as 'neither small nor large' (OK) in relation to learners' perception of the same classes

The students generally seem to be in agreement with their teachers in regard to their perception of the size of their classes as 'very large' (table 4.8). For example, both Sughra and Salima described their classes as 'very large'; and from amongst the four groups of students who were interviewed from these classes only one group of students described their class as 'large'. All the other students felt, just as their teachers, that their classes were 'very large'. Furthermore, there seems to be complete agreement between

the teachers and the students in their definition of the size of their present classes as 'neither small nor large' (table 4.9).

The range of teachers' and learners' 'experienced' and 'perceived' class size can be summarised as table 4.10, as follows:

Teachers' 'experienced' class size	Teachers' and learners' perceptions* of class size	Learners' 'experienced' class size
65-88	Very large	85-93
44-93	Large	49-74
26-51	neither small nor large	26-59

4.10: Summary of teachers' and learners' experience and perceptions of class size
* There are a few gaps in learners' data due to several unforseen circumstances (cf. chapter 3, section 3.6.3)

4.5 Determinants of teachers' and learners' perceptions of present class size

The following section outlines the reasons given by both teachers and learners for describing the size of their present classes variously as 'large', 'very large' and 'neither small nor large'. (Only one teacher described her class as 'small'. This was with reference to her experience of teaching very large classes during the previous years. On the other hand, none of the learners felt that their present classes were 'small' in size.)

Both teachers and learners often described the size of their class in terms of numbers, thus:

If according to the number of students then it is large - there is a large 'strength' of students - 57. (6.4)[4]

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[4] The numbers in bracket indicate the identification code for the respondents. (See list of abbreviations.) All extracts from teacher-learner interviews are given in translation except those marked by double quotation marks, where

However, the number of students in the class was perceived of in relation to other factors such as previous experience or space in the classroom. This emerges from the following discussion.

4.5.1 Determinants of teachers' perception of class size

4.5.1.1 Experience of varying size classes

The teachers show a tendency to perceive the size of their present classes in terms of their previous experience of teaching classes of varying size (cf. Coleman:1989c). Several teachers described the size of their present class as 'large' or 'very large' in regard to their earlier experience of teaching smaller size classes. For example:

> There are 75-76 girls, when earlier we had 40 girls and even before that we had only 25 girls when the school started. We didn't take more than 25 students in a class. (1.1)

Similarly teachers' perception of their preferred class size seems to be influenced by their previous and even their present experience. For example, Bina's preference for a smaller class seemed to derive mainly from her experience of teaching smaller size classes, thus:

> "[I would prefer] 15-20 [students]. It works so well. I've taught a class of 13 here and I've taught a class of 17 and I've taught a class of 12 at Aga Khan, and it's really lovely. When I came from Aga Khan I couldn't get adjusted to work in X C. I couldn't adjust to teaching 50 students and without aids." (2.3)

Mehnaz said that she would also prefer to have fewer (35) students in her class. However, she conceded that her present class with 44 students was better in relation to her experience of teaching much larger classes in the previous years, because,

> ... we can get them to work almost daily and also check their work. Even 44 is more but I've taught up to 79 students in this school in 1984-85. We had less sections and more children. Here we always have a rush for admissions. Last year I had 65 students in class IV, 56 in class VII. This year there is an extra section in class VIII. (4.1)

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the actual words of the speaker in English are given. An effort has also been made, during translation, to keep to the spirit of the idiom and language used by the respondents. Thus, very often English equivalents preferred locally in Pakistan have been used in translation instead of equivalents in 'standard' English, such as 'less' instead of 'fewer'.

4.5.1.2 Immediate educational context

Several teachers described their classes as 'large' in relation to the average class size in

their school, thus:

> There are 96 students. It's not very large but larger than other classes, for example I have 86 girls in my 8th class. (5.3)

> "X C is a large class. For school it's very large because usually we get 40-42, and this exceeds it. They are 50." (2.3)

4.5.1.3 Physical conditions in the classroom

Often classes were perceived as 'large' by the teachers in terms of the number of students

vis-a-vis the size of the classroom and the physical space available for each student in the

classroom.

> "[It is large] Because of the strength - number of students - according to the physical size of the classroom and availability of the furniture and also the number of students. Most of the students are sitting - three students are sitting at a desk for two." (4.2)

> If there are more than that [30-35 students], even students have a problem of seats because there aren't enough desks. Three children have to share a desk - so it is large. (6.4)

One teacher also described her class as 'very large', once again, in relation to room

size and inadequate space in the classroom both for the students to 'sit comfortably' and

for the teacher to 'walk around' to monitor their work, thus:

> The room is small. There is not enough furniture. Sometimes girls also have to stand or sit together cramped on desks, so they can't write properly. You must have 'checked' it yourself in classes here. Supposing the teacher has to teach 72 children. We are ready to teach them but at least we should be able to see all children - how they are working in their copies. If they write in that condition how can they do it? If there is enough furniture and the room is big enough for the girls to sit comfortably, it won't be very difficult. The teacher can at least walk around and check students' work even if they are sitting at the back. (1.1)

4.5.1.4 Ability level and gender of the students

The ability level (and language background) of the students in the class also seems to

influence teachers' perception of the size of their class as 'large', particularly in terms of

the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning in the classroom.

> I have 44 [students] in VIII C. There is no real difference because in class IV [where the number of students is 56] the children are sharp - so it's equal. Because the other section is Urdu medium,

the children can't understand very easily. These children understand easily so it comes to the same in the amount of effort I have to make. In class VIII also I have English medium - though there are 60 children. If the children are good it's not such a great problem because they are willing to work themselves - they work well even if you give them a little attention. But if the children are dull even less children cause a problem because you have to make sure whether they are understanding or not. (4.1)

Interestingly the ability level of the children was also given as a reason by a teacher, for her preference for having 20 to 25 students in her class, thus:

"At least there should be 20 or 25 in the class. I don't like less than 20 because there should be variation in the class. If all the children are good or weak - if the class size is bigger then only you can have variation. It's not fun to have all of the same ability." (4.2)

The gender of the students, along with their ability level, seems to be another important factor in the teacher's perception of a class as 'large', thus:

"You know there's a difference when there are boys and there are girls. If it would have been a girls' class of 50 - now we've boys also and it's also the commerce class where all the cream has gone to X A and X B. So they are more rowdy. They are less interested in work. They have more engagements, are more playful and mischievous . . ."

In contrast, the same teacher felt that even if her present all-girls class i.e., X B, was larger in size,

"They would work better. I had 42 girls and the class was better and X B is science group, you must remember, because in this - X B - all the children from advanced classes come there - like girls who are bright like Fariha, Shaheen. That's why the class is better." (2.3)

4.5.1.6 Teachers' 'problems' in giving attention, checking of work and control

The problems in giving individual attention to the students and checking their work also seem to contribute towards teachers' perception of their classes as 'large' and 'very large', thus:

[It is] Large according to 'strength' because there are 56 students. Also because I can't see all the students, give them attention. (4.1)

[The class is] Very large. We should not have more than 50 students in a class. We can't correct written work, can't give individual attention. Because there are 85 students we can't make everyone read even one line each in a period. If there were 55 students it might still be possible to give them attention - in rotation to different students on different days. (5.2)

Consequently Sughra (5.2) believed that a smaller number of the students in the class leads to better class results at the end of the year, thus:

In X C there are 30 students and the result is 99%. The reason is because there are less students. There is a lot of difference between 30 and 85. They belong to the Science group but even the Arts students can be taught better if the students are less. We can also get 85% result while presently the pass rate is 60-75%. If there are 3 sections in Arts instead of two as at present, they can also improve considerably. (5.2)

Teachers also seem to describe their classes as 'large' when they find it difficult 'to keep an eye' on all the students in the classroom or when they face a problem in controlling them. For example:

... it's large because it's not possible for one teacher to keep an eye on so many students at the same time. (6.6)

"Now I find the children uncontrollable ... The main thing I keep on feeling is it should be 30 and not more, from so many angles and so many points. Supposing you have uncontrollable children. Then also this problem of controlling will not be so bad if they're 30. Now with my experience I feel it should be only this - and this - and the worst behaviour can be brought under control and the worst child can be made attentive in the classroom." (2.1)

4.5.1.7 Opportunities for teaching (and learning)

One teacher felt that her class could be considered 'normal' in terms of the average class size in government schools. However, it was 'very large' for the purposes of teaching and learning in the classroom, thus:

With regard to teaching it is very large but with regard to government schools it's all right, because in government schools this is the usual number of students. As the number of schools is less than the amount of students, we take as many students as can be 'filled' into the school. With regard to teaching-learning [perhai] it is very large. (5.1)

The teachers who described their classes as 'neither small nor large' gave similar reasons, i.e., previous experience, average class size in the immediate educational context, etc., as teachers who described their classes as 'large' and 'very large' (sections 4.5.1.1-4.5.1.7 above), for defining their classes in this way. The following sample responses reflect this quite clearly:

In our school we have really large classes, so on a comparative basis this is neither small nor large. (1.2)

"Because I'm used to teaching a large class. I've always been teaching a large class - 50 students, 45-48 students. These [28 students] are the least amount of students I've ever had and I enjoy teaching them. I think it's not small and not large." (3.3)

"These are 55 - about medium, whereas in some classes there are 60 or 65. At present I don't have so many students but I have taught up to 80 students in the past years - in '83 I think." (4.4)

Other factors that were mentioned include adequate space and better physical conditions in the classroom in contrast to the overcrowded conditions in 'large' classes. For example:

> I think for these 28 children class VIII is very nice. We can even accommodate 30-35 in this classroom. There's quite a lot of space. Even 30-35, that would be a normal class. (3.3)

> "The strength is 42. Like that up to 40-42 is not bad. Up to 45 it's alright but the room is also spacious. . . So there should be some space for the movement of the teacher. He may approach, he may go or she may go. If it gets more crowded than this he will be in a tight corner. He will not be doing anything in central space and they will be doing anything of their own account." (3.4)

> I think at any point I can see them. I can teach each and every person. The room is quite big and I can see them clearly. There's no rush in the room. There's a lot of space at the back of the room also - so they look normal - equal number of students on each side [of the central aisle]. (2.2)

The teachers also seem to perceive the size of their class as 'OK' in terms of the ease or difficulty of doing certain things, such as giving of individual attention to the students, in comparison to larger classes. This can be seen in the following excerpts from teacher interviews.

> It is easy to teach, do corrections - easy to know them individually and develop a personal relationship with them. (1.2)

> "I think 28-30 is a reasonable number because you can really give individual attention to the students and that would be the best class - the best results compared to a large class." (3.3)

> "According to me because I go from student to student - I don't teach one student, it's alright - optimum. If more than this I will not be covering a thing and teaching to individual students. The teaching is actually no problem. It's the attention you give to the students - what he's doing, what she's doing. He will, if he is not under my control, then I'm not, in my view, giving any benefit to him or her." (3.4)

Thus it seems that teachers' perception of class size is influenced by a number of variables both inside and outside the classroom such as, their previous experience in classes of varying size, the average class size in the immediate educational context and the physical conditions in the classroom. Furthermore, as will be discussed in chapters 5 and 10, teacher's perceptions of class size also seem to be related to what they consider as appropriate behaviour and/or the duty of the teacher in relation to the students and the nature of teaching and learning in the classroom.

4.5.2 Determinants of learners' perception of class size

It seems that the factors underlying learners' perception of class size are related mainly to the physical conditions, and their implications for the opportunities for learning, in the classroom. Thus a number of students described their classes as 'large' or 'very large' in terms of the non-availability of adequate space (both for seating and work space) in their classroom, thus:

S1:[5] It's large. Sometimes even four girls have to share a desk. Four girls sit on the front desks. It's a real problem.
S2: When we write there isn't enough space for the copy. (5.4.1)

S1: You can judge [the size of the class] by the fact that three students sit on each desk - sometimes even four.
S2: The room should have been bigger. (6.1.1)

S1: Some girls don't even get a place to sit.
S2: The day all the girls are present there is a real problem of seats.
S3: Three girls have to share a desk. We somehow manage to sit together but we have to hang our bags on the sides.
S4: Then it's a problem to take out and put back copies and books from the bag. (5.3.2)

Some students also complained about the small size of their classroom vis-a-vis the large number of students in their class, for example:

S1: Miss there are 93 girls - so the size of the room is very small.
S2: And the number of girls is very large. (5.3.1)

Several students considered the size of their class as 'very large' due to the physical discomfort caused by having so many students in the classroom, thus:

S1: Now it's so hot in the class. There is no fan or light.
S2: We sometimes have to close the windows or the door to keep out the noise from outside or because of the reflection on the blackboard, then it really becomes very hot.
S3: Now if you close the doors and windows, it will be absolutely dark inside the classroom.
S4: We really have a bad headache when we go home. Girls make so much noise.
S5: And by concentrating hard to see the blackboard.
S6: The board hasn't been painted for ages and then also students paint it. (5.3.1)

The class monitors described their classes as 'very large' due to the problem in controlling the large number of students, thus:

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[5]The learner interviews were held in small groups of 3-4 students. However, S1, S2 etc. denote turns rather than a difference in speakers in the data. Thus S1 and S4 could be the same student in a group.

S1: [The size of the class is] Very large - 85 students in one class.
S2: It's very difficult to control them.
S3: There is one teacher and she has to control 85 students.
S4: And because they are all grown up you can't even beat them. (5.2.1)

These students were of the view that, '40 students would be more than enough' because,

Then the teacher will know what everyone is doing. But now with 85 students - if there were half this number it would make a difference. (5.2.1)

The learners seemed happy with the size of their class (describing it as 'neither small nor large') when they felt that the essential conditions for learning, such as hearing the teacher, were available in the classroom. This is evident from the following excerpts from learner interviews:

S1: At the present level we have to make notes ourselves. So it is not essential for us to see the blackboard. But we should be able to hear the teacher, otherwise we will neither be able to understand what she teaches nor write anything [na samajh saken ge na likh saken ge]. So presently despite the fact that we sit at the back we have no difficulty in hearing the teacher.
S2: It's OK. If there were more students there would have been more noise. With 40-45 students it's enough.
S3: They are medium - neither more nor less. (4.2.1)

In our class the number is just right. We all understand the lesson and enjoy it too. (2.3.2)

Thus the major contributory factors in students' perception of class size seem to be the physical conditions in the classroom, such as adequate work space, due to their effect on understanding the lesson and learning in the classroom.

4.5.3 Summary of findings

There is no universal definition of 'large', 'very large' and 'neither small nor large' classes in secondary schools in Pakistan. This is because teachers and learners seem to define class size in terms of a number of variables which can be summarized as follows:

1) Participants' experience of teaching and learning in different size classes

2) The average class size in the school/educational context in general

3) Physical conditions in the classroom, e.g., space and ability to hear the teacher

4) Ability level and gender of the students

5) Participants' feeling of ease or difficulty in doing certain things such as giving and/or getting of individual attention

6) Teachers' and learners' perception of opportunities for teaching and learning available in the classroom.

Some other factors (such as types of learning tasks or activities, perception of the role of teacher and learners and participants' concept of learning and strategies used for learning), though not mentioned explicitly, seem to be additional contributing variables in teachers' and learners' varied perceptions of the size of their classes as 'large', 'very large' etc. The fact that subject area was not mentioned as an important variable, as is the case in some research studies in North America (e.g., McConnell and Sosin:1984) could be due to the fact that, during the interview, both teachers and students were asked to think of their English classes only.

4.6   Continuum of class size and 'threshold levels'

As mentioned earlier, the various research studies on defining class size have not been fruitful in ascertaining, in any absolute terms, what constitutes 'small' and 'large' classes. The results of the present study further indicate that there is variation in teachers' and learners' perception of the size of the same classes. Thus it seems more useful to consider class size, in each situation and across different socio-cultural contexts, as a continuum comprising a number of 'threshold levels' rather than thinking of 'small' and 'large' classes as discrete units on a fixed scale. The threshold levels of class size could vary in relation to individual teachers, kinds of institutions, levels (primary, secondary or tertiary), learning objectives and other variables in the educational context. According to this view, each 'threshold level' ('large', 'very large' etc.) would then constitute a range of numbers, often overlapping, due to a host of teacher-learner variables as well as the specific characteristics of large and smaller size classes in different teaching-learning situations.

For the present study, the teachers' threshold levels of class size and the upper and lower limits of their threshold levels (in terms of the range of the number of students in the class) for different kinds of schools are shown in table 4.11 as follows:

Teachers' threshold levels of class size (perceptions)	The upper and lower limits of teachers' threshold levels of class size (experience)	
	Govt schools	Private schools
Very large	65-88	Missing data
Large	44-93	45-49
Neither small nor large	47-51	26-44

Table 4.11: **Teachers' threshold levels of class size with reference to different kinds of schools in the present study**

As can be seen in table 4.11 above, there is a vast difference in the upper limit of teachers' experience (number of students in the class), and consequently their perceptions and threshold level, of 'large' classes in government and private schools in Pakistan. However, classes with 45 or more students are perceived as large by the majority of teachers. If we look more closely at the threshold levels of government school teachers, we can also notice a considerable overlap in their threshold levels of 'very large', 'large' and 'neither small nor large' classes. In contrast, the threshold levels of private school teachers ('large' and 'neither small nor large') seem to be more absolute or distinct from each other. This could be due to the fact that the average class size in private schools is 35-45 students. Hence it seems that when the size of a class exceeds this number it is perceived as 'large' by the teachers (also see sections 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.2 above). (It is very rare to find a class of 50 students or above in private schools. This is why there is a gap in data (table 4.11) for the threshold level 'very large' for private school teachers.)

As will be discussed later, the behaviour of teachers seems to be closely related to their threshold levels of class size. For example, it was found that teachers do not change

their behaviour in classes which might be different in terms of numbers, but which fall within the same 'threshold level' of class size for the teachers. (This observation will be discussed in further detail in chapter 7.)

4.7   Summary and conclusion

This chapter began by looking at different ways in which 'small' and 'large' classes have been defined variously by researchers and practitioners in the field. It was found that the researchers have traditionally defined 'small' and 'large' classes, the primary units of their analysis, almost arbitrarily and in quantitative terms only. As a result the definitions of 'small' and 'large' often overlap in different studies on class size. Also, it was established that practitioners have varied definitions of 'small' and 'large' classes in different countries and even at different levels within the same teaching-learning situation.

Consequently it was decided, for the purpose of the present study, to use a qualitative approach to defining 'large' classes. It was assumed that this would allow the participants to define the size of their classes in terms of their own criteria rather than some external criteria imposed by the researcher. The findings of the study indicate that a) teachers and learners often perceive the same class differently in terms of size and b) there is a great variation in teachers' experience, and consequently their threshold levels of class size, in different kinds of schools, i.e., government and private schools, even within the relatively homogeneous context of secondary schools in Pakistan. More importantly, it was found that teachers' and learners' perception of class size depends on a number of variables in the teaching-learning situation that seem to interact with the number of students in the classroom. It was, therefore, suggested that it might be more useful to conceive of 'small' and 'large' classes on a continuum of class size rather than as discrete units on a fixed scale. The 'threshold levels' of class size for teachers from both government and private schools in Pakistan were also identified.

To conclude, it can be said that a class might be 'large' in terms of numbers but it is not necessarily perceived as such if, for example, the learners are of a higher ability level and/or are sufficiently motivated to participate actively in classroom activities and to carry out their work individually or in self-study groups outside the classroom. On the other hand, classes are perceived as 'large' and 'very large' in relation to smaller size classes, which could be a part of the participants' previous or present experience, as well other variables in the teaching-learning situation, such as the physical conditions in the classroom. It would be useful, in future research, to find out at what stage, and under what conditions, class size becomes the most or least important variable (the major problem, one of the major problems or no problem at all) in a teaching-learning situation.

In the next three chapters, I will look at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size classes in terms of the teachers' definition of the size of their classes as 'large', 'very large' and 'neither small nor large'. The decision to use teachers' definition of class size for the present study is motivated by two considerations: 1) the assumption that teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in school classes in Pakistan, which are largely teacher-centred, are affected more by the teachers' definition of the situation or his/her perception of the size of the class than that of the learners (who traditionally play the role of passive recipients in teacher-centred classrooms), and 2) logistic reasons. i.e, non-availability of data from learners in all the classes visited for the purpose of the study.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LARGER AND SMALLER CLASSES[1]

5.1 Introduction

A number of attempts have been made in recent years to find out how teachers feel about teaching in large classes (e.g., Coleman:1991c; LoCastro:1989, Shapson et al.:1980). At the same time, several research studies on teacher problems (e.g., Gorrell and Dharmadasa:1989) indicate that teachers consider large classes as one of the most important sources of stress in their professional lives. However, very little attention has been paid to how learners perceive large classes in terms of the conditions of learning as well as the opportunities for learning available in classes of varying size. (This has also been noted by Mortimore and Blatchford in their recent briefing on class size (March 1993) for the National Commission on Education in the UK.) Similarly, little attempt has been made to find out how the participants i.e., both teachers and learners in any one class perceive the size of their class in a specific educational context.

This chapter aims to look at teachers' and learners' beliefs about large and smaller classes (perceived by them as 'large' and 'very large', and 'neither small nor large' respectively). This will be done in relation to two things: 1) the participants' experience of teaching and learning in large and smaller classes; and 2) their perceptions about the same. Thus both the experience and perceptions of teachers and learners, as reported by them in varying size classes, will be taken into consideration.

I will begin by looking at how teachers see large and smaller classes in secondary schools in Pakistan. This will be followed by a look at how learners, in a similar

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[1]In the present study the terms 'larger' and 'smaller' denote teachers' perception of class size as 'large' and 'very large', and 'neither small nor large' respectively.

situation, feel about their experience of studying in varying size classes. Next, a comparison will be made between teachers' and learners' beliefs about their difficulties in large classes and the effects of class size on the teacher, the students and classroom practice. Finally, the nature of participants' difficulties in large classes in Pakistan will be compared to similar accounts of teachers and learners in large classes in various educational contexts around the world.

The likely determinants of participants' problems in large classes will be discussed in chapter 10.

5.2 Teachers' beliefs about larger and smaller classes
5.2.0 Introduction

Eberts (1986) describes the experience of mass instruction, with a lot of students and teaching assistants, as 'somewhat similar to running a political organisation' (p. 84). For Bain (1986) the experience is akin to 'steering an ocean liner with a canoe paddle'; thus teaching a large class is 'a stressful task and one in which moments of real satisfaction are usually followed by times of doubt and discouragement' (p. 117). Frederick (1987), on the other hand, considers the teaching of large classes as a challenge, 'to reconcile the recommendations of the experts for involved learning with the reality of passivity that plagues large classes' (p 46).

The teachers in Pakistan and other developing countries consider large classes as one of their major problems in the teaching and learning of English in the classroom (see chapter 1, sections 1.3.2 and 1.4.2 and Shamim:1991a)

In the present study, the teachers in secondary schools in Pakistan, from both the government and private sectors, also reported a number of difficulties in teaching and learning in large classes. (As mentioned in chapters 2 and 4, twenty teachers from six secondary schools were interviewed for the purpose of the study. For details see chapter 2, sections 2.6, 2.7, and appendices 2B and 2D). On the other hand, they all showed a preference for a class size *which was smaller than the size of their present English class,*

whatever the size of their present class may be. The relationship between teachers' 'experienced class size', i.e., the number of students in their English classes at the time of the investigation, their perception of the size of the same classes (cf. table 4.10) and their preferred class size (based on both their experience and perceptions of classes of varying size) can be seen more clearly in table 5.1 below.

Experienced class size (no. of students)	Perceived class size	Preferred class size (no. of students)
65-88	Very large	50-55
44-93	Large	15-55
26-51	neither small nor large	20-40

Table 5.1: **The relationship between teachers' 'experienced', 'perceived' and 'preferred' class size**

Table 5.1 above shows quite clearly that teachers prefer a class size which is smaller than the size of their present class. Interestingly, the teachers who described their present classes as 'neither small nor large', and mentioned certain advantages they had in their present (smaller) classes in comparison to other large classes in their own school or other schools in the area, also showed a preference for a class size which was smaller than their present classes. This confirms the findings of some earlier studies (e.g., Shapson et al.:1980) that teachers prefer to teach in smaller classes.

The data also indicate a relationship between teachers' perception of the size of their present class and their preferred class size. Thus we can see in the above table that teachers' preferred class size, in terms of numbers, increases or decreases in regard to the size of their present class. Hence the larger the size of their present class (present experience), the larger is the size of their preferred class also.

Now let us look more closely at how teachers see large and smaller size school classes in Pakistan. The teachers discussed their experience and perceptions of varying

size school classes in relation to the difficulties they experienced in their large classes and the relative advantages of smaller classes. Their beliefs about teaching-learning in large and smaller classes can be described in terms of the following categories:

1 Physical conditions in the classroom

2 Teacher attention, monitoring and control

3 Checking

4 Time

5 Opportunities for teaching and learning.

5.2.1 Physical conditions in the classroom

Nighat felt that the size of her classroom was small in regard to the number of students in her class. Therefore, the students sat in very overcrowded conditions which also made it difficult for them to write.

> "Now you have seen that 75% of the students are attending the classes - then three students share a desk. Some day when there is full attendance, only one or two students are absent, then they have to get desks from other rooms where more children are absent . . . Also they have problem in writing when they are sitting three persons at a desk which is supposed to be for two students, so it is really difficult to write and do pair work." (4.2)

The lack of adequate space in the classroom also made it difficult for her to do pair and group work with her class. Nighat believed that group work would have been more manageable if there was enough space to separate the different groups while they were working, thus:

> "If the size of the classroom is bigger and furniture is not available, even then I can ask them to sit on the floor to do some work, but we can't do that. They are sitting quite tightly [crowded together]. You can't do group work . . . Even pair work becomes difficult when there are three students. It becomes a small group instead of a pair and then one student, if he is weak, tries to avoid working and only two students work." (4.2)

In contrast, Sughra felt that the physical size of her classroom was 'alright' because, 'All students are able to sit at least - though there are three students at each desk'. However, she was also concerned about the discomfort of the students in writing.

The overcrowded conditions in the classroom also restrict the movement of the teachers in the classroom, which seems to have a number of unfortunate consequences for the students. For example, one teacher reported that:

> Now it's possible only once in every two weeks to go to the back of the classroom and take a round. Then I find they haven't brought their copies etc. So it takes a long time to find out if someone is not working - because three girls share a desk and because they talk a lot - no matter what you say - or they are fighting with each other complaining, 'Miss we don't have space to sit, we can't write properly'. They are so overcrowded - they are big girls now so when there are less students due to games practice or revision, it is better. (5.3)

Several other teachers felt that their inability to reach the students at the back of the classroom, and consequently to monitor their work, had a negative effect on the classroom performance of these students. Often the students stopped working thinking that, 'Miss will not reach us before the period is over' (5.1). (For further discussion of the effects of 'location' on teacher-learner behaviour in large classes, see chapter 8).

The teachers reported that teaching in a large class was also a source of physical discomfort for them. For example, Farida observed that teaching a large class was more exhausting for the teacher than teaching a smaller class because,

> In a large class you have to speak more loudly so that all the students can hear you. Also there are more copies to correct. (6.5)

She said that though she spoke loudly so that all the students could hear her easily, 'All teachers don't have such a loud voice'. As a result, 'The majority of children say they didn't hear what the teacher said - what work was assigned by her' (6.5).

Teachers also find it very exhausting to try and 'keep an eye' on all the students in a large class. For example, Ghayur observed that:

> "Yes, I teach here and I see the last bench there - that's my alertness - just being over alert. But these are the things that tax you. When you leave the classroom they tax you. That's why I say that why not have a pleasant number, a pleasant atmosphere, a pleasant way of teaching, a pleasant way of imparting and not being taxed in this manner. Maybe if all the children are

wonderful and excellent, I may not feel anything at all, even with 40, 45 or 50. But that's not usual and that's not expected." (2.1)

Ghayur also described the difference in teaching her two classes, one of which was large, in terms of the greater amount of physical effort involved in teaching the large class, thus:

> "I feel the difference is too much. The day I take VIII C [the smaller size class], I feel that relaxation there . . . I have 29 students - 30-32. And because of that point that I don't have to control them, number one, and two - their attitude, so that is not taxing on my mind as I feel now [in the large class] that my mind and my body - physically and mentally I'm constantly taxed in this class and therefore it's they who suffer more than me . . . It hurts me physically but they are at a greater loss. The children are at a greater loss. I make up what I lose by sitting quietly or taking that cup of porridge when I go home. I make up that way, although my throat suffers." (2.1)

Ghayur felt that if she had fewer children in her present 'large' class, she would not teach them differently, 'but more minutely and in a more peaceful way'.

Mehnaz recalled the amount of tension she had experienced when teaching a class of 79 students in a big hall, where another class of approximately an equal number of students was being held at the same time. She described her experience as follows:

> Then I used to give them work which they could do while sitting quietly, but I never sat at any one place after giving them work to do. I always sat at the back of the class and kept an eye on them from there. *But it was a lot of tension.* I had three classes of this size - overcrowded classes - 50-60 in A, 70 and 79 in the other two classes (my emphasis). (4.1)

Thus it seems that overcrowded conditions in the classroom due to limited space, a characteristic feature of large school classes in Pakistan, lead to a number of difficulties for teachers in teaching these classes. Also more effort and physical energy are required for teaching a large class. Thus large classes are physically taxing for the teachers. In contrast, teachers feel relatively relaxed in smaller classes.

5.2.2 Teacher attention, monitoring and control

A number of teachers reported that in a large class it is difficult to give attention to all the students. Also it is difficult to 'see' all the students and monitor their work in a large class. This seems to have a negative effect on learner motivation and learning in the classroom.

According to Midhat one of the major problems in a large class is that, 'Teachers can't pay individual attention' (5.1). Mehtab, comparing her experience of teaching a class of 80 students (in her previous school) with her present experience of teaching a class of 57 children (which she still perceived as large), observed that the difference in the two classes was largely in terms of the amount of attention she could give to the students, thus:

> Then it was really difficult even to reach all the children. When I had so many children in my class [80] I couldn't reach each child so I just looked at a few students' work here and there. It was not possible to go to each child to check what he was doing - even to find out whether they were working or not was difficult - so if there are less children we can give them more attention. (6.4)

Interestingly Mehtab felt that if the size of her class was still smaller than her present class, the difference in the two classes would be, once again, 'in observing the children' and in keeping track of their progress in class. She believed that this would motivate the students to pay more attention in class, thus:

> If there are less children we can see each child and even the children feel motivated and pay more attention when they know that the teacher will come to see their work. Children are careless - so if we go to them they realise that Miss has come to us to see our copies - so instead of looking around they will pay more attention to their work. So having less children is better. (6.4)

Similarly, Mehnaz believed that she would be able to give more attention to the children in a smaller class, whereas [in her present large class],

> I try to give individual attention now also but a lot of children are left out - like today I couldn't see whether all children were working or not, or if some children were just sitting or looking at other students' copies. As I walked around I 'caught' some of them. (4.1)

Thus she believed that having a smaller class would be better, because:

> . . . I could see each child's work individually, find out if they were learning or not - even teach them individually. Once in class IX I had 12 children and most of them passed. They never played truant and generally took an interest in their work. (4.1)

(Later I had an opportunity to visit one of her classes, which was considerably smaller than the class she refers to in the above discussion. In that class there seemed to be complete harmony between the teacher and the students, but more importantly, it was amazing to see how she could motivate the students and develop their interest in learning,

particularly after a class period in which the teacher had left the class complaining about
their misbehaviour.)

Several teachers complained that they found it difficult to 'see' all the students in a
large class, thus:

> And the children also think that the teacher can't come and see, so they just pass their time. A lot
> of children are not interested in studies due to their home background or low I.Q or whatever. We
> can't 'cover' so many children as we should. We try to but don't always succeed. (6.4)

> When there are so many children, especially as you've seen, there aren't even enough benches for
> all of them, so children who are short can't be seen. Sometimes when they want to hide from the
> teacher they sit in a corner so that the teacher can't see them. (6.6)

Thus these teachers were of the view that their inability to monitor the work of all the
students in a large class had a negative effect on learner motivation and their 'time-on-
task', particularly if the children were not already highly motivated. On the other hand,
they believed that it would be easier to 'keep an eye' on all the children in a smaller class;
as a result the children would also work better in smaller classes.

Maida also believed that if she had 40-50 children in the class instead of 69 (the
present number) her voice would be able to reach all the students but more importantly,
'I'll be able to keep track of who is there and who isn't. I'll be aware of their presence in
the class. When there are too many children it's difficult for the teacher to 'see' all the
children.' (6.6)

A few teachers also mentioned the problem of controlling the students in a large class.
For example, Ghayur felt that:

> "... a child who is not over enthusiastic or even careful or over serious thinks that it's [a large
> class] an advantage. He just feels I'm teaching them. How will I know and how will I point out?
> Absolutely they are in a different world and I'm in a different world - that's the idea that comes and
> crops up in his mind, so to keep him involved and to keep him alert my point immediately goes
> there. But only this controlling problem is the greatest. That is the thing that keeps everything
> slow. It [learning] can take place smoothly [in a large class]. I told you if that problem of control
> is not there then it can take place very well." (2.1)

In contrast, she believed that it was easier to control the students in a smaller class, thus:

> "Just as this number of 30 in VIII B is not a small number but it goes smoothly because there is
> no problem of controlling them. A little - say about 5 minutes or so, if I shout a little, then 40
> minutes go smoothly." (2.1)

5.2.3 Checking written work

The checking of a large amount of written work was reported by the teachers as another major problem in teaching large classes. Farhat seemed to be totally devastated by the amount of checking she had to do in her classes of 60 and 65 students:

> Believe it I have to mark 384 copies [per week] - add them up yourself . . . I tell the headmistress that I am under great strain. Tell me how I can mark their work, when I am the type who keeps talking and using the blackboard till the class ends [i.e., do not use class time for checking]. I don't like to sit down. I'm doing oral drills. (1.1)

She conceded that in her smaller classes of 25 students, which she had had in the same school till a few years ago, she had probably used the same teaching methods, 'but I used more aids - tried to make it more interesting, but with so many children and such limited time, just to check that everyone has done their work takes all the time' (1.1).

The following sample responses also give an idea of teachers' perception of the gravity of this problem:

> We have a real problem in correction. Perhaps we can even manage to teach this number but we are unable to correct their work . . . There are so many students and everyone is so busy at home that teachers don't check the copies. (5.1)

> Once again then we come back to class size . . . Now I've 65 students in class IX and 59 students in class X - so If I have 120 students how can I check their work daily? So I check the work of 10-15 students every day. (6.3)

> We, as teachers, feel embarrassed when students remind us to check their copies. But I get only two periods free - and then also I have an 'arrangement' [serve as substitute teacher] . . . The 'strength' is really a lot. (5.2)

The majority of teachers tried to check the exercise books either in class or in their free periods in the staff room. (In fact, checking of copies was the only activity that was carried on almost with religious zeal in the staff room, in between informal chat about household affairs.) Teachers who checked in class could not check the work of all the students due to the limited time available. Hence the work of only some children (usually the ones in the front) was checked.

The teachers believed that their inability to check the work of all the students in a large class affects the motivation of the students to work. For example:

Children know that their turn won't come, e.g., when I'm checking copies - so they are quite relaxed. Now the same girls always show their work. Other girls know that I won't get closer to them. Then they give excuses that they were absent. If the number of students is less one can correct the number of copies submitted and identify the ones who haven't completed their work. (5.3)

Furthermore, they felt that they would not have faced this problem in a smaller class, thus:

Now what happens is that we check copies of children in the front or in the middle but not everyone. But if one had less children in the class, we could observe them better and try to help them in their work. (6.4)

Some teachers checked the exercise books only before the annual inspection or the final exams. However, they felt unhappy about not being able to provide immediate feedback to the students:

The main thing is correction. Even now I'm not satisfied with it. Each year it's the same. When revising we take their copies to correct. No immediate feedback can be given and checking at the end doesn't help them. (5.2)

The difficulty of checking in large classes also seems to affect the amount of written work given to the students. Thus one teacher confessed that:

"Also you are afraid that there may be so many copies to check, so that the amount of work given is less." (4.2)

Thus the inability of the teachers to check the work of all the students seems to have an adverse effect both on learner motivation and the amount of written work done in class.

5.2.4 Checking learner progress

In large classes teachers also find it difficult to check if all the students have understood the lesson or not. This is evident in the following excerpts from teacher interviews:

For example, if we do grammar - teach some grammar - then we want to check immediately whether they have understood or not, have written it or not; but we can't check this due to the number of children. Even if 2-4 children are called to the blackboard, we can check those children only. If there were less children we could go and look at their copies and find out if they'd noted it or not - whether they'd understood or not. But there are so many children that we can't do this. (6.4)

Now when we teach something we don't know how many students have understood it and how many haven't. If there were less students we could give them a test after teaching something; the

number should be such that at least we can check their work in one period and give immediate
feedback on their errors. But we can't do that now. (5.1)

Thus checking if all the students have understood the lesson or not and providing

immediate feedback to them seems to be another major concern of teachers in large

classes.

5.2.5   Time

The time available for teaching vis-a-vis the number of students in the classroom seems to

be another important source of difficulties for teachers in large classes. For example:

You teach so many children in such a short time of half an hour only - to explain to them, to
satisfy them is difficult. (6.4)

"And also one thing in learning more affects the teaching is the duration of the period - it is very
short for large classes. If the duration is much then we can achieve our aims in the class properly.
Now the class is so large and the time is so less, so we have a problem. If we had a 45 or 55
minutes class period then this size would have been manageable. This has a good effect." (4.2)

Several teachers reported that when the same amount of time has to be distributed

over a larger number of students, it prevents them from using certain instructional

techniques, to the extent that they would like to, in their classrooms. This leads to

professional dissatisfaction, as is evident in the following:

I'm not satisfied with my method of teaching due to the strength. They have given me such a
large number of students. I can't ask them questions as much as I'd like to because I have to think
about completing the lesson due to lack of time. (6.1)

Perhaps they understand but when the production stage comes, I don't have the time - I can't spend
the whole period in eliciting it from them so if I get a couple of answers I have to stay there [be
satisfied with it]. (4.2)

Several teachers observed that large classes were also non-conducive to certain kinds

of classroom activities, due to the limited time available in relation to the number of

students in the classroom. For example, Saira said that she wanted to do 'reading' but

found it difficult to do it in her large class. However, she believed that,

If there were less students, at least we could keep a day for reading [aloud], or if I read one day they
could do it the next day - even if four lines each. This is a real problem [now]. (5.3)

According to Sughra one of the reasons for students' difficulties in reading [aloud] in higher classes was the fact that they had had few opportunities to read aloud at an early stage due to large classes, thus:

> In class X not a single student can read well. Because in class IV if there are 100 students, the teacher can't make each student read a line each. We can't blame the children. In a class of 85 students, at least 40 students do want to learn. Even those who are not interested will be motivated if the number is less. (5.2)

Teachers, especially those who taught classes IX and X (the last two years of secondary school) felt under great pressure, particularly in large classes, to complete the syllabus for the final exams in the limited time available. Nighat explained it thus:

> This rush for exams that we are in - one reason for this is large classes because if the class is large we ask more children so it will take more time and if a lesson would normally take three days to complete, now it takes four days to do the same amount of work. Also the time spent in collecting copies, distributing them and checking them. (4.2)

She believed that in a smaller class she would have been able to teach 'a lot more in less time'. Also,'*Students would have got more opportunities to practise*' (my emphasis).

Bina taught both a large class and a smaller class in her school. She observed that it took her more time to do the same amount of work in her large class than in her smaller class. (This confirms Nighat's beliefs above.) Consequently she was able to do more work in her smaller size class, thus:

> "I can do more exercises with them or more examples with them [in the smaller class]. Because it takes less time, you can do more." (2.3)

Some teachers felt that, in large classes, time is also wasted in controlling the students, thus:

> "[In a large class] a lot of difficulties we have to face. We have 40 minutes period and in that period if we waste a little more time controlling the class we've lost time and not gained anything . . ." (2.1)

5.2.6 Opportunities for teaching and learning

The majority of teachers felt that their teaching style would remain the same even if the size of their present class was reduced. For example:

No, I don't think it would make any difference in teaching grammar even if there are less children - except the problem in checking which I've mentioned earlier. But it's in every subject - otherwise the teaching method will remain the same. (6.4)

Nighat observed that having a large number of students in the class caused more problems in the grammar lesson and in teaching writing than in teaching reading because, "When reading is the focus, all children are reading [silently] at least". However, "... in grammar individual drill is required to teach the structure so it is more difficult". Similarly she opined that it is difficult to teach writing in a large class because,

"I can't reach all the children to see what they are writing. I can only check two or four groups or even if it's pair work, I can only see three or four pairs - what have they written. I can't access all the students so eventually we come back to - we have to dictate the composition and letters." (4.2)

Nighat believed that the difference in teaching her present large classes and a smaller class (a hypothetical situation for her) would be a relative difference in terms of 'more or less' rather than in the kind of instructional techniques used in the classroom. Discussing what the nature of her teaching methodology would be in a smaller class in relation to her present class, she said:

"For me I think [in a larger class] I couldn't ask questions from other students which I wanted to ask. The weak students - I want to give a chance to all of them but I couldn't. In a small class everyone will get a chance to participate and every students will know that we have to give the answers, so they will be more attentive. Now they know that there is a slim chance of their getting a turn so they keep sitting and just listening." (4.2)

Similarly, she believed that the difference in her 'large' and 'very large' classes [once again a hypothetical situation] would not be in her teaching methodology but in the number of learning opportunities available for each student in the classroom, thus:

"No, the teaching style would be the same [even in a very large class] but more children wouldn't get asked a question. There would be less chance of individual opportunity." (4.2)

Another teacher, Sughra, could not visualise any difference in her teaching style even if there were fewer students in her class. However, she believed, as Nighat above, that smaller classes are more conducive to learning due to increased opportunities for learning available in the classroom. Thus according to her, in a smaller class, 'More children would have understood [because] each child would have been asked a question and

would therefore have worked harder. And the pass rate [in a smaller class] would also increase from 50% to 75%'. (5.2). Moreover,

> Now students think that only 5-6 students will get a turn in a class period. Then [in a smaller class] more students would get a turn and more students would learn because they won't want to be embarrassed in front of the whole class. (5.2)

Farida also believed that there would be no difference in her teaching style even if the size of her present class was reduced. However, she perceived the difference between large and smaller classes in terms of the conditions for learning available in the classroom, thus:

> With regard to the learners there is a difference in how clearly they can see or hear you. If I write on the blackboard, how can a student, especially if he has weak eyesight, see the blackboard in a class of 70 students? He would like to sit in the front which is not possible. (6.5)

When asked more specifically about the teaching of grammar in her present large class and a hypothetical smaller class, she said that she would not change her teaching methodology in a smaller class; though she believed that teaching a smaller class would involve less effort on her part because,

> Then I won't have to do it over and over again to make them understand. You must have seen it here that I have to explain one thing 2-3 times - so it won't be like this. If I explain anything even once they'll understand because the 'strength' will be less and even students at the back will be able to understand. (6.5)

A few teachers believed that they would use a different classroom methodology in a smaller class than they were presently using in their large classes. However, the difference was perceived once again in terms of 'degree' (more or less) than in the 'kind' of activities used in their present classes.[2] For example, these teachers felt that a smaller size class would help them in increasing their 'with-it-ness' in the classroom and enable them to give more practice exercises to the students.[3] For example:

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[2]This observation was first made by Hywel Coleman during a discussion on similar issues.

[3]Coleman (1989) hinted at the presence of a similar tendency in teachers' perceptions in Nigeria. In answer to a question about what activities they would use if they had a 'small' class, a hypothetical situation for most of them in this case, the teachers mentioned the same kinds of activities but felt that they would be able to do them better in a small class than they could do presently in their large classes.

There will be a difference both in text and grammar because we can do more 'verbal' [oral] exercises. For example, now I do 5 sentences - I can then do at least 10-15 because the students would be less. (6.1)

[In a smaller class] Students would have been able to learn grammar better. We could have given them more practice. (5.1)

A few other teachers who described their present classes as 'neither small nor large' conceded that, in comparison to large classes, it was easier for them to do several things in their smaller classes. However, they also believed that their teaching method would remain the same in 'small' classes. For example, Farhana said that if she had a 'small' class, 'I think I would have taught in the same manner'. But she was of the view that a smaller class facilitates her 'kind of teaching' which emphasises learner participation and understanding in the classroom, thus:

"Our concept is to teach them something, to make them understand - to tell them so they would keep it in their mind. So for this purpose more than this number would be too much. And you have to give attention to each student which you can't do with 60-65 children. I don't do a lot of 'matter' with the children but spend more time on the children. I spend my entire period trying to give a chance to each and every child in my class." (2.2)

Comparing her present English classes of 44 and 43 students which she perceived as 'neither small nor large' with her 'small' class (an advanced group of 18 students) where she taught Social Studies, she confessed that she had to make everything more explicit in her 'larger' classes because it was difficult to find out if everyone was understanding the lesson or not.

"So for that purpose, for large class we have to teach everything in detail. I have to make everything very clear so that they can easily get it. Because they are in a large number, I don't know whether they are getting my point or not so I have to teach and explain everything twice or thrice. But this would be the difference. They (students in the small class) are less in number and sharp students." (2.2)

Further she was convinced, as a result of her recent experience as a learner in large classes (she had started teaching a few months ago only), that large classes have a negative effect on both teaching and learning in the classroom because,

". . . for the teacher it's not possible to give attention to everyone. Then [in a large class] you won't be able to do anything - especially according to my way of teaching when I want everyone to participate. There won't be enough time for that and of course you can't do much in a day." (2.2)

Another teacher, Shahida, described her present class of 50 students as a 'manageable' number. She compared the experience of teaching this class with her earlier experience of teaching up to 80 students in previous years, mainly in terms of the teaching methodology used, thus: "At that time I just used lecture method, not putting them questions or let them individual participation (4.4)". However, an observation of her teaching practice in her present classes revealed that although she felt more positively towards smaller classes, she was largely using the same methodology, i.e. 'lecture-method', in her present class as reported for her large classes above.

Thus it seems that the majority of large class teachers do not imagine that they would bring about any change in their classroom methodology even if the size of their present classes were reduced. On the other hand, some teachers believe that they would use a different methodology in teaching smaller classes than the one they are using presently in their large classes. However, the difference is perceived largely in terms of a difference in 'degree', i.e., more or less, rather than a difference in the kinds of activities used in the classroom.

Another observation made by several large class teachers seems to be of interest here. The majority of large class teachers felt that there would be no change in their teaching methodology *even if the size of their class was larger than their present class.* They believed, however, that their difficulties would increase manifold in teaching 'very large' classes. On the other hand, teachers who described the size of their present classes as 'neither small nor large', and particularly those teachers who had no experience of teaching larger classes expressed a lot of concern at the prospect of teaching large classes. In fact they felt extremely unsure about their ability to handle large classes.

To summarise, there seems to be a widespread belief amongst the teachers that smaller classes are better than large classes. In fact the teachers' beliefs about the advantages of smaller classes are the mirror image of the difficulties experienced by them in their large classes. The teachers seem to see the difficulties in large classes in terms of

increased teacher stress and workload. They also believe that it would be easier to maintain control and discipline in a smaller class which, in turn, would lead to a decrease in the amount of stress and tension they face presently in teaching their large classes. Also, in a smaller class, with fewer students to 'keep an eye on' and with fewer exercise books (and test papers) to check teaching would be less taxing, physically, than it is in their present large classes. Similarly, it is believed that smaller classes would enable them to give more attention to the students and monitor their work in the classroom consequently increasing the level of learner interest and motivation in the classroom. Thus smaller classes are believed to be more conducive to achieving their shared 'ideal' of 'good' teaching and learning in the classroom (whatever the nature of that 'ideal' may be). The beliefs of teachers about their difficulties in large classes and the relative advantages of smaller classes are summarised in table 5.2.

The beliefs of teachers about teaching in large and smaller classes raise some important issues with regard to introducing an alternative methodology or innovations in large classes. Firstly, we need to consider whether, and to what extent, these beliefs are related to a) their unfamiliarity with alternative instructional and management techniques, and b) their unwillingness to change (even in the face of overwhelming problems in large classes). Secondly, we need to find out if, and to what extent, these teachers are prepared through teacher training courses to analyse their problems in large classes and to develop an alternative methodology that does not conflict with their own or the community's view of teaching and learning in the classroom. (For a detailed discussion of these and related issues about introducing innovations in large classes, see chapter 9.)

Category	Teachers' beliefs about difficulties in large classes	Teachers' beliefs about the advantages of smaller classes
Physical conditions in the classroom such as, limited space vis-a-vis the number of students in the classroom	Difficult for the students to sit and write comfortably	More space for the students to sit and write comfortably
	Difficult to do group and pair work	Relatively easier to do group and pair work
	Difficult to reach all the students in the classroom	Relatively easier to reach all the students in the classroom due to more space
	Physical discomfort for the teacher, e.g, in having to speak in a louder voice	Physical 'relaxation' for the teacher
Teacher attention, monitoring and control	Difficult to give attention, monitor and control the students	Relatively easier to give attention, monitor and control the students
Checking written work	More 'copies' to check (i.e., increased work load)	Fewer 'copies' to check
Checking learner progress/providing feedback	Difficult to check learner progress/provide immediate feedback	Relatively easier to check learner progress/provide immediate feedback
Time (vis-a-vis the number of students)	Difficult to explain to and/or 'satisfy' all students	
	More time required, e.g., to complete one topic	Less time required to do the same amount of work
	Difficult to do some classroom activities, e.g., reading aloud by the students	Relatively easier to do the same classroom activities
Opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom	Difficult to ask questions from all students and give adequate amount of practice, e.g., of grammatical items in class	Relatively easier to ask questions from all students and give adequate amount of practice
	Difficult for students to learn as fewer opportunities for learning are available in the classroom	Relatively easier for students to learn as more opportunities for learning are available in the classroom

Table 5. 2: Comparison of teachers' beliefs about their difficulties in large classes and the relative advantages of smaller classes

5.3 Learners' beliefs about larger and smaller classes

5.3.0 Introduction

One of the aims of the present study was to investigate how secondary school students in Pakistan feel about their experience of studying in large classes. The students were interviewed in groups and asked to reflect on their experience of studying in their present classes, whatever the size of their class may be. Later they were encouraged to think about the advantages and disadvantages of studying in their present classes particularly in relation to class size (see appendix 2 C).

The students who perceived their classes as 'large' or 'very large' were unanimous in their view that there are no advantages of being in a large class. Some of the views which they expressed are as follows:

> No, there are no advantages but disadvantages only [nuqsan hi nuqsan he]. (5.3.3)

> It just makes you go crazy. There can only be disadvantages but there is no advantage at all. (5.2.2)

> S1: There are no advantages. There are 85 girls in class X. It becomes very difficult.
> S2: There are no advantages. There are only disadvantages. (5.2.1)

> There is no advantage. There are disadvantages only [nuqsan hi nuqsan he]. (5.4.1)

> S1: There aren't any advantages.
> S2: The only advantage is that so many students get to be taught together.
> S3: No, Miss [there is no advantage]. (5.3.1)

(Several students described their experience of studying in tuition centres as more helpful where, amongst other things, the size of the classes is generally smaller than that in the schools.)

However, a group of students observed that having fewer than 20 students in the class was also not desirable because,

> S1: ... the number of bright students will also be less.
> S2: We'll have less friends - less girls to help each other. (2.3.1)

Similarly, a few other students conceded that there are also some advantages in large classes, such as having more friends in the class (5.2.1) and the possibility of finding allies during a fight amongst themselves or with boys in another class, thus:

S1: The only advantage is when we are involved in a fight.[4]
S2: Because [in a large class] you can then find a lot of bad boys [bigre hue larke] also. (6.1.3)

The students' experience and perceptions of studying in large and smaller size classes can be described in terms of the following categories:

1 Physical conditions in the classroom

2 Attention from the teacher

3 Understanding the lesson/learning

4 Opportunities for participation in classroom activities

5 Checking of written work

5.3.1 Physical conditions in the classroom

Overcrowdedness, i.e., not having enough space to sit comfortably, and limited work space seemed to be the most common problems of students in large classes[5]. Thus the students complained that,

S1: When more students are present four girls have to share a desk.
S2: Miss, our classroom is also very small.
S3: There is a lot of problem in sitting. (5.4.1)

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[4]The boys in this class were involved in a serious fight with boys in another class during my visit to the school. The teachers told me that it was a common affair and did not seem disturbed at all when scuffles broke out amongst the students outside the school gate. However, the teachers did try to arrange for negotiations between the leaders of the two groups in order to resolve their differences.

[5]As I entered these classrooms it was easy to see three and sometimes even four students sitting cramped together at desks meant for two students. Often one or two students moved to another desk to give me a seat. However, sometimes when I had to share the desk with two other students it became very difficult for me to write while holding on precariously to my seat at the same time.

Sometimes it also led to indiscipline in the classroom. This was reported by one student as follows:

> Sometimes students also fight with each other when there are three students at a desk. We have our bags also. (6.1.1)

The students also reported that overcrowded conditions in the classroom made it difficult for them to write neatly, thus:

> S1: Now three girls sit at each desk. When we write it is very difficult. The handwriting becomes very dirty and when you submit it for checking the teacher says it is dirty work.
> S2: The seating capacity is very less. There shouldn't be more than two girls at each desk - now there are 3-4 students at each desk and it gets very difficult to work. (5.3.2)

> S1: [We have a problem] ...When three students sit at a desk.
> S2: That's why I write in my rough copy here so I can write it neatly at home in my fair copy. (6.1.1)

> Or if three students are sitting at a desk it's difficult to write and there is a lot of pushing. (6.3.1)

> S1: Sometimes even four girls have to share a desk. Four girls sit on the front desks. It's a real problem.
> S2: When we write there isn't enough space for the copy. (5.4.1)

The amount of noise in the classroom, particularly in the free periods, also seemed to be a cause of concern for the students in their large classes, as it was seen as interfering with their work. For example, several brighter students complained that:

> S1: There's a lot of noise so even if we want to learn something we can't do it.
> S2: In free periods there is so much noise. (5.3.3)

> S1: With more girls there is a lot of noise and it disturbs us a lot.
> S2: If there's a free period and we want to learn something we can't do so due to the noise.
> S3: In class you just can't learn anything. (5.2.1)

> S1: There's more noise.
> S2: They disturb a lot. If we want to do some work in the free period or learn something, they [the girls] make so much noise that you just can't work. (5.3.1)

On the other hand, the students believed that with reduced numbers in the class there would be more space and less noise in the classroom. This proved to be true, at least in one class, when a number of students from this class were involved in practice for the forthcoming inter-school games competition. As the practice sessions were held during class hours, many students were absent from class during those days. Other students in

the class immediately felt the effects of having fewer students in the class. They reported this to me as follows:

> S1: [Usually] There is so much noise. These days it's so peaceful because some girls go for games practice.
> S2: We can sit two at a desk.
> S3: And there is also less noise. (5.4.1)

Interestingly, other students who did not have this experience of a smaller class (even if for a temporary period only) seemed to share these beliefs about smaller classes, thus:

> Now because there are more students, there is a lot of noise. Also if there were less students we could sit more comfortably. Now three students have to share a desk. Otherwise there would be two at a desk. (6.1.2)

> There would be less noise in the class. (6.1.1)

One group of students, from a smaller class, observed that one of the advantages of having twenty six or 'just the right number of students' in their present class was that they could understand the lesson easily. They felt that this was because all of them could hear the teacher which would not be possible in a large class. This is illustrated in the following comment by a student:

> We can understand what is taught by the teacher. In 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 less students the teacher can teach more comfortably. All of us can hear her and understand the lesson. (3.3.1)

Thus the students in large school classes in Pakistan seem to be particularly concerned about the lack of adequate space for seating and work space, as well as the amount of noise in their classroom.

5.3.2 Attention from the teacher

The fact that the teachers cannot 'see' all the students in a large class or give individual attention to all the students was mentioned as another disadvantage of studying in a large class. Thus several students said they could not study well in their large classes because,

> When there are more students teachers don't pay attention to everyone. With less number of students teachers can pay attention to everyone. Now with so many students we sit 3-4 at a desk so how can she give us individual attention. (5.3.3)

> Then we don't get the attention of the teacher. (5.3.1)

The teacher can't give attention to all the boys. (6.1.3)

The students believed that in a smaller class, the teacher would be able to 'keep an eye' on all the children and give them more attention. This seemed to be an important source of motivation for the students, as is illustrated by the following comments of the students:

[In a smaller class] Miss will also give us more attention. (5.3.3)

S1: There would have been more strictness in [a smaller] class.
S2: She would have kept an eye on everyone [sub per nazar rehti].
S3: And there would have been less mischief. If the number of students was less, the teacher would have been able to keep an eye on everyone and spot the miscreants easily. (4.2.2)

S1: Then [in a smaller class] Miss would have been able to keep an eye on everyone. With more students she finds it difficult to remember how each student studies. Fifty students means a lot of students - so [if there were less students] the teacher would have known each student personally and also how they were studying. She would have explained better. We are double in number from X B so she can't give us the same amount of attention that she gives them.
S2: Miss could have given all students individual attention. Now with boys in our class there is also a lot of noise. And teachers would have known how each one of us was working. They can't do that with fifty children. (2.3.2)

With less students in the class we would have got more individual attention; just as now for example, if there were less students [for the interview] instead of six. (3.4.1)

The students were of the view that it would be easier for them, in a smaller class, to get the attention of the teacher. Also it would be easier for the teacher to monitor the work of all the students in the classroom. This was observed by several students as follows:

[If the number of students is less] It's easier for the teacher. The teacher can pay more attention to each student. But if the students are more, all students won't get a chance. But the teacher's lecture would remain the same. So those students who are interested will pick up. (3.4.2)

S1: If there are less students no one can be careless.
S2: The teacher will be able to give more 'concentration' on each child. Ten students are enough. It's easier for the teacher than 49 students.
S3: Well, in Pakistan 25 students maybe. They can discuss very clearly. (2.3.2)

In fact, one student complained that, 'With an increase in the number of students, the teacher does not give us much attention. Earlier if we hadn't done our work the teacher scolded us' (6.1.1).

Several students said that they would prefer to have 20-25 students in the class, ' . . . so that we can all get attention from the teacher and consequently enjoy our studies [perhne men

maza ae]' (2.3.2). Moreover, in a smaller class, it would be difficult for anyone to hide behind the crowd. As a result, more students would pay attention to the lesson. The students explained their perception of this 'effect' of having a small class as follows:

> S1: They [the students] would have had to work more [in a smaller class] but it would have been good for them.
> S2: Everyone would have realised that they should work on time and study better to save themselves from embarrassment. (6.1.1)
>
> Miss, if there were less students, it would have been easier to pay attention to the work in class. (5.2.2)

One group of students who described the size of their present class as 'neither small nor large' felt that they got more attention from the teacher in their present class due to having fewer students in the class. This seemed to have important consequences for their classroom behaviour as well as learning, as can be seen in the following extract from their interview:

> S1: If there are less children and the teacher asks a student and he doesn't know the answer, he'll study and prepare the answer for next day.
> S2: The teacher should give more attention to students who are unable to answer so that they also get motivated to learn.
> S3: A lot of students in our class have improved in this way.
> S4: Like me.
> S5: Earlier on we didn't bother too much. Now when Sir asks us questions we pay more attention.
> S6: We have improved.
> S7: I've gained confidence that I can also answer questions. Initially when we came in class X we used to get very nervous.
> S8: We lacked courage. Now we've gained so much confidence that if another student can't answer we raise our hands or stand up and give the answer.
> S9: We have the confidence that this is the correct answer.
> S10: And even if it's not the correct answer, we know the teacher will correct us especially in Sir's class. (3.4.1)

Similarly, several other students who felt that they had smaller size classes (as compared to other 'large' classes in the school) said that one advantage of having a smaller class was that the teachers could give them more attention because, 'They can see us' (2.3.3).

Thus it seems that students in secondary schools in Pakistan place a high premium on the amount of attention they get from the teacher. Consequently the inability to get attention from the teacher in a large class can be very demotivating for them.

5.3.3 Understanding the lesson and learning

Some students believed that their performance had deteriorated in senior classes due to an increase in numbers in their class, thus:

> S1: There are so many girls now that we don't study properly.
> S2: It makes a lot of difference. (5.3.3)

One reason for their low performance could be the fact that, in a large class, the teachers are unable to identify the problems of different students and deal with them on an individual basis. Some learners certainly felt this to be the case:

> There are so many girls - It's a problem for Miss who to explain to [kis kis ko samjhaen]. (5.3.2)

> S1: There are so many students. How can Miss explain to everyone?
> S2: Then it is difficult for the students to understand. (6.1.2)

However, there seemed to be a general belief amongst the students that smaller classes would result in an increased understanding of their lessons. This was observed by several students as follows:

> S1: [In a smaller class] We'll understand better.
> S2: Then it would be easier to study. (6.1.2)

> If there are less students, the girls would be able to understand better. (5.3.3)

> [If there were less students] We would have understood better. (2.3.2)

5.3.4 Opportunities for participation

Some learners complained that they did not get an opportunity to answer questions in class. For example:

> We 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. (5.2.1)

> Miss can't ask questions from a lot of girls. (5.2.2)

(Answering teachers' questions is the only form of learner participation in school classes in Pakistan, except reading aloud and writing on the blackboard - which are privileges granted to a few 'good' students only.)

At least one group of students (3.4.1) believed that in a smaller class all the students would get an opportunity to participate thereby facilitating their learning in the classroom.

5.3.5 Checking of written work

The difficulty in checking written work was mentioned as a teachers' problem by some students, as is illustrated by the following comment of a student:

> If there are 100 students in a class, teachers have to check copies along with teaching - so it's really difficult for them. (5.3.3)

The difficulty in getting work checked by the teacher was not mentioned more frequently probably because the majority of the interviewees were either 'good' or 'better' students from the 'front' of the class (see chapter 3, section 3.4.3) whose work was checked in any case, i.e., even if the teacher checked the exercise books of a few students in the class only. (Also see chapter 8, section 8.6.)

Several students were of the view that reduced numbers in the class would help the teachers in checking their work more promptly, for example:

> "If there are 25 students, the student will not confuse. Exact time teacher will correct all the copies - in exact minute, time and place." (2.3.1)

One group of students who perceived their class as 'neither small nor large' mentioned the regular checking of their work by the teacher as an advantage of having a smaller class as compared to other classes in their school:

> S1: "It's easy for the teacher to explain to us and check our work.
> S2: Our copies are checked on time." (2.3.3)

The beliefs of the students about the advantages of smaller classes seem to match, as in the case of the teachers above, the problems they experience in their large classes. Thus the students perceived the benefits of having a smaller class mostly in terms of the availability of better conditions for learning in the classroom such as, more space to sit and to do their work, less noise and consequently their ability to hear the teacher, and a greater amount of attention from the teacher in the classroom.

The beliefs of the learners about studying in large and smaller classes can be seen more clearly in table 5.3 below.

Category	Students' beliefs about difficulties in large classes	Students' beliefs about advantages of smaller classes
Physical conditions in the classroom	Overcrowded conditions in the classroom and therefore less space to sit	More space in the classroom to sit comfortably
	Limited work space	More work space
	More noise in the classroom	Less noise in the classroom
Attention from the teacher	Less attention from the teacher	More attention from the teacher
	Difficult for the teacher to 'keep an eye' on all the students	Relatively easier for the teacher to keep an eye on all the students
Understanding the lesson and learning	Difficult to understand the lesson	Relatively easier to understand the lesson
Opportunities for participation in classroom activities	Difficult to get opportunities to answer questions in class	Relatively easier to get opportunities to answer questions in class
Checking of written work	Difficult to get 'copies' checked on time	Relatively easier to get 'copies' checked on time

Table 5.3: Comparison of learners' beliefs about their difficulties in large classes and the relative advantages of smaller classes

5.4 Comparing teachers' and learners' beliefs about larger and smaller classes

There seems to be no doubt that both teachers and learners in secondary schools in Pakistan consider the teaching and learning of English as problematic in large classes. It is also quite clear that both teachers and learners would prefer to teach and learn in classes that are smaller than the size of their present classes. Moreover, a look at tables 5.2 and 5.3 above reveals that both teachers and learners use very similar parameters for describing their difficulties in large classes and the advantages of smaller classes.

As mentioned earlier, the participants' beliefs about the advantages of smaller classes seem to be a mirror image of the problems experienced by them in their present large classes, irrespective of how large the size of their present class may be. Thus if the beliefs of teachers and learners about larger and smaller size classes are viewed in terms of a cline of class size from 'small' to 'very large', it would be easy to see that the differences are perceived, both by teachers and learners, in terms of 'more or less' or as a relative difference in the difficulty and/or ease of doing the same kinds of things in classes of varying size. In fact this almost one-to-one relationship between participants' beliefs about difficulties in large classes and the advantages of smaller classes indicates the presence of a shared culture of teaching and learning which seems to cut across the variable of class size in school classes in Pakistan. (The culture of teaching and learning as observed in classes of varying size will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7.)

Thus it seems that both teachers and learners feel that smaller classes will make them do *better* the same kind of things which they are doing now in their large classes but which they are perhaps not able to do so well due to the size of their class. Also, both teachers and students feel that in smaller classes, the teachers would be able to monitor the activities of the students in the classroom, check their written work and keep track of their progress which will have a positive effect on student motivation and learning in the classroom.

To conclude, it seems right to say, in the light of the above evidence, that a) both teachers and students face difficulties in large classes and prefer to teach and learn in smaller classes, b) both teachers and students perceive the differences in large and smaller size classes in terms of *degree* (more or less) rather than in the *kind* of experiences in classes of varying size.

5.5 Teachers' and learners' beliefs about the effects of class size

The above data indicates that there is a great deal of similarity in the beliefs of teachers and learners about the effects of class size. Moreover, the effects of teaching and learning in large classes are felt by the participants, particularly, in four areas. They are as follows:

1 Physical conditions in the classroom

2 Teacher stress and workload

3 Learner motivation and 'time-on-task'

4 Opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom

Thus, firstly, it seems that the effect of large classes is perceived in terms of physical conditions such as overcrowdedness, limited space and noise in the classroom. This causes physical discomfort for both the teacher and the students. But, more importantly, it restricts the movement of the teacher thereby preventing him/her from reaching all the students; also it makes it difficult for the teacher to do group work in these classes. The students also find it difficult to see the blackboard and hear the teacher clearly which in turn makes it difficult for them to understand the lesson in the classroom.

Secondly, as the teachers are unable to 'see' all the students in a large class, they find it physically taxing to 'keep an eye' on all the students and to monitor their work ('Even if girls copy from each other the teacher does not get to know' (5.4.1)). Further, their inability to do so effectively seems to be a source of anxiety for both the teachers and the learners. On one hand, the teachers undergo a lot of stress and tension in trying to keep an eye on all the students in the classroom; on the other, the students pay less attention to the lesson and indulge in talking and other non- productive activities in the classroom ("They neglect as the teacher is not watching them" (4.4)). This leads to problems of

control and, therefore, an increased amount of stress for the teacher. Moreover, teachers have more 'copies' to mark which leads to an increase in their workload.

Thirdly, the physical conditions in the classroom, along with the fact that the teachers cannot give individual attention to all the students, seems to increase the likelihood of some learners, who are not already highly motivated, to become careless and lose interest in their work. In addition, if their work is not checked by the teacher, due to the large number of students in the class, they feel less motivated to do their work in the classroom or complete it at home.

Fourthly, due to the limited time available in the classroom vis-a-vis the number of students, the teacher finds it difficult, for example, to 'do reading [aloud]' and give the students as much practice in the use of grammar items as is considered necessary for the students to become proficient in the language. Thus there are fewer opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom.

However, both teachers and learners seem to believe that with reduced demands on existing resources (including the teacher who is a scarce resource in a large class, in any case) each student will have a bigger share of the available resources, such as space to work, attention from the teacher etc. leading to increased opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom.

There also exist a few differences between the beliefs of teachers and learners, due to the difference in their perspectives, about the emphasis or priority accorded to various difficulties in large classes and their effects on teachers, students and teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus, for example, the teachers reported the physical conditions in large classes mainly in terms of overcrowding (physical discomfort for the students) and their inability to reach all the students in the classroom. On the other hand, the learners mentioned physical conditions in large classes, such as limited work space, in terms of physical discomfort but, more importantly, as conditions for learning in the classroom; the students further believed that the lack of adequate work space etc. can have

a negative effect on their immediate classroom performance as well as motivation and learning in the long term.

5.6 The nature of teachers' and learners' difficulties in large school classes in Pakistan

Is the nature of teachers' and learners' difficulties in large classes context-specific or universal across varying teaching-learning situations in different parts of the world?

In this section I will compare teachers' and learners' difficulties in large school classes in Pakistan with similar reports from large classes in other parts of the world. The aim is to investigate if, and to what extent, the nature of teachers' and learners' difficulties in large classes in Pakistan is similar to and/or different from the problems reported by the participants in different educational contexts, both in developing countries as well as in the developed 'West', such as North America.

The findings of the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project indicate that the problems of teachers in large classes mainly hinge around the difficulty in giving 'individual attention' to the learners (however individual attention may be defined by different teachers, i.e., as difficulty in keeping an eye on and closely supervising the work of all the students, or as identifying the problems of each student and consequently providing him/her with individual help), and correcting written work. Teachers also seem to be concerned about the difficulty in using some instructional and management techniques effectively in their large classes due to the specific characteristics of large classes in these situations, such as, limited space and shortage of time vis-a-vis the number of students in the classroom (e.g., Coleman:1991c; Coleman: 1990; McLeod:1989; Sabandar:1989; LoCastro:1989). These problems seem to be related closely to the transmission mode of teaching, which is still prevalent in developing countries such as Pakistan, the traditional role of the teacher as 'knower', and the relatively passive role of the learners in the classroom.

On the other hand, the problems reported by teachers in large classes in North America and Britain, particularly at the tertiary level, seem to be related directly to increased numbers in the classroom (e.g., Gibbs and Jenkins:1992; McGee:1986b). Thus the frequently mentioned problems in large classes include: difficulty in planning and organising the large course (often with the help of teaching assistants, whose numbers also increase in relation to the size of a course); providing a large number of handouts and copies of reading material; and working out a system of evaluation where most of the papers can be scored quickly and objectively (e.g., by a computer), as against essays and subjective tests used earlier. There also seems to be a general concern amongst these teachers about making the teaching and learning in large classes more interactive and interesting in order to 'maintain quality with reduced resources' (Gibbs and Jenkins:1992).

Thus there seems to be a striking similarity between the problems mentioned by teachers in Pakistan and those reported by teachers in other developing countries, where large classes are also seen as a 'fact of life' in their teaching-learning situation. In contrast, the difficulties of teachers in large classes in Pakistan are vastly different from the problems identified by teachers in Britain and North America where large classes, particularly at the tertiary level, are only a part of the experience of both the teachers and the learners in their academic life.

As mentioned earlier very little research work has been done on learners' perception of large classes particularly in developing countries. However, it seems that for learners the organisation of large group instruction is as important a variable in shaping their attitudes towards large classes as is the number of students in their class (see chapter 1, section 1.3.2). However, learners also seem to be worried about the anonymity of the large class situation and the difficulty of forming relationships with tutors (Ward and Jenkins:1992). The findings of the present study indicate that the learners in school classes in Pakistan are mainly concerned about the difficulty of getting attention from the

teacher. They are also worried about the non-availability of some basic conditions for learning in the classroom, such as space to sit comfortably and to work, which they believe has serious consequences for their motivation and learning in large classes.

The beliefs of teachers and learners about difficulties in teaching and learning in large school classes in Pakistan raise an additional question:

What are the likely determinants of the difficulties reported by the participants in large classes (whatever the number of students in the class may be, i.e., 44 or 93)? In other words, are the problems in large classes a result of large numbers only? Secondly, to what extent are participants' difficulties in large classes related to other variables in the teaching-learning situation, such as level and the 'culture' of teaching and learning in the immediate educational context?

This question will be discussed in chapter 10 in the light of the findings of the present study as well as the results of some previous research studies available in this area.

5.7   Summary and conclusion

To summarise, I began by looking at how teachers see large and smaller size classes in secondary schools in Pakistan. This was followed by an investigation of how learners in the same situation feel about the experience of studying in classes of varying size. It was revealed that teachers' and learners' beliefs about the advantages of smaller classes were a mirror image of the difficulties which they experienced in their large classes. Moreover, the participants perceived the differences between varying size classes largely in terms of 'degree' rather than in the 'kind' of teacher-learner behaviour in the classroom. In other words, the differences were perceived mainly in regard to the ease or difficulty of doing (or not doing) something which they considered desirable.

The beliefs of teachers and learners about larger and smaller size classes were compared next. It was found that both teachers and learners consider large classes as

problematic. Moreover, it was established that all participants prefer to teach and learn in classes which are smaller in size than the size of their present class, whatever the size of their present class may be. It was also discovered that the effects of class size are perceived by the participants in at least four areas, viz, physical conditions in the classroom, teacher stress and workload, learners' motivation and 'time-on-task' and opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom. Finally, a comparison of the nature of participants' difficulties in large school classes in Pakistan with similar reports from other parts of the world revealed that there is a great deal of similarity in teachers' problems in teaching large classes in developing countries. Furthermore, there are some fundamental differences in the nature of teachers' problems in developing countries, such as Pakistan, and teachers in large classes in the developed 'West'.

To conclude, it can be said that the difficulties faced by teachers and learners in large school classes in Pakistan are 'real' and need to be confronted directly both by teacher educators as well as the teachers and students themselves; more importantly, they need to be analysed in relation to other teacher-learner variables (see chapters 9 and 10) before any solutions or alternative methodology can be suggested for large classes.

CHAPTER 6

TEACHER-LEARNER BEHAVIOUR AND CLASSROOM PROCESSES IN 'LARGER' AND 'SMALLER' SIZE CLASSES: I

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will look at teacher and learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size, i.e., 'large', 'very large', and 'neither small nor large'. (A total of 232 lessons were observed in varying size classes of 22 teachers in six secondary schools in Karachi, Pakistan. For details of sampling procedure see chapter 3; for teachers and learners' perceptions of the size of their classes, see chapter 4). This will be done in terms of the activity types that seem to comprise the teaching and learning process for the participants. The model of teaching and learning underlying the shared culture of teaching in varying size classes will also be described. (Individual lessons in varying size classes taught by different and the same teachers will be looked at more closely in chapter 7.)

6.2 Activity types: A framework for describing the process of teaching and learning in classes of varying size

The notion of activity type was first put forward by Levinson (1980) in the context of language use. According to him, an activity type, 'refers to any culturally recognised activity, whether or not that activity is co-extensive with a period of speech or whether any talk takes place at all'. Furthermore, an activity type refers, in particular,

> to a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with *constraints* on participants, setting and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions (p. 368).

Levinson cites teaching as one example of an activity type.

For the purpose of the present study, the concept of teaching as an activity type has been extended in two ways: horizontally, to include the related activity of learning, and vertically, by conceiving of the teaching-learning process as comprising activity types at various 'levels'. Thus the activity type 'teaching and learning' can be divided and subdivided into a subset of activity types which can further consist of sub-activities or task clusters with accompanying teacher-learner behaviours.

The observation of teaching and learning in different size classes revealed that some activity types and teacher-learner behaviours seem to represent the 'core' of the teaching-learning process for the participants. On the other hand, there are several activity types which are perceived to have an enhancing function only. If the varying activity types, and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours within each activity type, were to be placed on a scale from optional to obligatory, the 'core' activity types can be described as obligatory as they seem to define the act of teaching for the participants. In contrast, other activity types, and even some teacher-learner behaviours within core activity types which have an enhancing function only, are viewed as optional. Thus while all teachers feel obliged to follow the core activity types in their classrooms, whatever the size of their class may be, the activity types with an enhancing function are left out easily under different constraints such as, the pressure of time or larger numbers in the class. Some other differences between 'core' and 'enhancing' activity types were also noted. These can be seen in table 6.1.

If we look at the various dimensions of activity types (table 6.1) in terms of a continuum from core to enhancing activities we find that core activity types are more rigid in their structure. Furthermore, they have a narrow but well defined goal, i.e., to prepare the students for the exams. Another characteristic of core activity types is that, being

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[1]The pattern of 'core' and 'enhancing' activity types found in school classes in Pakistan seems parallel to conversational routines found in different types of encounters (e.g., Coulmas:1981). In the present study the pattern of 'core' and 'enhancing' activity types helped in explaining the individual differences between teachers within a shared culture of teaching and learning in the classroom.

routine activities which are repeated year after year irrespective of the kinds of learners in the classroom, they require very little preparation on the part of the teacher after the first year or two. Moreover, teachers even with a fairly low proficiency in English often manage to do core activity types, which are more textbook dependent, in their classrooms. Moreover, the high predictability of the pattern of classroom interaction and the relatively lower level of learner participation in core activity types makes it easier for the teacher to control the students.

Dimensions of activity types	Core	Enhancing
Nature	Closed and repetitive	Open-ended and mostly one-off
Purpose	Preparing for exams	Understanding/learning
Frequency of use	Often	Sometimes
Amount of teacher preparation required	Very little (after the first time)	A lot (usually)
Amount of risk involved for the teacher	Low	High
Degree of proficiency required in English by the teacher	Low	High
Predictability of interaction	High	Low
Expected noise level	Low	High
Reliance on the textbook	High	Low
Time required	Less	More
Expectation of success	High	Low
Level of learner participation	Low	High
Difficulty level	Many learners can do it	Fewer learners can do it

Table 6.1: Characteristics of 'core' and 'enhancing' activity types in school classes in Pakistan

In contrast, enhancing activity types are more open-ended. Consequently they require the teacher to have a higher degree of proficiency in English. In addition, compared to core activity types, generally a greater amount of planning and preparation is required to

do enhancing activities in the classroom. Moreover, as enhancing activity types are *both learner and learning-oriented* it is difficult to predict the pattern of classroom interaction with any certainty in these activities. As a result, the teachers find it difficult to use enhancing activity types in their classrooms, particularly if they have large classes. Thus as will be seen below (and further in chapter 7), enhancing activities are used very infrequently, compared to core activities, in large school classes in Pakistan.

6.3   A description of teaching and learning of English in larger and smaller size school classes in Pakistan

6.3.1   Introduction

The process of teaching and learning in all the schools, which were visited for the purpose of the study, seems to consist of two major activity types: 1) teaching and learning in the classroom and 2) testing or examinations, which ostensibly had the function of measuring learner progress but which seemed to have a far greater influence on what happened in the classrooms in terms of teacher and learner behaviour and other classroom processes.

Teaching and learning in the classroom seems further to comprise three 'core' activity types:

1) 'Doing a lesson (text)' from the prescribed textbook, which includes 'reading'[2] a text and doing exercises which follow the text or the reading passage in the textbook

2) 'Doing grammar' which includes the teaching/learning of grammatical items and structures as well as writing of essays, applications and letters

3) Checking of 'text' and 'grammar copies'.

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[2]Reading here refers to reading the text aloud as well as other activities that were directed at literal understanding of the text or 'reading the lines' only, such as word-to-word translation of the reading passage.

Similarly, testing or examinations seem to consist of at least three activity types: preparation or the pre-examination stage comprising teaching and revising the answers in class, the latter often through frequent repetition in the classroom; the actual giving and taking of the examination; and the checking of the examination papers. Thus checking is an essential component of the two activity types dominant in the teaching-learning process, i.e teaching and learning in the classroom and testing or examinations.

The relationship between the different levels of 'core' activity types within the activity type 'teaching and learning' can be seen more clearly in figure 6.1.

6.3.2 Teaching and learning in the classroom

In this section I will look more closely at the activity types 'doing a lesson (text)', 'doing grammar' and 'checking' that seem to form the 'core' of the teaching-learning process in the classroom. These activity types will be described in terms of the sub-activities and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours within each activity type. For this purpose, the operational definitions which were used by the participants, both in formal and informal discussions to discuss the subjective reality of their experience in different size classes, will be used as far as possible.

6.3.2.1 Doing a lesson (text)

As mentioned above, one major activity type in all the classrooms was 'doing a 'lesson' from the text book (usually a reading passage followed by a set of comprehension questions based on the text and some other unrelated grammar exercises). Before we make any further attempt to describe the behaviour of teachers and learners in the activity type 'doing a lesson (text)', it would be useful to look inside a classroom and follow the teaching-learning of a 'lesson', which always began with the reading of the 'text' in the prescribed textbook and was perceived as completed after the exercises which followed the reading passage had been done. This process normally required several class hours.
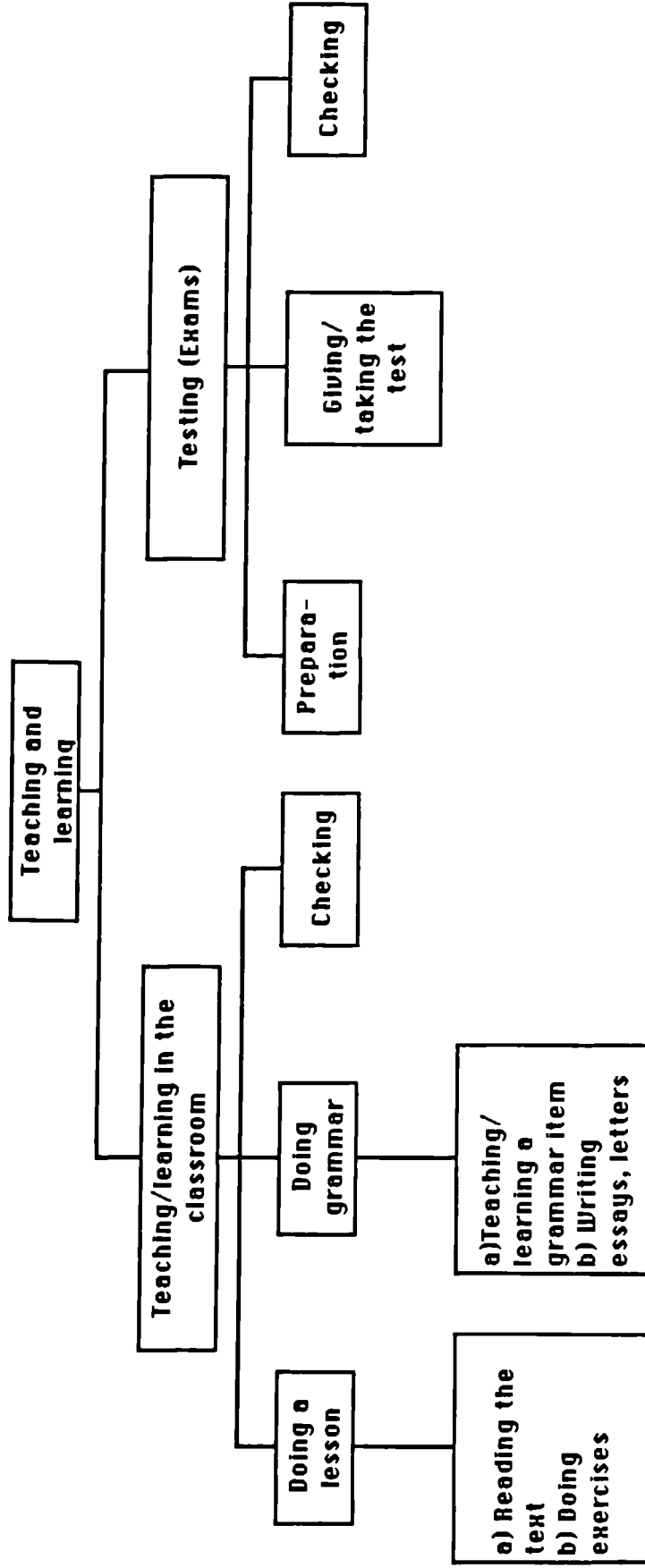
Figure 6.1: Levels of activity types in the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in Pakistan

The following account of 'doing a lesson (text)' is spread over four class hours and is extracted from my classroom observation notes. It represents a typical lesson of this kind in classes of varying size visited during the study. (For a complete version of the classroom observation notes on this 'lesson' see appendix 6 A)

Day 1 (CO 1):

74 students are present out of a total of 93 students.

The students are in class VIII (third year of secondary school). The room is full to capacity with students sitting on dual desks (often three at a desk). The desks are arranged in four rows with narrow pathways in between. Although the windows are open the room is very stuffy. There is a teacher's desk and chair in the front of the room. The teacher has easy access to the blackboard from where she sits.

The students stand up to greet me as I enter the class. I walk to the back of the class and perch precariously on a dual desk, sharing it with two other girls. The desk does not have enough work space for the three of us. Seeing my discomfort in taking notes one of the girls puts her book down on her lap.

The teacher tells the students to take out their books and open them on Page 64. They are also told to take out their 'copies' to write 'words-meanings'. As the students take out their textbooks and exercise books, the teacher writes the title of the lesson on the blackboard: 'The Nobel Prize'. (It is a fairly long reading text from the prescribed textbook, followed by comprehension questions and some unrelated grammar exercises.)

The teacher selects a student to read from amongst 6 or 7 students in the first two rows who offer to read by raising their hands. The selected student stands up and reads aloud the first paragraph. The teacher corrects her pronunciation and/or prompts by modelling a word or a phrase whenever required. The teacher reads the same paragraph again stopping after each phrase and sometimes even after a 'difficult' word to translate it into Urdu. All the students follow in their books. The teacher pauses occasionally to write a difficult word and its meaning (in Urdu) on the blackboard which the students copy with great alacrity in their exercise books. The procedure continues till the end of the class hour. During this time the students continue to sit passively, with their heads down, listening (apparently!) and copying mechanically (it seems to me) from the blackboard. All students have their books open in front of them. Most of the time there is complete silence in the classroom.

[The students seem to be familiar with this procedure and fully conversant with classroom rules. No instructions are given by the teacher and no clarifications are required by the students. There seems to be perfect harmony between the teacher and the students. As the teacher continues in her 'robot-like' manner I have to make a real effort to keep myself awake. The teacher makes no effort to make eye contact with the students. In fact, she keeps her eyes glued to the book both while reading and translating the text.][3]

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[3]Square brackets indicate researcher's comments (either made at the time or added subsequently soon after the lesson) based on an interpretation of the situation observed in a classroom.

Day 1 (CO 2):

The same procedure continues in the next class with the only difference that this time the students are not given an opportunity to read. The teacher is in a hurry to complete the lesson (she says so a couple of times during the lesson) and *therefore* does not waste time in making the students read aloud first.

Day 2 (CO 3):

The third lesson is devoted to doing the exercises following the text. As the teacher reads out the questions, about three or four students volunteer to answer by raising their hands. Often the teacher translates the questions into Urdu. If the selected student cannot answer correctly, the teacher provides the answer herself which the students mark in their books. Most of the students do not even make an effort to answer but wait to take down the answers given by the teacher. Some students who volunteer to answer have the answers already written down in their books. The student sitting next to me tells me she is using her brother's book from the previous year. Hence all the answers are already marked in the book.

The teacher addresses questions to students sitting in the front and centre of the room only. She neither encourages nor expects (I think) students in the middle or the back rows to answer the questions or participate in any other way. The exercises are done in a mechanical fashion.

The students are told to copy down the same exercises in their fair copies for homework.

Day 3 (CO 4)

(The first part of the lesson is a continuation of the exercises that were being done in the previous class.)

The teacher announces: 'page 71' and immediately begins to read the next exercise from the textbook: 'Rearrange words in their correct order'. One student answers. The teacher calls out the number of each word in the first sentence. She continues with this procedure for all the sentences in the exercise.

(There is a lot of noise in the corridor outside. Some students are cleaning the compound. Others are putting up charts on the notice board outside the Head's office in preparation for the annual inspection of the school next week.)

A student comes in to talk to the teacher. The teacher talks to her briefly and continues with the lesson as before. Sometimes a few students ask the teacher to repeat the answers which she does in a mechanical fashion, for example: 'he, no.4; received, no.5; the, no. 6; Nobel, no.7'.

The students are told that they will also get dictation in their half yearly exams scheduled to begin in a week's time. After completing the exercises the teacher sits down at her desk in front of the class. She now gives the students the syllabus for the forthcoming exams. I can't see her or hear her clearly from where I am sitting at the back of the class. The teacher announces the syllabus: 'Translation from English to Urdu - any paragraph from your textbook; Urdu to English translation of sentences in different tenses'.

The remainder of the lesson continues in the same way with the teacher giving further examples of question types for their half yearly exams. All this while the students look at the teacher and/or the blackboard. They all seem to be listening very attentively. Several students are copying down the examples which she writes on the blackboard. She tells them not to copy down everything but just listen to her and try to understand the pattern of the questions.

A look at the above account of a reading (text) 'lesson' as well as similar lessons in different size classes (see appendix 6 B) establishes that 'doing a lesson (text)' includes, minimally, the following activity types:

a) Reading the text

b) Doing the exercises following the text (followed by the students 'writing' them in their 'fair copies').

It was required, as part of the syllabus, for all the teachers to do a set number of 'lessons' from the prescribed textbook for the half yearly as well as the final or end of year exams. Hence 'doing a lesson', also referred to as teaching the 'text', was perceived as one complete unit of teaching which began with reading the text aloud and was deemed as completed after the exercises had been done in class as well as in their 'fair copies' by the students. Usually it took 3-4 class hours to complete a 'lesson' after which the teacher would, ideally, check the work of the students[4] Table 6.2 shows the subset of activity types 'reading the text' and 'doing exercises' with accompanying teacher-learner behaviours, within the activity type 'doing a lesson (text)', as observed in a number of classes which were described variously by the teachers as 'very large', 'large' and 'neither small nor large'.

The pattern of teacher and learner behaviours that accompanied the activity types 'reading the text' and 'doing exercises' was found to be stable across classes of varying size and seems to form a set of 'core behaviours' in doing a lesson (text) in the

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[4]Teachers who were not able to check the work of the students after each 'lesson' was completed due to the large number of students in their class felt guilty about not doing their job properly (see chapter 5).

classroom. The teachers used different strategies to ensure that learners followed these

'expected norms' of behaviour. For example, one teacher used one of the students in her

class as a teacher-aide. The students' job was to walk around the classroom, while the

teacher was teaching, to ensure that the students were looking at the book and following it

as she read aloud the text and that they looked at the teacher when she translated and

explained the text (see also chapter 8).

Activity type	Teacher behaviour	Learner behaviour
a) Reading the text	The teacher reads the text aloud from the textbook.	Students (SS) listen quietly following it in their books with their heads bent and eyes down (looking into their books).
	The teacher translates the text into Urdu and/or explains the meaning by paraphrasing it in her own words and giving further examples.	SS listen (apparently) looking at the teacher and/or the textbook.
	The teacher gives meanings of difficult words (identified by the teacher) on the BB in Urdu and/or English.	SS copy down 'words-meanings' into their exercise books.
b) Doing exercises	The teacher gives answers to questions/exercises, either orally or by writing them on the BB.	SS either mark answers in their textbooks and copy them later in their 'fair copies', or they copy 'questions-answers' from the BB

Table 6.2: The subset of core activity types and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in 'doing a lesson (text)'

6.3.2.2 Doing grammar

Another activity type, which was normally found in the teaching and learning of English

in almost all the classes which were observed, was 'doing grammar'. The teaching of

grammar was perceived by the participants as separate from the teaching of text, thus,

> The way we do it here - we have to teach grammar as a separate portion, for example, we have first to do nouns, pronouns, verbs, tenses etc. (1.2)

> In grammar it is really what is given to them which they have to learn [bus jo likhva dia vohi yaad kerne ka hota he]. If they make an effort to write or learn on their own, it would help. Now, for example, essay - so we have already given it to them [to vo likhvaya hua he] or application or letter. (5.3)

The distinction between 'text' and 'grammar' was also reflected in the division of marks in the final exams:

" ... what we mean by grammar in our context is that if the total marks of the English paper are 75, 50 marks are allocated to grammar, that is, if we also include essay and application and letter in grammar." (6.2)

The students were required to maintain two separate exercise books for text and grammar work. (In fact one of the most often asked questions by the students in any class, when they were told to copy down something from the blackboard, was , 'Miss, in text or grammar copy'?)

'Doing grammar' included the following two core activity types, mainly for the purpose of exam preparation:

a) the teaching/learning of some grammatical items or structures such as active and passive voice; and

b) the writing of essays, applications and letters.

The teaching/learning of a grammatical item comprised, minimally, the following sub-activities:

a) giving of definitions and grammar rules by the teacher (often in Urdu); and

b) doing some practice exercises to 'master' the given rules.

A group of students described how they were taught grammar in their class, as follows:

Whatever she teaches us in grammar first she gives us the definition. Then how it is formed, object, subject etc. Then she explains. First she explains herself. Then she asks different boys in class, turn by turn. (6.3.1)

Similarly, writing of essays, applications and letters involved, minimally, the giving of the essay, letter etc. to the students by the teacher, either by writing it on the blackboard or by guiding them in how to copy it from the 'key' or 'grammar book'[5]

As in the reading or 'text' lessons above, the 'core' activity types in 'doing grammar' were also identifiable by a set of accompanying teacher and learner behaviours in varying size classes. They are summarised in table 6.3. (For examples of teaching/learning a grammatical item, see appendix 6 C; for teaching of writing see appendix 6 D.)

Activity type	Teacher behaviour	Learner behaviour
a) Doing a grammatical item/structure	The teacher gives the definition of, for example, a proper noun and some rules of use	SS copy down the definitions and rules in their exercise books
	The teacher gives some practice exercises	SS do the practice exercises (either orally or in writing in class) and copy them later in their 'fair copies'
b) Writing essays, letters etc.	The teacher gives the essay or letter to the SS (either by dictating it to them or referring them to the relevant portion in a 'grammar' book, or by writing it on the BB)	SS copy the essay or letter from the BB or the 'grammar' book (or if it is dictated in class, they copy it later from their 'rough copies' to their 'fair copies')

Table 6.3: **The subset of core activity types and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in 'doing grammar'**

Furthermore, both the teachers and learners seemed to share the following beliefs about the teaching and learning of a grammatical item or structure in the classroom:

a)   Grammar is a knowledge system comprising a set of finite rules:

This view about the nature of grammar (and consequently how it should be taught)

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[5]One grammar book that was used extensively for this purpose in all the schools was: Pak Secondary School English Grammar and Composition, by Efzal Anwar Mufti, published by Qaumi Kutub Khana, Lahore. 1989 (58th edition). (It was first published in 1952.) Some other popular books by the same author are: Active and Passive voice (Made Easy), Direct and Indirect Narration (Made Easy), Translation (Made easy) and Tenses (Made Easy).

was held by the majority of teachers and students, and is illustrated in the following

comment by a teacher:

If we want to teach articles, I make a table to explain the different kinds of articles. I also use a table to teach tenses. In this way they understand better. It's like maths. For example, I teach present tense through brackets. I make them draw them even in their copies. So they understand well. Those who want to can understand easily. Then they do exercises - 10-12 sentences in class; then more sentences are given to do at home. In 9th and 10th we repeat tenses again and again because of active/passive and direct/indirect. Also translation is very important in teaching grammar - kinds of tenses, what they are called in Urdu, what form of verb is used, etc. I have made my own tables in my copy because in books they give complicated tables. I give small sentences as examples because in grammar books the sentences are very complex which students find difficult to understand. (5.2)

A group of students from this class reported that, instead of repeating the rules for

tenses and active/passive voice, their teacher had told them to copy down these rules

from their copies of previous year. (She had taught them English in the previous year

also.)

b) Learning the rules of grammar and tenses facilitates the learning of

English: The teachers observed that grammar was very important for learning a

language, thus:

"Grammar is like crown to the king. The king is to his kingdom as grammar is to language. Grammar - it controls them. If I speak, 'I want to buy two book' it sounds odd. People will understand but we should give it importance." (3.4)

In order to learn any language you need to know the rules of grammar. If you don't know these then it's difficult to learn or understand any language. (6.6)

Likewise, all the students professed the importance of 'knowing' grammar for

learning English, for example:

We like everything but I think the main thing in learning English is tenses. You can't learn English till you know the tenses. (5.2.2)

However, they seemed to have difficulty in 'learning' grammar, as is evident in the

following observation by two students:

S1: It's easier to understand.
S2: But it is difficult to learn [yaad karne ka masla hota he]. (3.4.1)

Nevertheless, it was assumed by both teachers and learners that the rules of grammar,

once they were mastered, would help the students in improving their speaking and

writing proficiency in English. A number of students expressed these views, as follows:

> S1: "I like most grammar.
> S2: Because in practical life we can speak things. It makes a person perfect in speaking." (2.3.1)

> S1: In grammar, there is past present etc., use of was/were. When we talk to anyone in English it makes it easy for us to converse in English. If there's a mistake with grammar, we can correct these mistakes.
> S2: We know that "ed" is added to make past tense because when we were writing about 'My last party', it helped us in writing the essay, for example, changing 'come' to 'came'. So it helps both in speaking and writing in English. (3.3.1)

Writing was considered both by the teachers and students mainly as a 'finished product'. The teachers seemed to have little confidence in learners' ability to write independently and creatively. This belief could be due to the students' low proficiency in the language. However, it could also be related to the kind of writing which is required for exam purposes, i.e., writing essays and letters on a few 'expected topics'.[6] These essays and letters are given to the students in class in order to help them in passing the exam. Also, as mentioned earlier, several teachers said that if all the students had the same essay or letter, it was easier for them to check their written work which is particularly problematic in large classes.

When some students were asked how they felt about the teacher giving them the essays, letters, etc. instead of encouraging them to write them themselves, they said that the former was helpful for the following reasons:

> S1: So that all the knowledge becomes clear for us on the blackboard.
> S2: If we write ourselves we'll make mistakes.
> S3: We learn them for our exams. (6.1.1)

6.3.2.3 Checking

Both the activity types 'doing a lesson (text)' and 'doing grammar' were followed by checking of the work done by the students in their 'fair copies' (the product of the

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[6]See Khanum(1992)for a detailed analysis of the nature of exam papers in Pakistan.

lessons). Table 6.4 provides an overview of what the teachers and learners perceived as the minimal requirements for the activity type 'checking' to take place.

Activity type	Teacher behaviour	Learner behaviour
Checking 'text and grammar copies' (correcting written work)	The teacher checks the work of the SS (mostly in terms of mechanics of writing, i.e., shapes of letters and hand writing, spellings, margins, neatness etc.) and signs it.	SS submit their work in their 'fair copies' for checking to the teacher or get it signed from the teacher after their work has been checked by student 'checkers' in the class.

Table 6.4: The core teacher-learner behaviours in the activity type checking

Both the teachers and the students were of the view that students do not work if their homework is not corrected. Thus a group of students observed that they had their work complete only because, 'she [their teacher] can check it any time (2.3.2)'. Hence, they suggested that, 'The teacher should check the work immediately after a lesson is completed. In this way we'll work on time and learn it on time also (2.3.2)'. Similar views were expressed by other groups of students as follows:

> S1: Yes, Miss [we like our work to be checked by the teacher immediately]. We are the first ones to get it checked.
> S2: Miss, if she gives 'fair' we really feel proud. (6.1.1)

> When we do our work we want our teacher to correct it immediately and then we also like to do our work. If the teacher doesn't check we feel that what is the use of doing our work when the teacher is not going to check it. (2.3.2)

The teachers also threatened the students that they would not check their work if it was not submitted on time, as a way of motivating them to do their work regularly.

It seemed that parents, Heads and inspectors also expected the teachers to check the written work in 'fair copies' of the students. This is evident in the following comments of the students:

> S1: Even at home when they see our copies they want to know why our work hasn't been checked.
> S2: Yes, the parents want to know why the copy has not been checked. (4.2.2)

> When our teacher noticed that some girls did not hand in their work for correction she told the checkers to collect the copies by rows so that if any day madam [the Head] comes she should not be blamed that she hasn't checked the work. (5.2.2)

Thus 'good' teachers tried to check the 'copies' of all the students after completing each 'lesson' or unit of teaching, while some teachers collected the 'copies' for checking only before the half-yearly or final exams or before the annual inspection. However, all teachers seemed happy to check the work of the few bright or the more enthusiastic students either in class, i.e., if they finished their work earlier than other students, or when they submitted it later for checking to the teacher.

It was observed that a few teachers, particularly in very large classes, delegated the job of checking to some selected students, usually a few bright students in the front rows (see chapter 8), who were designated as 'checkers'. After these student 'checkers' had checked the work of the students the teacher was left with the job of signing these 'copies' only. This involved considerably less time for the teachers than checking the 'copies' themselves, while making it possible for the work of more students to be checked even in very large classes.

After describing the core activity types and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in the teaching and learning of English in varying size classes in secondary schools in Pakistan, it seems possible to extend the activity type 'teaching and learning in the classroom', outlined in figure 6.1 above, in figure 6.2. (see page 197.)

As can be seen in figure 6.2, 'doing a lesson (text)' and 'doing grammar' are perceived as core activity types in the teaching and learning of English in the classroom. Though the majority of teachers had allocated separate days in the week for the teaching of 'text' and 'grammar' (in one case there were even separate teachers to teach 'text' and 'grammar' to the same class), they were free to timetable them in their teaching schedule in any way they liked. For example, one teacher planned the teaching of a 'lesson (text)' and one or more related grammar items as a complete unit of teaching which required a bigger block of time than teaching them separately. She reasoned that if the grammar items which were likely to occur in a reading text were taught before teaching the 'lesson', then the reading of the text provided the students with an opportunity to practice
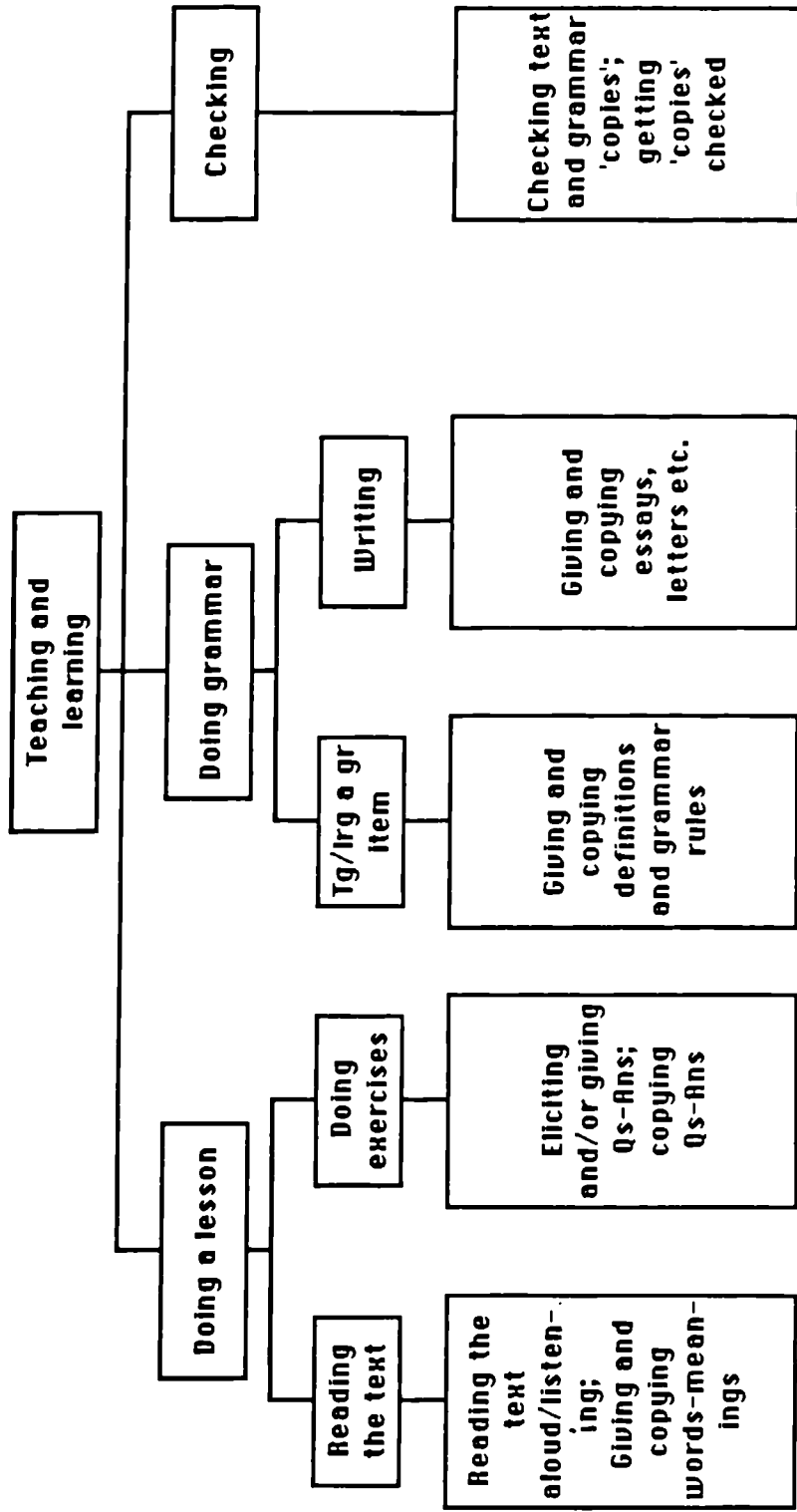
Figure 6.2: The core activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in Pakistan

and consolidate these grammar items. Similarly though teaching/learning a grammar item and writing of essays and letters was considered as 'grammar' for exam purposes, they could in fact be taught at any point in the academic year. Thus it was observed that while the teachers devoted more time to the teaching/learning of grammar during the whole academic year (e.g, three days per week), the essays and letters were usually done just before the exams.

Moreover, though all teachers were found to use, minimally, the core activity types mentioned above, they seemed to have the freedom to introduce any number of activity types, with an enhancing function, at any stage in their classroom or even at any level (cf figure 6.2) in their entire teaching schedule. For example, one teacher had allocated a day per week for 'discussion' in her class; another teacher, who focussed a lot on handwriting, spent a great deal of class time on ensuring that the students learnt to make the shapes of letters correctly.

On the other hand, the core activity types in 'doing a lesson (text), i.e., 'reading the text' and 'doing exercises' (see figure 6.2), were perceived by the teachers not only as obligatory but also as sequential in nature. Thus the exercises could not be done before the text had been read and assumed to be understood by the students. However, the core teacher-learner behaviours within these activity types did not necessarily occur in any pre-defined sequence. Thus though the usual pattern in many classrooms in 'doing a lesson (text)' was reading of a part of the text (phrase, sentence or paragraph) aloud by the teacher followed by translation and/or explanation of the text and giving meanings of difficult words in the text, the teachers could vary the sequencing of these sub-activities as well as introduce other teaching/learning activities with an enhancing function, in between the core activities. To take an example: some teachers first elicited the vocabulary items from the students encouraging them to guess the meanings of these words before writing them on the blackboard, while others gave the students 'words-meanings' without any effort to involve the students. However, in both cases the learners were finally given the vocabulary lists which they copied from the blackboard.

6.3.3 Testing (Examinations)

The activity type 'testing' comprised a subset of 'core' activity types as follows:

1) Teaching and/or giving the required material for the exams; revising this material

2) Giving and taking of the exam

3) Checking exam papers.

Getting through the exam was considered the major objective of all teaching and learning that took place in the classroom. This is evident in the following excerpts from teacher and learner interviews:

> At the moment we are simply teaching - our main concern is to produce good school results so we go about the task of teaching accordingly. (1.2)

> S1: In matric we don't have time. If we spend time learning to speak English how can we complete our course.
> S2: Presently we study English as a subject.
> S3: Our only concern at present is that we have to do the exam. (4.2.2)

In fact, the threat of examinations was used by all teachers across different contexts, as an incentive for the students to attend classes regularly and to pay attention to the lesson as well as to complete the work assigned by the teacher in the classroom. Table 6.5 shows the subset of 'core' activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in the activity type 'testing'.

The above description of the core activity types 'teaching and learning in the classroom' and 'testing' suggests that the participants have a number of shared beliefs about the teaching-learning process. They can be summarised as follows:

a) knowledge is a 'concrete' and 'finite' entity, which is found in textbooks, teachers' notes or guidebooks (several chunks of this 'knowledge' are also 'carried' into the examination hall or 'imported' into it from outside for the purpose of answering exam questions (see section 6.5 below));

b) teaching equals the transmission of this 'knowledge' to the learners as efficiently as possible; and

c) learning is the ability to memorize and reproduce this 'knowledge' (set answer(s)) as accurately as possible for exam purposes.

Activity types	Teacher behaviour	Learner behaviour
a) Teaching/ revising (preparing for the exams)	The teacher gives material to learn for exams; she makes the SS learn (memorize) Q/Ans., essays etc. through frequent repetition and classroom tests The teacher sets the exam paper	SS copy down material given by the teacher; they learn (memorize) this material, such as answers, essays etc.
b) Giving/taking the exam	The teacher gives the exam	SS take the exam trying to reproduce the material learnt earlier as correctly as possible
c) checking (marking exam papers)	The teacher checks the exam papers in terms of their approximation to the model answers (often provided by the teacher herself earlier in the class)	

Table 6.5: The subset of core activity types and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in 'testing'

6.4 The characteristic features of activity types

After looking at the activity types that seem to comprise the teaching and learning of English in varying size school classes in Pakistan, it is possible to summarise the essential characteristics of these activity types as follows:

1) The activity type 'teaching and learning' of English consists of several subsets of activity types with accompanying teacher and learner behaviours, which seem to be shared tacitly by all the participants in school classes in Pakistan.

2) Some of the activity types and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours within each activity type can be described as obligatory[7] and form the 'core' of the teaching/learning process. However, there are other activity types, such as 'discussion', which are perceived by the participants as having an enhancing function only. These are considered as optional and, therefore, 'skipped' if there is less time or if the teacher so desires due to the 'largeness' of the class (cf. TI 5.3) and/or other constraints in the teaching/learning situation.

3) *Different* activity types, both with minimal or enhancing functions, can occur at any level (cf. figure 6.2 above) in the teaching and learning process. (The next chapter will look more closely at teaching and learning in varying size classes in terms of activity types with minimal and enhancing functions.)

4) All the 'core' activity types, i.e. 'doing a lesson (text)', 'doing grammar', and 'checking', that comprise the process of teaching and learning in the classroom are iterative in nature and occur repeatedly during the course of an academic year. Moreover, though all these activity types are perceived by the teachers and learners as obligatory, the teachers enjoy a fair degree of autonomy in how they structure these activity types within their teaching schedule during a term or an academic year.

5) As mentioned earlier, the sub-activities in the activity type 'doing a lesson (text)', i.e. 'reading the text' and 'doing exercises', are inextricably linked together in a linear fashion and can occur in that sequence only. Thus the teacher cannot do the exercises following the text until after the text has been read. Likewise, these exercises are not checked (formally at least) until they have been done in the class and copied by the students in their 'fair copies'. However, the teacher and learner behaviours within each activity type do not have to occur in any pre-defined sequence. Thus for

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[7]It is difficult to strictly categorise some teaching behaviours as obligatory or optional on a binary scale but some teachers (particularly 'good' teachers) felt more obliged to 'do' them than other teachers.

example, the teaching-learning behaviours 'reading the text' and 'translating/explaining the text' by the teacher and 'giving/copying of vocabulary items' can be distributed in any way within the broad framework of the activity type 'reading the text'.

6) Each of the core sub-activities can continue for as long as the teacher desires, within a class hour. In fact the relative use and duration of these sub-activities and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours, within an activity type, were observed to vary from one classroom to another according to the beliefs of the teacher about their relevance and usefulness for the purpose of teaching and learning, but more importantly for passing the exam. For example, Bina (2.3) did not spend a long time giving a vocabulary list to her class when she thought that most of the words were familiar to the students and would not cause them problems in comprehending the text and 'doing exercises'. On the other hand, she spent a lot of class time on questions (following a reading text) which were expected in the exams.

7) Both formal and informal discussions with teachers and students also revealed that the successful accomplishment of some activity types (both with minimal and enhancing functions), and the sub-activities within them, earned the participants respect from their colleagues. Thus a teacher was considered a 'good' teacher if she managed to check the work of the students regularly. Similarly the ability to read aloud by the learners earned them status in the classroom, as only a few 'good' students, usually from the 'front' of the class, could read well (see chapter 8).

6.5 The shared culture of teaching and learning in larger and smaller size school classes in Pakistan

Whatever the characteristics of each activity type may be, it seems important that all the 'core' activity types and sub-activities with accompanying teacher-learner behaviours mentioned above were observed to occur regularly in all the classrooms visited,

irrespective of class size and even the kind of school in which they occurred. This indicates the presence of a shared culture of teaching and learning which cuts across the vast range of class size in the different kinds of secondary schools visited during the study.

In this section an attempt will be made to identify the characteristic features of this shared culture of teaching and learning. This will be done in terms of the model of teaching that seems to underlie the teaching and learning of English in larger and smaller size school classes in Pakistan.

The model of teaching (and learning) used in classes of varying size can be described in terms of communication theory where there is a message at source which has to be transmitted from the source to a destination.[8] There could be 'noise' at different stages in the transmission of the message which could result in the distortion of the message received at the destination. However, the source of 'noise' could equally well be in the transmitter and/or the receiver.

Let us look at the different stages in the transmission of a message from the teacher to the learners, and back again, to identify some sources of noise at various stages in the process.

Stage 1: Teaching and learning in the classroom

A: Message source: The teacher (and the textbook or guidebook)

B: Transmitter of the message: The teacher in the classroom (and/or private tutors at home)

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[8]The model of teaching in school classes in Pakistan is based on the information processing model of Shannon and Weaver (1949) quoted in Rost (1990: 2).

C: <u>Method of transmission</u>: The teacher gives 'words-meanings', 'questions-answers' and essays and letters etc. to the students by:

    a) Writing them on the blackboard

    b) Dictating them to the students

    c) Doing exercises from the textbook orally in class, and telling the students to mark the answers in their books and to copy them later in their 'fair copies'.

D: <u>Receiver of the message at destination</u>: The students in the class.

Now if we think of a finite bit of knowledge that is embodied in the textbook or the guidebook and/or the teacher's head as the message at source, the teacher has the function of transmitting this message to the learners (receivers of the message) as best as she can. Several kinds of 'noise' can be noted here. Either the teacher does not have the ability *(language proficiency) or the skills to* transmit the message effectively or the learners are not well equipped, due to lack of motivation, low proficiency in the language etc. to receive and interpret the message correctly. The message could also be distorted during transmission due to some factors in the teaching/learning environment, e.g., noise in the classroom.

Several other factors could be the source of 'noise' in receiving the message correctly at destination:

    a) The learner is absent

    b) The learner has difficulty in seeing the blackboard and/or hearing the teacher

    c) The learner cannot read and/or copy the message correctly.

If the learner is absent he could take the answers (message received at destination) from a friend's exercise book who might have copied it incorrectly himself in the first place. Or the learner could get the answers from private tutors or 'key' books (surrogate teachers).

If the message is transmitted orally, one condition for receiving the message is the ability to hear the teacher. Hence, there needs to be silence in the classroom. The noise of learners' talking in the classroom not only causes interference in transmitting and receiving the message, it is also perceived by the participants as reflecting teachers' incompetence and inability to 'control' the students in the classroom. This explains why silence has almost a pedagogic value in traditional classrooms, which are identifiable with a talking teacher and silent learners.

It is the job of the teacher to check the accuracy of the message received at destination and correct the distortions in the message, if any. It is necessary to ensure that the students get the correct message because they will later be required to send the same message back to the teacher, i.e., to reproduce it for exam purposes. If the teacher fails to correct the distortions in the message after it is received by the students, there is a danger that the distorted message will be transmitted back to the teacher or examiner during the exams. This was mentioned by several teachers, for example:

> A couple of days ago in revision, because their work hadn't been checked they learnt the incorrect things and wrote the same in their paper (galat yaad kia aur galat hi paper me likha]. I was confused and wondering if I was wrong but they hadn't written [copied] it correctly and learnt it that way. (5.3)

> First of all you don't get an opportunity to correct their work - to see if they've written correctly or not. If they write incorrectly they'll also learn the same and then the child will fail in the exams. (5.1)

It is also illustrated in the following comment by a student checker:

> The teacher tells us to check the mistakes of other girls, otherwise they'll learn the incorrect things for their exams. (5.4.1)

This to a certain extent explains the 'ritual' of checking of written work in traditional classrooms.

Stage 2: Testing or examinations

This brings us to the second stage of the teaching-learning cycle which comprises formal examinations (term exams, and half-yearly or end-of-year exams). The learners 'prepare'

or memorize the answers to 'important' questions which are 'expected' in the exams and/or devise other strategies to answer them. This is illustrated in the following comments of the students:

> S1: We learn the important questions only. We work out which questions can't be expected in the exams and leave those out.
> S2: In 'essay and application' we have been learning them since beginning classes. In 'application and letter' the beginning and the ending is the same.
> S3: In essay a number of words are familiar. (6.1.3)

> FS:[9] What are the 'expected' topics for this year?
> S1: An accident, My hobby.
> S2: No, we had this in class IX. (3.4.1)

> FS: How do you prepare for your exams?
> S1: We do it ourselves.
> S2: We take five-year papers. Then we try to figure out what will be the expected questions this year. In this our tuition Miss helps a lot and my parents. They tell us.
> S3: In school they tell us very little about this. But in tuition centres or my brother at home know more about it because they've also taken the same exams - so they help us.
> S4: In class IX, I learnt 13 essays but didn't get any of them in the exams.
> S5: I learnt 25 - and only one came in the exam - an accident - and in that also the topic was changed.
> S6: I was able to manage.
> S7: I just put together everything from the other essays I'd learnt. (5.2.1)

As the exam questions are highly predictable, it is possible for teachers and learners to gear their entire teaching and learning towards the 'expected' questions in the exams.[10] Further, the focus is mainly on testing the degree of accuracy with which the 'message at source' can be reproduced by the learners. Thus learning is equated both by teachers and learners to memorising and reproducing the message as 'correctly' as possible.

The different stages in testing, when the message received by the students earlier in class is transmitted back to the teacher or examiners, can be seen as follows:

A: Message source: Teachers' notes, guidebooks, memorised message in the learner's head

B: Transmitter: Learners

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[9] 'FS' refers to the researcher.

[10] See Khanum (1992) for a detailed discussion of this and related issues in testing in Pakistan.

C: Method of transmission: Writing answers to the exam paper

D: Receiver of the message at destination: Teacher/examiner

How is the message to be remembered/retained as there is usually a gap between receiving the message, i.e. classroom teaching (and learning), and reproducing it during exams? Now one of the requirements of exams is that students are not allowed to take with them into the examination hall any 'messages' recorded on paper. So the learners need to learn (memorise) the message as accurately as possible to reproduce it in the exams, for their grades will depend on how closely the message that is transmitted back to the teacher approximates to the message at source. But it is easy to forget parts of the message, especially if it was recorded and learnt mechanically in the first place. Thus, as stated earlier, learning (memorising) the 'questions-answers', essays etc. is not the best way of achieving this ideal of correctly reproducing them in the exams. Hence there is wide-scale cheating during the exams when learners use all available means to reproduce the message as closely as possible to the 'message at source'. This includes everything from writing the answers on the examination script beforehand (cf. teacher interviews) to writing them on the wall of the classroom where the examination will be held (cf. CO Notes). Often more 'efficient' means of reproducing the message are devised. For example, micro-copies of answers to 'important' questions are 'smuggled' into the examination hall or 'imported' from the outside while the examination is being held (cf. learner interviews). In the latter case two kinds of preparation need to be done before the exam: a) it has to be arranged that some ready sources of the message, such as other students, textbooks, guidebooks etc., are present outside the examination hall at the time of the exam; and b) ways of importing the 'message' inside the examination hall have to be worked out. (The later includes using the lower staff members, such as caretakers, to get the answers to exam questions while the examination is in progress![1])

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[11]It has also been reported that the message, particularly   answers to objective questions, is sometimes announced from a microphone installed in a van outside the examination hall.

As in teaching and learning in the classroom (stage 1), some possible sources of 'noise' can be identified at this stage also. They were described by a group of students as follows:

> FS: If everyone cheats in the exams, why is it that all these students don't get good marks?
> S1: It's because if they don't find the relevant answer they get worried.
> S2: And 'print' [copy] something else.
> S3: If something comes from outside the examination hall everyone copies the same.
> S4: The policemen themselves supply the answers.
> S5: They get less marks because if someone hasn't studied, especially in grammar, he gets confused about which answer to select.
> S6: There are people sitting outside the school to solve the paper. They are also failures of 3-4 years. They solve the papers and send it in and everyone copies the same answer thinking they are correct.
> S7: In grammar they have a problem. In essay there's no problem. (6.3.1)

Thus, on one hand, the predictability of exam questions facilitates the learning of 'set' material (questions-answers, essays etc.) which have already been given by the teacher in class or procured from 'guide books' or 'work books'. On the other, there are several sources of noise in reproducing the message correctly during examinations. These include:

a) the learners do not know which message to 'copy' down as answer to a particular question; and

b) the wrong message is delivered to the examination hall and the learners copy the message as it is delivered to them from the outside without looking at the appropriacy of the message or its relevance to the exam questions.

The major criteria in marking exam papers seems to be to check how closely the answers approximate to the 'message at source' in order to award marks and grades. One teacher, who also marked papers of board exams, stated some additional criteria for checking as follows:

> "It's true that marks are given on impression. If in the first question the student has impressed me, I take him as an intelligent student and award him marks as an intelligent student. But if he doesn't have a good handwriting I am not impressed. When we see an exam script we only think that he must pass, so if there is any margin to do so we do it. It's not in our mind to fail them because the instructions from the head examiner are, 'You have to show this much percentage of pass students'." (TI No.1, 6.2)

However, a few teachers also tried to award marks in their internal or school exams for individual initiative and effort, as is evident in the following comment by a teacher:

> "First [I check] whether the matter is there or not because children usually learn chunks from the book. But I don't give credit for that and I've told the children that they shouldn't worry if it's right or wrong but they should try and do it themselves. Because children take tuitions their tutor writes it for them which they learn by heart. First thing I check is matter, and then spelling. Even if the sentence is wrong but I appreciate that they've made an effort to do it themselves." (2.2)

During recent years there have been huge outcries from educationists in Pakistan against the high incidence of cheating in 'board' exams. This increase in cheating in exams simply seems to be a corollary of recent developments in technology (e.g., it is now possible to have micro-copies of notes to take to the examination hall) as well as a rising awareness amongst the students that more efficient and economical methods of carrying the 'message' into the examination hall are available than learning or memorising it as before. Moreover, memorising 'questions-answers', essays etc. is not only time-consuming, it is also inefficient in terms of reproducing the exact 'message' due to the risk of 'forgetting'.

The model of teaching and learning outlined above can be seen diagrammatically in figure 6.3.

6.6   Summary and conclusion

I began this chapter by outlining a framework for describing the process of teaching and learning in varying size classes in secondary schools in Pakistan. The aim was to find out if, and to what extent, teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes were similar and/or different in larger and smaller size classes perceived by the teachers as 'large' and 'very large', and 'neither small nor large' respectively. A look at the activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in a total of 232 lessons, observed in *the classes of 22* teachers in six different schools, revealed the presence of a shared culture of teaching and learning which seems to cut across the variable of class size in

Stage I: Teaching and learning in the classroom

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Message at source          Transmitter        Transmission of          Receiver
(textbooks,                (teacher)          the message              (students)
guidebooks,                                   (teaching and
teachers' head)                               learning in the
                                              classroom)
```

Checking of the message at destination (by the teacher and student 'checkers')

Checking of the message at destination (by teachers/examiners)

Stage II: Examinations

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Receiver           Transmission of        Transmitter         Message at
(teachers/         the message            (students)          source
examiners)         (writing                                   (TT' notes,
                   answers to                                  guidebooks,
                   exam Qs)                                    learners' head)
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Figure 6.3: Model of teaching underlying the shared culture of teaching and learning in varying size school classes in Pakistan

school classes in Pakistan. The model of teaching underlying the process of teaching and learning in classes of varying size was also outlined. (The reasons for the homogeneity found in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size will be explored further in chapter 10.)

As discussed above all teachers felt obliged to follow the core activity types in their classrooms irrespective of the size of their classes. However, several differences could be observed in some discrete teacher-learner behaviours and classroom processes in the classroom of two teachers, out of the 22 teachers observed for the purpose of the study. It was discovered that these two teachers were trying to introduce innovations in their large and smaller classes. However, it is significant, as will be discussed in chapter 9, that the innovations introduced by these teachers in their individual classrooms remained mainly within the framework of core activity types described in section 6.3 above. This indicates that both the nature and scope of innovations in large and small classes in Pakistan are related very closely to the shared culture of teaching in secondary schools in Pakistan.

CHAPTER 7

TEACHER-LEARNER BEHAVIOUR AND CLASSROOM PROCESSES IN 'LARGER' AND 'SMALLER' SIZE CLASSES: II

7.1 Introduction

In chapter 6 it was found that there exists a great deal of similarity in activity types and the accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in classes of varying size. This indicates the presence of a shared culture of teaching and learning comprising core activity types which seems to cut across the variable of class size in school classes in Pakistan. In this chapter, I will look more closely at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in a) varying size classes taught by different teachers; b) varying size classes taught by the same teacher; and c) 'similar' size classes taught by one teacher.

I will begin by looking at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes taught by six different teachers and perceived by them variously as 'large' and 'very large', and 'neither small nor large' respectively. This will be followed by a discussion of the same in two varying size classes taught by the same teacher. Next, two lessons in 'similar' size classes, also taught by one teacher, will be described. Finally, the differences in varying size classes taught by different and the same teachers will be discussed.

7.2 Teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes taught by different teachers

In this section I will look at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes taught by six different teachers and perceived by them as 'large', 'very large', and 'neither small nor large', as follows:

Lesson/Teacher	Teacher's perception of class size
1 Shahida (6.1)	Large
2 Mehtab (6.4)	Large
3 Midhat (5.1)	Very large
4 Sughra (5.2)	Very large
5 Farhana (2.2)	Neither small nor large
6 Ferheen (1.2)	Neither small nor large

Table 7.1: Different teachers' perception of the size of their present classes

The following excerpts from my classroom observation notes describe teacher-learner behaviours and classroom processes in the core sub-activity 'reading the text', which took place within the wider framework of the activity type 'doing a lesson (text)' in these classrooms.[1] (For detailed classroom observation notes on these lessons see appendix 6 B (1-6).)

7.2.1 Two lessons in classes perceived by the teachers as 'large'

The following two teachers perceived the size of their classes as 'large' . They are both teaching a 'lesson' from the prescribed textbook.

Lesson 1 (Shahida, 6.1)

53 students are present out of a total of 74 students.

The teacher starts reading the lesson and gives meanings of difficult words as she reads. She walks between two rows while reading the text. The students follow it in their books. All students sit with their heads bent over their books. The student sitting next to me follows the text in his book with a pen. The teacher continues to read the text aloud while walking around the classroom at the same time.

She tells Hamid to read the same paragraph again. He reads at a fast pace while the teacher continues to walk around the class monitoring the students. If he falters on any word, she helps him by modelling that word for him. There is pin drop silence in

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[1] The classroom language in all the lessons is Urdu unless otherwise specified.

the classroom. The teacher nominates Nadeem as the next reader. She prompts him as he reads haltingly. She tells him he is not reading well today. She asks Ali if he would like to read. He says no. One student (Waseem) volunteers. The student next to me also raises his hand hesitantly. The teacher selects the first student and encourages him constantly while he reads. The students who were punished earlier stand quietly in their corners and the teacher continues to walk up and down the narrow pathways between different rows.

The teacher reads the lesson again from the beginning while translating it phrase by phrase at the same time. She goes at a very fast pace. As she comes across some verbs in the text, she reminds the students of their second and third forms etc. All the students listen in silence. They all have their eyes glued to their books which are open in front of them.

The teacher stops briefly to ask the students the meaning of a sentence she had just translated. She tells them she is asking to see if they were listening or not. Waseem answers correctly. She tells him non-verbally to sit down. She elicits the opposite of 'majority' from the students warning them that they can get it in their exams. Only Hamid volunteers by raising his hand but after surveying all the students she decides to give it herself ('minority') and then continues with her reading aloud and translation of the text. As she walks around the classroom reading the text, there is complete discipline in the class.

(6-I-1/ CO 5)

(The underlined text shows the pattern of classroom participation of different students in regard to their location ('front' or 'back') in the classroom. The three students, Hamid, Nadeem and Waseem, sit in the 'front' of the class. Also see chapter 8.)

Lesson 2 (Mehtab, 6.4)

43 students are present out of a total of 57 students.

11.05 The teacher tells the students to clean the blackboard and open their books on page 65. She writes 'English' on the blackboard and starts reading the text while the students follow it in their books. All students have their books open in front of them and sit with their heads bent and eyes down over their books. All of them look very attentive, apparently at least.

I ask the student next to me (at the back of the class) to identify for me, in his book, the place where the teacher is reading from but he is unable to do so. It seems that he is just following the classroom norm of acceptable behaviour, i.e., heads bent and eyes down as the teacher or other students read the text. The teacher nominates Naseem to read. He sits in the second row. He reads in a loud, clear voice. As he reads the text aloud all the other students follow it in their books. Occasionally the teacher stops him to correct his pronunciation of a word.

(At least six desks in the room are broken. Three students, sitting at a broken desk, rest their books on their laps.)

The teacher nominates Gafoor in the front row to read next. As he reads she stands in front of the class, following it in her book, but also keeping an eye on the rest of the class. In between she reprimands different students frequently for not paying attention. At the same time she also prompts the student as he reads hesitantly, sometimes modelling words and even phrases for him. All students sit very quietly. I can see a student following in his book with his finger. The teacher nominates Uzair in the front row to continue reading. The students read one paragraph each.

There is complete silence in the classroom. All the students look down into their books. Even the student next to me seems to be paying close attention.

Kamran in the front row is nominated next. As he hesitates the teacher asks him if he has read it at home or not. He says 'No' very quietly. Without pursuing it further or wasting any more time the teacher makes a general solicit for volunteers from the class, particularly focussing on the students at the back of the class. 'Why are all of you so quiet?' Apparently she doesn't expect a response to her question but only means it as a warning to the students at the back to pay attention, for she promptly nominates a student from the front row to continue reading. Another student volunteers. He is selected and the teacher tells the student who was nominated earlier: 'Let him read first.' She corrects him as he reads. All students continue to look into their books . . .

She notices a student at the back who is engaged in some other work and walks over to him and slaps him lightly on the head. Soon after, she begins to read the same text herself from the beginning. She reads the first sentence and stops to ask Naseem (in the second row) to translate it into Urdu. He does the task. The teacher reads the second sentence and nominates another student to translate it. As he is unable to do the task she opens it to the whole class asking for bids: 'Anyone else?' When no one volunteers she nominates Shahid who does it haltingly. She encourages him as he seems to be making an effort to do the task. She continues to read herself stopping briefly to elicit the meaning of 'started' from the students as she comes across this word in the text. Several students call out the meaning in Urdu in a low voice. She repeats the meaning and nominates Naseem to translate the next sentence. Apparently she is satisfied with his answer as she immediately allocates the next turn to Arif: 'Arif, next line.' She encourages Arif to answer.

She continues with the lesson in the same manner at a brisk pace occasionally stopping to elicit the meaning of a word from the class (nominated students). She nominates Shams in the front row to answer. Another student, Jamal, volunteers and is selected to answer with a brief instruction to Shams: 'Shams, sit down.' Jamal does not answer correctly and Naseem self selects to answer. His answer is partially correct, as is evident from her brief comment. She deflects the question back to Shams who answers it correctly . . .

(6-I-4/ CO 3)

[In the next lesson, she gave the students a list of 'words-meanings' on the blackboard; see appendix 6.B.2]

A look at the above two lessons in 'large' classes shows a great degree of similarity in 'core' teacher-learner behaviours. For example, both teachers read the text aloud and translate it for the students. Similarly the learners in both the classrooms sit passively unless they are nominated or selected by the teacher to read the text aloud. The only other form of learner participation in both the classrooms is answering questions or offering information in response to teacher solicits. It seems that the teachers do not expect the learners to be able to read and understand the text independently of the teacher. In fact the teachers act as intermediaries between the writer and his/her message, which is embodied

in the text, and the learners or the readers of the text. They consider it their job to help the learners understand the text by translating it into Urdu and/or explaining the meaning (also see chapter 10). The focus is on understanding the content or meaning of the text at the literal level of 'reading the lines' only. When the text is read aloud a lot of attention is paid to correct pronunciation of the words. The 'difficult' words in the text are identified by the teacher. The meanings are sometimes elicited from the students but often the teacher provides them herself. The learners are neither guided nor encouraged to try and find the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary items from the context. The students look into their books and follow the text (apparently) when it is read by the teacher or other students.

However, a number of individual differences between the two teachers can also be noted. These are mainly in terms of the degree to which some enhancing activities - such as reading the text aloud by the learners - is used in the two classrooms? Also the two teachers differ in their strategies of control. Thus Shahida walks around the classroom while she reads and translates the text in order to keep the students 'on-task'. On the other hand, Mehtab teaches from the front of the classroom but is aware of the fact that not all the students are participating. Hence she calls upon various students, particularly the students at the back of the classroom, frequently to check what is happening at the back, while at the same time urging these students to pay attention to the lesson.

7.2.2 Two lessons in classes perceived by the teachers as 'very large'

Let us now look at two lessons in classes which were perceived by the teachers as 'very large'. The two teachers are once again teaching reading texts from the prescribed textbook.

Lesson 3 (Midhat, 5.1)

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[2]Both teachers and learners perceived the reading of a text aloud by the students as an enhancing activity.

59 students are present out of a total of 75 students.

The students sit very crowded in a small room. The desks are arranged closely together almost to the front wall of the classroom. There is hardly any space for the teacher even in the front of the class.

The teacher writes the heading on the blackboard. She tells the students how to copy it in their exercise books explaining the format on the blackboard. The students have their books open in front of them. The teacher holds up an exercise book and tells them where to write the heading. She tells them to write it with a green or black marker.

The teacher begins to read the text on page 76, phrase by phrase, which the students repeat in chorus following her model (it's a poem for recitation in the prescribed textbook). Then she translates the same and the students once again repeat the translation after her as earlier. The teacher draws four columns on the blackboard. She reads the first stanza of the poem again which the students repeat after her in chorus as before. However, this time she pauses in her reading, now and again, to write 'difficult' words and their meanings in Urdu on the blackboard. For example:

wants chahna

The teacher reads out the same from the blackboard: 'Wants means 'chahna'.' The students repeat after her in rhythmic unity and with a lot of gusto and enthusiasm. She keeps writing words and their meanings on the blackboard and modelling them for the students. The students seem to enjoy this activity very much.

[There are two pictures related to the text on the same page in the textbook but the teacher does not refer to them at any point before or after reading the text.]

By now there are more than ten words written on the blackboard. All the students have their books open in front of them. The students at the back discuss how to form the shape of the letter /h/ as they copy down the vocabulary list from the blackboard. The teacher tells them to write [copy] it neatly in their exercise books. She tells the class that in the meantime, i.e. during the time the students are copying from the blackboard, she will go round the class to check their previous work.

(5-II-1/ CO 3)

Lesson 4 (Sughra, 5.2)

55 students are present out of a total of 85 students.

Even though many students (thirty) are absent today, the students sit huddled close together while leaving the desks at the back vacant.

The teacher goes around the classroom checking the work of the students and whether they have covered their exercise books or not. (They were told to do so the previous day for the annual inspection next week.)

The teacher writes the topic on the blackboard:

Text: The village fair

A student is told to read the text aloud. She reads the first paragraph and then translates it into Urdu. The rest of the students sit with their heads bent, apparently following it in their books. The teacher reads aloud the same paragraph again, translating it phrase by phrase as she reads. 3-4 students volunteer to read the next paragraph. The teacher nominates Kausar to read next who sits in the second row (she is one of the star students in the class). After this the teacher reads it herself again. [The teacher reads haltingly, pausing almost after every word.] Now about 8 students raise their hands volunteering to continue reading the text. The students are sitting very quietly. Sometimes the teacher stops briefly to elicit meanings from the class, for example:

T: Crowded means ?

Some students mumble the answer in low tones. Several students offer to read. They are all from the first two rows of the class. A student is selected to continue reading after which the teacher reads the same paragraph once again, translating it at the same time. The lesson continues in the same manner. The teacher calls on the students at the back to pay attention, reprimanding them at the same time for being 'sleepy'. She nominates a student from the 'back' of the class to read.

The same students (from the front of the class) raise their hands each time. The students sit with heads bent over their books. They have glassy looks and seem to be sitting through an ordeal. [There is hardly any sign of life in the class except when the students in the front two rows raise their hands bidding for a turn to read the text.]

The teacher nominates a student to read who had not volunteered to do so earlier. As she stands up to read the teacher walks towards her threateningly, and she begins to read the wrong paragraph. She was obviously not paying attention. The teacher reprimands a student for writing something when they are supposed to be reading.

[The smooth rhythm of the class seems to be disrupted each time a student from the back of the class is nominated to read the text. It strikes a jarring note as the girls at the back stumble through the text and are scolded by the teacher for not reading correctly.]

The teacher reverts to her earlier procedure of asking selected students in the first two rows to read. It seems definitely easier both for the teacher and the students. As the teacher looks at the girls, most of them try to avoid meeting her eye and bend down further over their books giving the impression of a lot of concentrated attention and hard work.

The teacher once again calls on a student from the back row to read. [This seems more like a control strategy than any real interest in the students at the back of the classroom.]

(5-I-2/ CO 5)

In the above two lessons we can, once again, see the teachers reading the text aloud and modelling the pronunciation of the words for the students. However, the students in Midhat's class (lesson 3) look livelier than the students in Sughra's class (lesson 4). In lesson 3 all the students get an opportunity to participate in choral reading of the text which they do following the model provided by the teacher. The teacher also seems to

pay a lot of attention to the mechanics of writing or copying from the blackboard which makes the task more challenging for the students. The students are told about the format they need to follow and to use green and black markers for writing the heading before copying the word list from the blackboard. Some students also discuss how to form the correct shapes of letters while copying them from the blackboard? Though the students 'read' the text mainly by repeating it mechanically after the teacher, the students who learnt to 'read' well were given an opportunity to play the role of 'mini-teacher' later during further practice in reading the same text.

On the other hand, Sughra in lesson 4 seems interested in 'doing the lesson' only (cf. chapter 6). Though it was a revision class (this was not indicated by the teacher at any point during the lesson, but the students had already done the exercises in their fair copies), only some students were able to 'read' the text correctly. Moreover, it seems that the students were nominated to read as a form of punishment for not paying attention to the lesson (unless they were girls from the front of the class) rather than giving them practice in reading aloud.

Thus though Midhat and Sughra read the text aloud, translate it for the students and give them words-meanings just as the two teachers in lessons 1 and 2 above, the learners in Midhat's class seem to be happier as they get more opportunities to participate in classroom activities, even if it comprises mechanical repetition only. Also there is a sense of achievement on the part of the students, and a reward (playing the role of 'mini-teacher') for learning to 'read' in the classroom.⁴ In contrast, the majority of students in Sughra's class sit very quietly, with glazed looks, through what seems like an 'ordeal' as there is no opportunity for them to contribute to the lesson in any way.

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³As these students were in their first year of learning English they were still learning to write the English alphabet and the teacher paid a lot of attention to correct formation of letters and hand writing. She tried to check their work regularly and awarded stars to the students for neatness and good handwriting.

⁴Later, in another lesson, when Midhat was busy checking 'copies', some students suggested that in the meantime they should do 'reading' of the next lesson. One student, who it seemed had already prepared the 'lesson' at home, offered to lead the class in choral reading of the text. While this student modelled the reading of the text, other students participated very actively and repeated after her with great gusto and enthusiasm.

7.2.3 Two lessons in classes perceived by the teachers as 'neither small nor large'

Finally, it would be useful to look at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in two smaller size classes, i.e., classes perceived by the teachers as 'neither small nor large'.

Lesson 5 (Farhana, 2.2)

41 students are present out of a total of 44 students.

8.40 The students are shuffling their books and 'copies'. The teacher sends one student to the staff room to bring their exercise books. As the teacher writes 'Unit 5' on the blackboard a number of students raise their hands volunteering to read the text aloud. Kamal [the bright boy] is sitting in the front row today. A student begins to read. The other students request him to wait a while [probably because the teacher has not allocated the turn]. The teacher is angry with one of the students and tells the student, who had self selected to read, to sit down. Then she nominates another student to read the text from the beginning. Other students follow it in their books.
T: Is it clear to all of you what she has read? What are they talking about?
SS (together): Birds.
T: Let me explain to you first.
She asks several questions as she explains the meaning of the passage read by the student earlier, for example, 'What birds can't fly'?
She checks from the class, 'All of you know 'swift'.'
One student offers: 'For example, eagle.'
T: Yes, very good.
T: Just let me know, is it clear to all of you?
SS (together): Yes, Miss.

Kamal gets the next turn to read, after which the teacher explains what he has read. She asks the class if they know 'penguins'. She draws a 'penguin' on the blackboard. The students look very excited. They all seem to recognize the bird.
T: Has anyone seen it in real?
Some students: Yes, Miss.
T: Can it fly?
SS: No, Miss.
The students share information with each other and tell the teacher what they know about penguins, for example:
S1: They live in water.
S2: No. On land.
The teacher explains the meaning of 'handicapped' . . .

One student tells the teacher that the meaning of the reading passage is not clear to him.
T: I must explain it from the beginning.
She explains the meaning of the paragraph from the beginning. [She explains in English only. In fact, English is used almost entirely in the classroom both by the teacher and the students.]
The teacher confirms again from the class: 'Is it clear?'
SS: Yes, Miss.

A number of students volunteer to read. One student is selected and he reads aloud the passage.

9.00 The teacher reads the passage aloud again as she explains it. The students follow in their books. All students have their books open in front of them. They are sitting with their heads bending down on their books. Some more students are nominated, in a random order, to read the text aloud.
T: I've explained to you the difference between British and American English in pronunciation and accent.
Several students offer examples such as 'schedule' which she writes on the blackboard.
Kamal: Miss, what do we use in Pakistan?
T: American English [which is not true].

The teacher also explains the gist of the reading passage in Urdu. Two students at the back have the wrong page of the book open in front of them. The students seem to be getting distracted.
T: How does the penguin walk?
One student acts it out. Kamal talks quietly to the teacher. She goes to stand closer to him. The majority of the students seem to have lost interest in the lesson.
The teacher realises this and asks the class: 'Are all of you listening at the back? Yes or No?'
Some students (very softly): No, Miss.

The teacher walks over to a student in the back row and asks him to repeat what she had been explaining. All students look back at him and wait anxiously. The teacher goes to another student in the second last row, and asks loudly: 'Today what is the problem? Why aren't you getting it? You have not given such a good response.'

She decides to change the pattern of classroom organisation and announces: 'We'll do as in poetry. We'll make two sections. Boys in section A, girls in section B. Are you ready?'

One boy complains to the teacher: 'Miss, the girls fight with us.' The teacher rearranges the class telling several students to change places so that all girls sit on the right hand side of the class and all boys are on the left hand side. The students begin to look very excited.

(2-I-2/ CO 3)

Lesson 6 (Ferheen, 1.2)

33 students are present out of a total of 50 students.

[When I entered the class, the lesson had already started.]

S1 reads the text in a loud clear voice. The teacher corrects her pronunciation and explains the meaning of the passage in English. She asks short questions on the passage which the students answer either in 'Yes' or 'No'. There does not seem to be adequate space for all the students to sit comfortably. Two students are sharing a chair. [I wonder where the other students sit when all the students are present.]

Sumera is nominated by the teacher to continue reading. She sits in the front row and now stands up to read in a loud clear voice. The students follow in their books while she reads the text aloud. The teacher listens carefully correcting her pronunciation of words now and again. She explains the meaning of the passage in English. Most of the students sit passively. Only a few students in the front row answer the teacher's

questions. The teacher nominates another student (S3) to read. The student stands up to read. The teacher corrects her pronunciation and also helps her when she stumbles on any word. The teacher, once again explains the meaning of the paragraph read by the student, in English.[5]

9.30 The teacher elicits the meanings of 'difficult' words from the students, for example:

T: Do you know what's a 'widow'?

She gives them the meanings of these words in Urdu. She asks short questions on the text such as, 'What else did he do?', 'What did Hazrat Ali do?' [I can't figure out the reason for asking these questions as she answers most of the questions herself.] However for one question, 'Who was Hazrat Fatima?' the students answer in chorus. The teacher does not offer any comment on the answer but continues with the reading and explaining of the text. As she reads the text and explains it to the students they sit quietly, apparently following it in their books. She stands in front of the class during all this time.

Another student (S4) from the front row is nominated to continue with the reading of the passage. The students sit very quietly as the teacher explains the text. She asks some questions again which the students in the front row answer. Mostly only one student (Sumera) volunteers to answer. The teacher nominates a girl who had not volunteered, to answer the next question. She answers incorrectly and consequently has to keep standing. The teacher gives the correct answer. She continues asking more questions:

T: One day what happened?

Only some students mumble the answer. S5 is told to sit down.

T: Who wants to read?

Several students bid for a turn by raising their hands. The teacher selects one of the volunteers non-verbally who stands up to read. [Although S6, the girl who is reading, is just two rows ahead of me I can't hear her. I wonder if the other students can hear her.] All the students seem to be following the text in their books. The teacher asks some questions which the same students [a few girls in the front rows] answer. The teacher does not repeat the answers for the class nor does she comment on the answers in any way. [It is therefore difficult to know whether an answer has been accepted as correct or not.] The teacher continues to teach from the front of the classroom.

As the reading of the lesson has been completed, the teacher moves on to the comprehension questions given at the end of the passage.

(1-I-2/ CO 1)

In both the lessons above, the focus once again is on reading the text aloud by the

teacher and/or the students and explaining the meaning of the text to the students.

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[5]The teacher explained in her interview that she tried to use English in her class unless she felt that no one was understanding anything. Then she was forced to translate the text into Urdu also.

However, the two teachers seem to differ in regard to their views about teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus Farhana in lesson 5 is concerned at the lack of response of her learners and changes the organisation of her class in the middle of the lesson as a way of involving them more actively. Moreover, Farhana tries to create interest in the text by activating students' background knowledge and encouraging them to share information with each other in the class (an enhancing activity). On the other hand, Ferheen continues with the 'act' of teaching without worrying too much about whether the students are with her or not (lesson 6). In fact in this class only a few girls from the front rows participate in the lesson by volunteering to read the text aloud or by answering the teacher's questions. Also, the learners in Ferheen's class are neither expected nor encouraged to contribute anything from their everyday experience in life though the topic of the lesson is familiar as it occurs in other subjects also.

Thus while lesson 5 is built around the interaction between the teacher and the learners, in lesson 6, the teacher seems to be going through the ritual of teaching only. In fact she mainly focuses on doing core activity types which comprise the act of teaching and learning in school classes in Pakistan (cf. chapter 6, section 6.3.1). Ferheen said that even if her class was smaller than the one at present, she would perhaps continue to teach in the same way but with the added advantage that, '. . .with less children I could give more individual attention'. However, comparing her present experience with her earlier experience of teaching 'small' classes in the same school, she confessed that,

> At present when we are teaching, it is just for the sake of teaching as an end in itself. When we used to teach smaller classes, our teaching was more interesting. (1.2)

She felt that one reason for this could be that teachers of 'small' classes, like herself, did not know how to teach larger classes. However, Ferheen believed that it was possible for teachers like her to improve if they were given a refresher course in teaching large classes.

It is significant that, on one hand, Ferheen described the size of her present class as 'neither small nor large'. On the other, she mentioned problems in teaching and learning

in her class which seemed to be related to class size. This ambivalence in her attitude could perhaps be explained with reference to two factors that seem to influence her perceptions of class size as well as what happens in terms of teaching and learning in her classroom. They are: 1) the average class size in her present educational context (the average class size in the school was 60-65 students; recently the largest class in the school with over 100 students had been divided into two sections after the teachers had found it impossible to teach this class); and 2) her previous experience of teaching smaller classes of 25 students only (see also chapter 4, section 4.5.1). The latter also explains why she concentrated mainly on doing core activity types in her classroom.

7.3   Teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes taught by the same teacher

Let us now look at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in two classes taught by the same teacher and perceived by her variously as 'large' and 'neither small nor large'. The two classes were in fact two different sections of the same class: X C, comprising both girls and boys in the commerce group (the large class) and X B, an all-girls section comprising students of a relatively higher ability level from the science group (the smaller class). According to the teacher, the differences between the two classes were noticeable both in terms of class size as well as in the ability level of the students. She outlined this close relationship between class size and learner-type (including the gender of the students) and its effect on teaching and learning in the classroom as follows:

> "[In the large class] Even if the boys are there and the number is less, it works better. On certain days if certain boys are not there, the class is much better. And if certain boys are there and the class still is less, it is better - easier I mean. If the lot is there then they are difficult." (2.3)

She recalled that, in her large class,

> "One day we had all the boys gone to play cricket and we had only girls. So the class - the work, I mean, what we plan to do in that period doesn't seem to fit in that but otherwise if the boys are not there, it does". (op.cit.)

The lessons in the large and smaller classes were based on the same text i.e., a poem from the prescribed textbook. However they were taught at different times, in the two

classes, with a gap of almost two months in between. Also the teacher spent one class hour in teaching this poem in the smaller class, while it took her two class periods to complete it in the large group. The classroom language in these lessons is mainly English.

If we look at teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in the two classes carefully we can find both a number of similarities and differences in the large and the smaller class. (For detailed classroom observation notes on the lessons in the large and the smaller class, see appendices 7 A and 7 B respectively.)

The teacher felt that as most of the students find it difficult to understand poetry they can easily get distracted in a poetry class. Hence she seated the students in a semicircle in both the classes in order to keep them sufficiently involved and interested in the lesson. (She told me later that she had recently started using this pattern of classroom organisation for teaching poetry only.)

Moreover, in both the classes, the teacher encouraged the students to think about the meaning of the poem and often tried to help them in guessing the meaning of difficult words. For example, in the smaller class:

> The teacher writes the first two lines of the poem 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' on the blackboard and asks the students what they understand by these two lines.
> T: Rocks means?
> A number of students together: To swing
> T: Cradle?
> SS: Baby's cot
> T: What do you call it in Urdu?
> Several students give the meaning in Urdu.

> A student stands up to explain the two lines of the poem written on the blackboard. The teacher prompts her by asking short questions in between. Another student volunteers to answer the question. She answers incorrectly but the teacher accepts the answer for the time being.
> T: Anything else? . . .
> She encourages the students to try and guess the meanings of 'difficult' words.
> T: Why should God's blessings be on women?
> A student answers. The teacher encourages other students to think about it. The students try to answer in English. They are encouraged to do so even if they cannot always answer in 'correct' English . . .

As they come across the word 'rainbow' in the text the teacher asks: 'Why do we have 7 colours?'
Some students try to explain the reason. The teacher keeps asking short probing questions in order to make the students think (cf. follow-up discussion on the lesson). She explains the main idea of the poem by using the analogy of making a structure in a mould.
T: Anyone else?
She asks me if I want to add something to the explanation of the poem . . .

The teacher reminds the students: 'I told you a story in connection with it.' The students recall the story about the importance of the role of mother in building the character of a child. The teacher explains the meaning of the stanza.

Likewise, she asks short probing questions in her large class while encouraging the students to think about the meaning of the poem, as follows:

9.38 The teacher reads aloud the first stanza of the poem. She asks short questions focussing on the content of the poem. She also points the attention of the students to grammatical clues, such as, 'What is 'it' here?' She explains the meaning of the first stanza but at the same time she continues to elicit information from the students encouraging them to answer short questions on the poem. For example: 'Rich man's mother or poor man's mother?'

Some students: Everyone's.

The teacher asks the students probing questions in between encouraging them to think about the meaning of the poem. The students answer the questions mostly in Urdu which she repeats for the whole class in English.

The students in the large class are also encouraged to think about the meanings of difficult words in the text and use their background knowledge for understanding the poem, thus:

T: You know why rainbow is there after rain?
A student gives a scientific explanation in Urdu which the teacher repeats for the whole class in English.

Furthermore, vocabulary extension work is done in both classes. But the teacher does not concentrate on this in the large class, as is illustrated by the following extract from the lesson in this class:

The teacher explains the meaning of 'fountain' to the whole class focussing particularly on how it functions (so that the students can relate to its metaphorical use in the poem), by drawing a diagram on the blackboard. As she explains the meanings of 'difficult' words in the poem, she sometimes switches over to Urdu. She begins to ask the students the difference between a 'pond' and a 'lake', a 'stream' and a 'river' etc., but does not pursue it. However, she continues to elicit the meanings of the 'difficult' words listed on the blackboard.

The difficulty level of the tasks seems to be different in the two classes due to the difference in the ability level of the students in the two groups (cf. informal discussion with the teacher). For example, in the smaller class the teacher divides the class into four groups and tells each group to discuss one stanza from the poem. She also tells them to underline the 'difficult' words. Thus the students are encouraged to work together in small groups, independently of the teacher, to try and understand the meaning of the poem. In contrast, the focus in the large class is more on exam-type questions, such as the name of the poet and the central idea of the poem. This is evident in the following extracts from the lessons in the large class:

> T: Who has written the poem?
>
> Several students answer together. She tells them to repeat this information three times in chorus. Then she asks them to spell the last name of the poet a number of times which they all do together in chorus once again. They repeat the same procedure for the other names of the poet also. She asks individual students to spell it. (She told me later that the students can be asked the name of the poet in the exams.)
>
> The teacher revises similar information about some other poems done earlier, for example, 'Who has written 'The voice of God?' (For details see appendix 7 A , CO 2.1.)
>
> 9.48 The teacher tells the students to take out their exercise books and write the central idea of the poem. She reminds them that it should be short and precise. Some students want to know if they should write the poem or the central idea. The students get down to work with great alacrity. There is a great deal of busy activity in the classroom. The teacher goes around the class checking the work of different students. Some students still want to know if they have to write the poem also and the teacher tells them to write it for home work. She goes around checking the students' work. The students stand up to show her their work and seem very keen for her to check their work. (See appendix 7 A , CO 3.1.)

Thus the teacher essentially used the same style of teaching in her large and smaller class. However, she seemed to be under greater stress in the large class. In fact she admitted that she felt more exhausted in teaching the larger group for one class hour than she did in the course of her work during the rest of the day. She seemed particularly worried about losing control in the larger group. Hence she made an extra effort to be vigilant in the large class and used a number of strategies to remain 'on top of things'. These include: teaching sometimes from the back of the classroom; breaking 'partnerships' of students who were likely to indulge in mischief by changing their

places; and monitoring the work of the students more closely than she did in the smaller group. This is illustrated in the following extracts from one of her lessons in the large class:

> Some students begin to act silly and the teacher has to call them back to discipline. She does so by calling out the names of a few students in a warning tone. The teacher gives examples of a rocking chair. One student says, 'Rock 'n Roll' when asked to give the meaning of 'rock'.

> The students look very alert as they answer the teacher's questions. The teacher tries to set up, in vain, the 'one-at-a-time' rule for turn taking. She is annoyed at a student who is disturbing others and changes his place. As she spots a student who is not paying attention to the lesson, she calls her name and addresses her directly for a while as she continues to explain the meaning of the poem.

> She calls the name of Mustafa in a warning tone. She goes to a student who is slouching in his chair and tells him, 'Mother will tell you to sit straight.' He immediately sits up and the students around him exchange smiles with each other. When the teacher feels that she is losing the attention of some students she asks them a question, such as, 'Do you all agree?', 'Yes or No?' All students answer together loudly, 'Yes, Miss.'

> Several students exchange glances as a shy looking girl is nominated to read. Though generally the students seem to like this activity some of them have started getting distracted. The teacher stands at the back of the class and explains the meaning of the stanza.

As the noise level was also higher in the large class, with more students talking to each other, she had to make a special effort to speak loudly (she was naturally soft-spoken) in order to be heard above the noise. Moreover, she was concerned about the ability of the students to hear each other while they read the text aloud or answered questions in the large class, as is evident in the following classroom observation notes from this class:

> The teacher nominates Adnan to read the stanza again. She urges him to read in a louder voice after confirming from other students whether they can hear him or not.

> Saima is nominated to give the central idea of the first stanza. The teacher confirms with a student in another part of the room if he can hear Saima.

It was also revealed, during observation of further lessons in the two classes, that Bina used more activity types with an enhancing function in her smaller class than in her large class. For example, she used group work very frequently in the smaller class while

it was used only occasionally in the large class. She explained the reason for this as follows:

> "[In the large class] You need to have more groups or bigger groups. If you land up with bigger groups it means that few do work. The rest enjoy and talk. You need to have smaller groups."

However, she felt that organising the large number of students into smaller groups of 4-5 students wasted a considerable amount of class time. Also, in terms of time, it was observed that more work was done in the smaller class in the same amount of time, than in the large group. (The problems reported by Bina in teaching her large class resemble very closely the difficulties reported by teachers of large classes in different educational contexts (cf. Coleman:1990). See also chapter 5, section 5.6.)

Thus it seems that individual teachers do not change their teaching style in teaching large and smaller size classes. However, they face a number of 'problems' in doing the same kinds of things as effectively in large classes as they can do in their smaller classes. This leads to an increased amount of teacher stress and workload in teaching large classes. In contrast, as discussed in chapter 5, there is both physical 'relaxation' and 'pleasure' or professional satisfaction in teaching classes of a smaller size.

7.4 What, if anything, is different in classes of varying size taught by different and the same teachers?

A closer look at the teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes above points attention to at least two kinds of differences in classes of varying size. They are as follows:

1) difference in the pattern of teacher-learner interaction and learner participation in classroom activities according to their location (vis-a-vis the position of the teacher) in the classroom; and

2) difference amongst individual teachers in terms of activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours with main and enhancing functions.

7.4.1 Location as a feature of interaction in large classes

One important difference that is noticeable in larger and smaller size classes is in the pattern of classroom interaction and learner participation in the classroom according to the location of the students vis-a-vis the position of the teacher and the blackboard in the classroom. Thus we find, in lessons 1-4 above (and in lesson 6), that only students in the first two or three rows or the front of the classroom volunteer and/or are nominated to read the text aloud and answer the questions in class. On the other hand, the students at the back are either passive or engaged in other activities while apparently following the norms of expected classroom behaviour, such as heads bending down over their books. The teachers seem to be aware of this fact and use different strategies to bring these students back into the 'fold', as it were, during a lesson. For example, Shahida in lesson 1 deliberately changes her location in the classroom by walking around the class while she or other students are reading the text aloud . She said that this enabled her to keep an eye on all the students which, according to her, motivates them to pay attention to the lesson. Mehtab, on the other hand, teaches mainly from the 'front' of the class, but pauses frequently, during her lesson, to ask questions from the students at the back or to call upon them directly to pay attention to the lesson (lesson 2) (see also chapter 8, section 8.7).

How is classroom space divided in terms of the location of the learners vis-a-vis the position of the teacher and the blackboard in larger classes? What are the perceived benefits and/or the disadvantages of sitting at different locations in the classroom? What expectations do the teachers and learners have of students who sit in the 'front' or the 'back' of the classroom? These and other questions in regard to students' location in the classroom, which seem particularly related to class size (they were almost always mentioned by teachers and learners in larger classes), will be discussed in detail in chapter 8.

7.4.2 Activity types and teacher-learner behaviour with main and enhancing functions

As described earlier, there are some core activity types and teacher-learner behaviours which were found in the classrooms of all teachers, irrespective of the size of their classes. These core activity types seem to have the main function of being counted, both by teachers and their students, as the 'act' of teaching and learning in the classroom. However, as can be seen in the different lessons above, different teachers use several other activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours, even within core activity types, which can be described as 'enhancements' as they seem to have the function of adding on to the 'core' activity types, or more generally of enhancing the teaching-learning process in the classroom.

If we look at the teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes above, we can see that all teachers read the text aloud, translate and/or explain the meaning of the text and give 'words-meanings' i.e. follow 'core' teaching behaviours in the activity type 'reading the text' (cf. chapter 6). Moreover, in all the lessons the majority of students sit quietly, apparently listening to the teacher or other students, with their heads bending over their textbooks which are open in front of them. However, there is a difference amongst the classrooms of individual teachers in terms of the extent and frequency of the use of different sub-activities, for example, reading the text aloud by the students, which was perceived as having an enhancing function only.

Thus while there exists a tacit understanding amongst the teachers about the necessity of doing 'core' activity types in their classrooms, whatever the size of their class may be, it seems that several activity types and teacher-learner behaviours, even within the core activity types, are considered optional. These can therefore be dispensed with if the teacher is in a hurry to complete the lesson or if the number of students in the class is very large (cf. appendix 6 A, classroom observation notes 3 and 4 and teacher's interview (5.3)).

One teacher who was faced with teaching a larger class now as compared to her previous experience of teaching smaller size classes in the same school said that with an increase in the size of their classes over the years, she and her colleagues had gradually given up using a number of enhancing activity types such as story telling, and even the use of visual aids in their classrooms. She said that now, in their larger classes, the aim of the teachers was mainly to get on with the job of teaching (doing core activity types) in order to complete the course.

It seems that, on one hand, teachers develop 'survival' strategies, such as creating a smaller class of a few 'good' students in the front of the class, to cope with the large number of students in their classes (see chapter 8). On the other, teaching and learning in large classes is increasingly confined to the doing of 'core' activity types while reducing, at the same time, the use of activity types with an enhancing function. Some teachers who still manage to use some enriching activities have to put in extra time and effort to do so, although it is not always possible for the majority of teachers due to their heavy teaching schedule and personal commitments outside the classroom.

Furthermore, the use of core and enhancing activity types with accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in larger and smaller size classes seem to be related as much to the personality type of individual teachers and their level of personal commitment and interest in their students as to the size of their classes. For example, Midhat encourages the students to participate in the lesson in her 'very large' class, even if it is through choral reading of the text only (lesson 3). Moreover, she makes a special effort to relate to the students individually by commenting on their classroom performance and progress, e.g., improvement in handwriting, while going around the class to check their work (cf teacher interview and classroom observation notes). Consequently the students in her class seem to be highly motivated and are actively involved in their work, even if they are doing a mechanical task such as copying from the blackboard. On the other hand, Ferheen (lesson 6), who is teaching a class which she described as 'neither small nor large',

seems interested in doing her 'job' only, i.e., following the minimum requirements for the 'act' of teaching to take place in the classroom. Also this is done with little regard to whether all the students are participating in the lesson or not.

When two varying size classes are taught by one teacher (e.g. Bina above), the effect of class size seems to be felt particularly while trying to do the same kinds of activity types in the larger and the smaller class. Thus as reported by Bina, teaching the large class is more problematic in terms of an increase in physical effort and stress for the teacher. Also as more time is required to do the same amount of work in a large class than in a smaller class, Bina felt frustrated when she did not have the time to do the same amount of enhancing activities, such as vocabulary extension work, in the large class as she did in her smaller class. Also she used group work less frequently in her large class due to the fear of losing control but, more importantly, because she felt that group work proved to be less effective in the large class. (For further discussion on problems in using group work in large classes, see chapter 9, section 9.2.3.)

7.5 Teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in two 'similar' size classes taught by the same teacher

One teacher regarded both her classes (with 26 and 42 students respectively) as 'neither small nor large'. However, she said that, for her, 42 (the number of students in the second group) was the optimum number for effective teaching and learning to take place in the classroom. The two classes were in fact two sections of the same class, i.e., X C, comprising 42 students from the commerce group, and X B, with 26 students of a relatively higher ability level from the science group.

A look at the activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in two lessons, which were held on the same day in the two classes and dealt with the same topic (rules about the use of definite and indefinite articles), reveals that the teacher essentially

uses the same classroom methodology in both classes. This is illustrated in the following extracts from my classroom observation notes:

Lesson 1

41 students are present out of a total of 42 students.

2.40 The teacher begins the lesson by asking a student: 'What's the meaning of the word 'article'?' Some students are still settling down putting away their test papers etc. She makes a general solicit to the class: 'How many kinds of articles are there?' Three students raise their hands. A student in the back row answers: 'There are two kinds - definite and indefinite articles.'

The teacher asks the students to list the 'words' that come under 'definite and indefinite'. She writes the two kinds on the blackboard and elicits their equivalents in Urdu. (She teaches them Urdu also.) The student in the back row answers again while the other students listen very intently. The teacher explains the answer to the class and tells him to sit down.

The teacher gives an example orally: 'The sun rises in the east' and nominates the student in the back row (it is his third turn) to answer the question: 'What is 'sky'?' She goes to stand close to the student. The teacher walks around the class explaining. Most of the students seem to be listening to the teacher's explanation. She makes a general solicit once again: 'Who is going to tell me any example of 'the'?'

The teacher gives an example on the blackboard: 'I live in Sind'. . .

She asks: 'What's the difference between 'Jinnah' and 'the Jinnah'?'

The teacher continues with her [long-winded] explanation of rules for using articles. The students sit quietly. Some of them look at the teacher as she continues to explain . . .

The students seem to be listening to the teacher's explanation which she gives in a loud, booming voice that reverberates through the room. The teacher continues to give the explanation giving examples from Arabic also. The students sit very quietly looking dull and distracted. Some students look very bored. A student in the back row has a 'key' open in front of him . . .

The teacher continues with her explanation asking questions in between, e.g., 'Why you are not using 'an' here?' A student is nominated to give the rule about when to use 'a' and 'an'. The teacher points attention to the difference in the types of nouns: 'A fan, an eye, but we say 'strength' not 'a strength'.' She elicits the reason for this usage. One student explains that it is because some of these nouns are countables while others are uncountables. The teacher repeats the answer for the whole class . .
.

The teacher comments on the fact that the girls are not answering any questions and tries to guess the reason for their lack of response: 'The problem is you don't remember the definition. You must know the definition of all parts of speech.'

(3-II-4/ CO 4)

Lesson 2

26 students are present out of a total of 26 students.

2.08 The teacher explains the rules for using articles giving examples from everyday life. The students look very intently at the blackboard. The teacher nominates Abdul Rehman to spell a word. Other students prompt the correct spelling.

The teacher has written two sentences on the blackboard:

I have a hut on the bank of the Indus.

He is _ B.A, but my brother is _ B.Sc.

The students listen to the teacher's lecture [explanation of rules for using articles] very quietly. She explains the meaning of 'bachelor' . . .

The teacher asks the class: 'Are these bachelor sons countable or uncountable?' She proceeds to give examples of countables.

The students try to fill in the blanks in the second sentence on the blackboard. One student offers: 'Miss, 'the' will be used?' The teacher explains why 'the' is not used here. She gives a very elaborate explanation. The students look at the blackboard and murmur answers as the teacher explains. All students look very attentive. The teacher explains the use of 'a/an' with reference to the initial sound in a word. The teacher stands in front of the class when she explains. She continues with the explanation trying to create humour with her play of words. The students laugh. They sit in rapt attention (apparently) as the teacher continues with a long winded explanation.

T: Look here.

She writes another sentence on the blackboard:

I looked _ the sky _ was full _ stars.

All the students copy it down immediately. The teacher walks around the classroom urging the students to think about what articles can be put in the blanks . . .

A student volunteers to answer. The teacher corrects him as he answers and tells all the students who were standing (for not being able to answer correctly earlier) to sit down. She repeats the explanation in detail and all the students seem to listen to it very intently . . .

The teacher asks what kind of article will the letter 'a' be if it is used as an article.
S1: Definite article.
S2: Indefinite article.
The teacher tells them to think about the difference between definite and indefinite articles.
(3-II-4/ CO 3)

In both the lessons above, the teacher focuses on explaining grammatical rules for

using 'definite' and 'indefinite' articles. The rules are first elicited from the students

(probably because the students have done 'articles' in previous years). However, when the students are unable to provide the required rules correctly, the teacher indulges in a very elaborate explanation of rules with example sentences on the blackboard. Moreover, in both the lessons, isolated sentences are used to illustrate these rules. In fact, the example sentences follow the pattern of the 'expected' question on articles in the Board exams. Hence in both classes, firstly, teaching and learning is geared largely towards the school leaving exams. Secondly, the teacher walks around the classroom as she asks questions and/or explains the grammar rules. Thirdly, the majority of students in the class sit quietly, apparently listening to the teacher's lecture, while only a few students volunteer to answer the teacher's questions.

Thus it seems that individual teachers do not change their teaching style in classes which are perceived by them as similar in size (even if there is a difference in the actual number of students in these classes). On one hand, it confirms earlier findings that numbers are not the only indicator of class size (cf chapter 4). On the other, it establishes that teachers do not change their teaching style if two or more classes (which may be different in terms of numbers) fall within the same 'size category' in regard to their threshold levels of class size. (The threshold levels of class size could be different for different teachers depending on a number of factors, such as the 'norm' in their immediate educational context, ability level of the students and their preferred teaching style.)

7.6 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I began by describing teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes taught by six different teachers. This was followed by a look at two varying size classes taught by the same teacher. Next, some differences in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes found in larger and smaller size classes were discussed. Finally, the activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours in two 'similar' size classes, taught by one teacher, were examined.

A closer look at several lessons taught by different and the same teacher in varying size classes confirmed, on one hand, the observations made in chapter 6 about the presence of a shared culture of 'core' teacher-learner behaviours and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes (cf. the transmission model of teaching in Pakistani classrooms outlined in section 6.5). On the other, it revealed some essential differences in larger and smaller size classes. They are: 1) difference in the pattern of teacher-learner interaction and learner participation in the classroom according to the location of the learners vis-a-vis the position of the teacher and the blackboard in the front of the classroom; and 2) differences amongst individual teachers in terms of the extent to which they use activity types (and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours) with an enhancing function in their classrooms.

It was also found that the classroom methodology used by individual teachers derive as much from their personality types and their views of teaching and learning in the classroom as from their perception of the size of their classes as 'large' and 'very large', and 'neither small nor large' (see also Kumar (1992) and Prasad (1992)). Thus individual teachers such as Bina, when they are teaching two classes which they consider as different in size, generally try and follow the same classroom methodology in their larger and smaller size classes. However, they can do fewer enhancing activities in their large classes due to several constraints specific to the large class context (see chapter 5). Moreover, they feel more stressed while doing the same kinds of activity types in a larger class than when they do them in a smaller class.

Furthermore, teachers do not seem to change their teaching style when they perceive two or more classes as 'similar' in size or in the same size category in terms of their threshold levels of class size (even though these classes may be different in terms of numbers). On the other hand, there is some evidence in the literature on class size (chapter 1, section 1.6) that a change in teachers' perception of the size of a class, based either on a dramatic increase in numbers or their previous experience of class size, can

motivate the teachers to rethink the instructional and management techniques used in these

classes (e.g. Gibbs and Jenkins:1992, Burgess:1988).

CHAPTER 8

IN OR OUT OF THE ACTION ZONE:

LOCATION AS A FEATURE OF INTERACTION IN LARGE CLASSES

8.1 Introduction

In chapter 6 it was found that the various locations of the the learners vis-a-vis the teacher and the blackboard in the front of the classroom seem to affect the pattern of teacher-learner interaction and learner participation in the classroom. In this chapter, the importance of location in teacher fronted large classes in Pakistan will be explored further. I will begin by discussing the reasons for students' various locations in the classroom. This will be followed by a closer look at the effect of students' location on teacher-student interaction in the classroom (first mentioned in chapter 6). Thirdly, the behaviour patterns and characteristics of learners in and vis-a-vis their location in the front or the back of the classroom will be described. Fourthly, the conditions and opportunities available for learning in the front and the back zones of the classroom will be discussed. Finally the 'careers' of different types of students, who are located in or out of the action zone, and some teacher strategies for extending the action zone in the classroom will be described.

8.2 Physical layout of the classroom and teachers' attention zone

Most of the classrooms in secondary schools in Pakistan (where the research was undertaken) have four rows of five or six dual desks. There are narrow pathways between the first and second rows and between the third and the fourth rows. In fact the classrooms in government schools are built, according to government specifications, to accommodate twenty dual desks for forty students. However, with an increase in student numbers, often, the desks in the second and third rows are joined together to make extra space for more desks or chairs, i.e., if they are available. Sometimes an extra row of

desks is put in to accommodate the large number of students in the classroom (e.g., site 5). Figure 8.1 shows the typical layout of school classes in Pakistan.
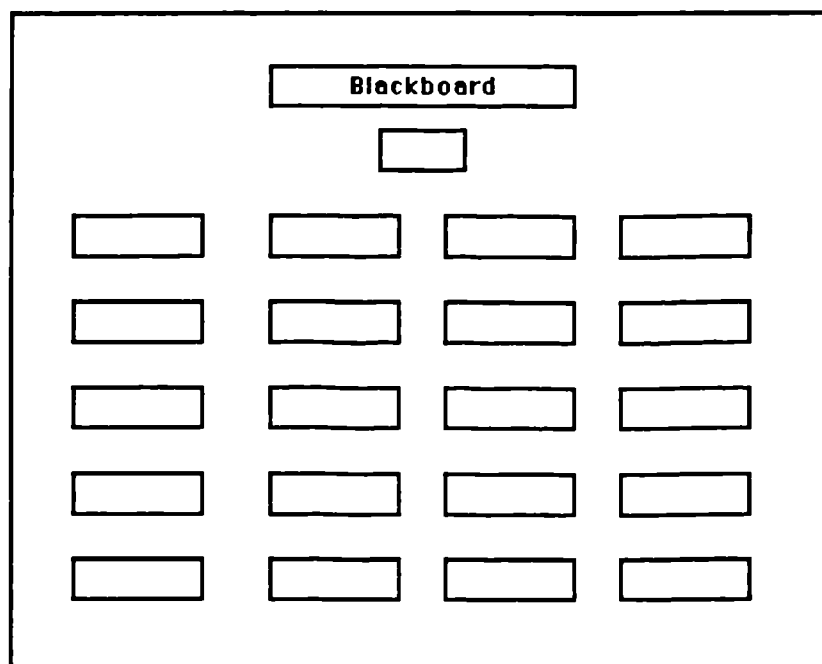
Figure 8.1: **The layout of a typical classroom for forty students in secondary schools in Pakistan**

The teacher usually teaches from the centre of the front of the classroom. From this position she has easy access to the blackboard which is almost always the only resource in the classroom other than the textbook. Thus while teaching, the teacher directly faces the middle two rows but she can also 'keep an eye' on the students sitting in the two wings on the left and right hand side in the front two or three rows. On the other hand it is not always possible for her to 'see' the students at the back of the classroom.

Thus the front of the classroom lies within the 'surveillance' zone of the teachers. On the other hand, the back of the classroom is outside their attention zone. This seems to affect the behaviour of the students at different locations, i.e., the front or back, in the classroom. This is evident in the following comments by a teacher:

> I think when students sit in the front they realise that the teacher is watching them, they do not get involved in mischief as compared to children sitting at the back of the class. Children at the back are away from the 'direct gaze' of the teacher so they get involved in talking and mischief. Children in the front are likely to get caught more easily so they are more careful. (6.6)

This observation seems to be in agreement with Hall's concept of proxemics (1969, in Horne:1970) according to which the 'close phase' of the physical distance between the teacher and the students is 4-7 feet while the 'far phase' is 7-12 feet. Hall suggests that beyond 12 feet the teacher ceases to be a member of the group and becomes a lecturer with a more formal style of teaching.

One teacher used a unique method for extending her attention zone to the back of the class by assigning the task of monitoring the class, while she was teaching from the front, to a student monitor. This strategy was observed to have the desired effect of keeping the students quiet and apparently on-task. The nature of this procedure as well as its effects were also reported by the students in that class, as follows:

> S1: In our English class one student stands at the back because students at the back talk and make a noise. So either Naseem or Imran are assigned this duty.[1]
> S2: They check if all the students are looking at their books. If anyone is talking they make him stand up. This is the only period in which there is no noise and the students work. Otherwise in all other classes something or the other is happening. (6.3.1)

Thus it seems that both the teachers and students believe quite strongly that the teachers' ability to 'keep an eye' on the students has an appreciable effect on their classroom behaviour and consequently their general performance in the classroom. On the other hand, it is felt that the teachers' difficulty in monitoring the work of the students, particularly of students who are at the back in a large class, encourages them to indulge in other activities during the lesson (see also chapter 5, section 5.2.2).

8.3 Reasons for learners' location in the classroom

The students perceive their location in the classroom with reference to the position of the teacher and the blackboard in the front of the classroom. Thus the students in the first three rows consider themselves to be in the 'front' of the class while the students in the

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[1] This job was entrusted to these two students on the basis of their general reputation as 'tough guys' in the class rather than on the basis of general merit in their studies.

5th and 6th rows feel that they are at the 'back' of the class. The students in the 4th row perceive their location variously as the middle or the back of the classroom.

The location of the learners in the classroom seems to be a result of one or more of the following factors:

1 The teacher tries to impose/dictate location and succeeds.

The teachers reported that the class teachers assigned seats to the students, at the beginning of the school year, on the basis of height. However,

> Subject teachers can change seats if they see that two friends talk a lot. Then we move one of them to sit somewhere else. (6.1)

Furthermore, the students told me that:

> S1: I once sat in the front. The teacher sent me back telling me: 'You are so tall. Why are you sitting in the front?'
> S2: When the class is changed the students at the back try to sit in the front but shorter girls complain to the teacher. So we (taller girls) are sent back. (5.2.2)

> We can study better in the front. Mostly there is noise at the back which tends to disturb you. In the beginning I sat in the front a couple of times but the teacher sent me back. (4.2.2)

Another teacher who taught comparatively younger children, said that, 'If students do not respond we change their seats, make them sit in the middle or front rows (4.1).' Similarly the students said that teachers often reallocated seats on the basis of student ability: 'In the English class the teacher tells the weaker girls at the back to come to the front and sends some girls from the front rows to the back (5.4.2).'

2 The teacher tries to dictate location but is eventually defeated in her efforts to do so, or forced to reconsider her earlier decision by the learners.

The students in one class reported that the teacher had initially assigned the seats according to the height of the students. However, very soon the students changed their seats, rearranging their location according to personal preferences for different zones in the classroom. As a result, ' [Now] A lot of tall girls sit in the front while

some shorter girls sit at the back' (5.3.3). These students further opined that the tall

girls were able to sit in the front because, 'They flatter the teacher'.

Another group of students said that their teacher had told the students, who had

received low grades in the half yearly exam, to sit in the front so that, 'They keep

their attention on their work'. However, they said that,

> These students sit there only in the English period and then come back to their usual places. [In fact] These days Miss is not being strict about it so they have moved back to their usual seats. (4.2.1)

Their teacher seemed to have resigned herself to the fact that, "In the beginning the

teacher assigns seats but later they settle it themselves. The teacher doesn't have a lot

of control over this". She reported, as her students above, the non-success of her

efforts to rearrange the location of the students in the classroom, according to their

ability level, as follows:

> "For example, after this test in class IX, I told the students who failed the exam to sit in the middle, so that I can focus on their difficulties and problems. They sat there for a week or two and gradually started changing their seats. There could be two reasons - may be they want to avoid the teacher or may be some other influential students are getting their seats. So I didn't pursue it after a week or two. You can't achieve anything by imposing it on them." (4.2)

3   The teacher does not attempt to dictate location and the students decide for

themselves.

It was observed that several teachers allowed the learners to make their own decision,

from the beginning, about their location in the classroom. The fact that the students

could exercise a degree of choice in selecting their location in the classroom is

illustrated in the following comments by a group of students:

> S1: Sometimes girls at the back get an opportunity to sit in the front. When girls who sit in the front are absent we [girls in the front] tell them to move up to the vacant places in the front.
> S2: But they don't want to sit in the front. And despite the fact that we tell them to move to the front they prefer to sit at the back.
> S3: Because they have to talk.
> S4: The last couple of days a number of students were absent so we told the girls at the back to take this opportunity to sit in the front but they didn't want to do so.
> S5: They are afraid Miss might ask them questions and if they can't answer she'll tell them: 'If you don't know the answers why are you sitting in the front?' (5.2.1)

(The characteristic forms of behaviour displayed by students at different locations in the classroom will be discussed in section 8.5 below.)

There seemed to be a tough competition amongst the students for getting the front seats in the classroom. The students said that they use various strategies to get a place in the front of the class, for example:

S1: If you come regularly you can come early and grab the front seats.
S2: I grabbed my seat in the front row the very first day before other boys had come. (6.3.1)

Similarly, the unwritten rule in one classroom was that, 'Whoever comes first in the morning and keeps his bag reserves the seat. Then no one can remove the bag' (6.1.1).[2] One student complained that he could not come early in the morning to get the front seat as he lived far from the school. He said that when he discussed his problem with the class teacher (he also had weak eyesight), the teacher also told him to come early if he wanted to sit in the front. However, another student in the same class, who always sat in the front, said that he lived farther from him but always came early to get a seat in the front because, 'You understand better if you sit in the front (6.1.2).' This suggests that while many students would like to sit in the front, only some of them are willing to make the extra effort involved in getting the front seats.

8.4 Location as a feature of interaction in large classes

It was found that, in larger classes, learner participation in classroom activities as well as the general pattern of teacher-student interaction was linked significantly with the location of the students in the front or the back of the classroom. In fact only a few students in the front rows participated in the lesson in any way. This is evident in the following classroom observation notes of a part of a reading lesson:

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[2]Coming early to class to get the front seats has also been noted by Coleman(1991d) as one of the strategies used by learners in large classes.

Mehnaz continues with the reading passage she had started yesterday. After making a few students read it out aloud - when she calls some students from the back of the class to the front in order to read, probably so that she can hear them better when they are closer to her - she begins to read out the passage phrase by phrase (in fact, word by word) which the students recite in chorus after her. Only the children in the first four rows are repeating while the children in the last three rows are busy talking to each other quietly, or doing other things. (4-ย-1/CO 2)

Furthermore, mostly the students from the front of the class were selected by the teacher for reading the text aloud or answering the teacher's questions in the class.[3]

Moreover, the students at the back either did not volunteer or were unable to read 'correctly' when nominated by the teacher to do so (cf. chapter 7). This can be seen in
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the following extract from my research diary:

> Two things were particularly noticeable in Sughra's class today. 1) Only 8-10 students (out of 52 students present in a class of 85) from the first two rows volunteered to read by raising their hands. The teacher selected one of them and the students read reasonably well. The smooth rhythm of the lesson was disturbed when the teacher decided to call upon some students from the back [probably because of my presence in the class] to read. As they hesitated and stumbled in their reading, it cast a jarring note, breaking the earlier smooth rhythm of the lesson. The teacher began to feel annoyed and soon reverted to calling on the volunteers from the front rows only, and the class somehow regained balance and proceeded smoothly as before; 2) The students' help was enlisted by the teacher for the purposes of classroom management as well as her personal work. (RD, 30 November, 1991.)

It was also observed that the teachers directed different types of questions to students at the front and back of the classroom. Thus more difficult questions were asked of students in the front rows while students at the back were often told to repeat the same answers. One teacher explained it thus:

> We'd like the girls at the back to answer also . . . If you ask the same questions 2-3 times they can at least remember something of it. That's why I do it orally - so that if they listen carefully they can repeat it. (5.3)

Similarly the students at the back reported that:

> S1: Mostly she [the teacher] tells girls at the back to read.

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[3]In teacher-fronted large classes these were the only forms of student participation in the classroom. Further 'teacher asks questions - students answer' was often the only pattern of teacher-learner interaction in the classroom. The only bit of discourse that was initiated by the students was to confirm whether they should copy something in their 'text copies' or 'grammar copies'. Sometimes they also plucked up enough courage to ask the teacher which page she was reading from if they could not follow it the first time she announced it at the beginning of the lesson.

S2: If they do it incorrectly she tells the girls in the front to read so that they [girls at the back] can understand and then they are told to read the same. She tells them to follow the model provided by girls in the front. (5.2.1)

A few students at the back also commented on the difference in teachers' wait time between questions which were directed at the students in the front or the back of the class; they believed that this reflected a difference in the teachers' expectations from students at different locations in the classroom. However, it was not possible to record the incidence of this phenomenon in any systematic way.

It was also observed that the majority of large class teachers created, within their large class, a smaller class of students in the front only. They seemed happy to teach this 'smaller' class of students in the front and ignored the students at the back as long as these students tacitly agreed not to disturb the class and at least copied down the answers from the blackboard. An extreme example of this phenomenon was observed in the class of Farhat at site one. She had 65 students in her class. However, in actual effect, she was really teaching a class of 8 students - the class monitors who sat in the first row. They answered all the questions and served as barometers for pacing the classroom activities. One day when she had given them dictation, it was very obvious that she only considered the students in the front as worthy of her attention. The following extract tries to capture the classroom events towards the end of the class:

> The teacher tells the monitors in the first row to first check their own work. 'Then you'll exchange papers and each monitor will check 4 papers very quickly', she announces. Hina, who is the class monitor, is told to read out each word. The teacher asks her to read slowly. As Hina reads out a word the teacher repeats it and then stops a while to allow the 8 monitors to find the word in the book and check its spelling. The pace of the class is set up by the monitors in the first row and the teacher only waits for them to find the word and check it before moving on to the next word. The students at the back cannot keep pace and look very bewildered.

> When all the words have been checked the monitors walk back to collect the papers from their rows. A third student sharing a desk with Hina and Unaiza in the front row is told to move back so as to give the two monitors space to work. Some students at the back begin to do other work while the monitors are busy checking their papers.

> The teacher tells the students to note down their roll numbers as she begins to call them out. The teacher obviously does not know the names of all the students. However, the class listens attentively for their names and roll numbers. Some students are absent and the monitors of their rows are told to take down their roll numbers (1-I-1/ CO 7).

When the teachers were asked if they felt any difference in communicating with the students in the front and the back of the classroom, the general response was that it made no difference because:

"I think that teacher's presence in the class is important - right in front of the class. She can see all the children around her, even back students. But still I think it's not a problem at all - that we don't know what students at the back are doing. Because the teacher is in the front, the students are looking at her. We know from all angles whether students are paying attention to you . . ." (3.3)

Though the teachers did not admit to perceiving any difference in their interaction with students at different locations in the classroom, they had definite opinions about the kinds of students who sit in the front or back of the class which seemed to influence their behaviour towards these students. For example, it was observed that the teachers asked questions from students at the back mainly 1) to control mild forms of misbehaviour, by publicly showing their incompetence, or 2) to get them back to the 'fold' when they were observed as not paying attention to what the teacher was teaching in the front of the classroom. Thus it seemed that the students at the back were addressed basically for punitive or control purposes only because, as will be discussed in section 8.5 below, neither the teacher nor the other students in the classroom expected them to be able to read well or answer the questions.

8.5 Learner characteristics and patterns of classroom behaviour

What kinds of students sit in the front and the back of the classroom and why do they choose to sit there? It was found that certain character traits are attributed to the students who sit in the front or the back of the class both by the teachers and other students in the classroom. Further specific patterns of classroom behaviour are associated with students who prefer to sit at different locations in the classroom.

The majority of students perceived a link between different types of students and their location in the classroom. For example, the students in the front were considered to be

more industrious and hardworking. This is illustrated in the following comment by a student:

> The advantages of sitting in the front are for those who study regularly and complete their work on time. They get up early in the morning and go over their work so it's beneficial for them [to sit in the front]. If you don't study then there is no advantage. (6.1.3)

Several students in the front claimed that they were accustomed to sitting in the front, because:

> She is my favourite teacher and I enjoy studying in her class. This is my fixed place. I'm not accustomed to sitting at the back. I've always sat in the front. (5.3.1)

Another reason for students' preference for the front zone could be their awareness of the teachers' negative view of the students at the back of the classroom. Thus the students in the front did not want to be considered 'dull' or 'bad' by the teachers, as is evident in their following comments:

> It's my habit always to sit in the front row. I don't enjoy sitting at the back (because) the teacher thinks that girls at the back don't study. (5.4.1)

> Girls at the back are considered dull. Teachers think they don't study - that they talk a lot and I couldn't tolerate that. Our Maths teacher says this frequently. (5.3.1)

It seems that students in the front also have more self confidence. This could be due to their personality type. Conversely, it could be a result of their location in the classroom, as two students who now sat in the front confessed:

> S1: I used to sit at the back. I was afraid of sitting in the front. But now I'm not afraid any more.
> S2: Earlier I was also afraid of sitting in the front. (5.4.1)

The teachers were also of the opinion that students in the front were 'usually clever' perhaps due to their strong personality type, as a result of which they managed to get a seat in the front, in the first place, thus:

> " . . . the smart children are quite active and dominating in the class, so they take the seats in the front row. And the children who are weak are not weak in studies only but also in behaviour. So they are suppressed." (4.2)

They were also of the view that the students who sit in the front do so because they want to get recognition. Consequently they work hard to get the attention of the teacher, for example:

> Yes, girls at the back either don't pay attention or if while teaching I ask the meaning of a word we've met before - the girls in the front answer and girls at the back don't raise their hands. (5.3)

> You must have seen that when we ask the students more children from the front row raise their hands. So we realise that students at the back are taking less interest and are therefore unable to answer the questions. (6.4)

In contrast, the students at the back had a very negative view of what they perceived as strategies used by the students in the front for getting the attention of the teacher. One student expressed this as follows:

> What really annoys me is that girls in front write the translation of the lesson in their textbooks at home so they can easily give the translation etc. when told by the teacher to do so in class. Then the teacher reprimands the girls at the back for not studying at home. (5.2.2)

The teachers considered the students at the back to be 'dull' and 'lazy' in comparison to students in the front. Moreover, they were of the opinion that the students who choose to sit at the back of the classroom want to be outside the attention zone of the teacher and to hide from the teacher. (As seen earlier, the attention zone of the teacher is limited to the front of the classroom in larger classes.)

> Even some shorter girls sit at the back. For the teacher there is no difference, but the students in the back row are usually dull. They want to hide behind but some students at the back also want to work. But mostly it is not true. They are lazy - that's why they sit at the back. (5.3)

They believed that this was because the students at the back wanted to keep their 'weaknesses', such as their low ability level and bad handwriting, hidden from the teacher:

> Only those girls sit at the back - some sit there deliberately because they know that Miss doesn't go to the back very often. Mostly their work is not complete. They have bad handwriting and are 'nil' in studies. So they tell themselves, 'Miss won't come to the back so we will not be scolded for not working'. If they get scolded everyday, they don't like it and therefore they prefer to sit at the back to hide from the teacher. First of all they know that Miss can't see what everyone is doing. (5.1)

Thus for teachers the difference between the students in the front and back seemed to be very clear: the students in the front are 'clever'; they have a strong personality type and they work hard and participate actively in the lesson. In contrast, the students at the back are 'dull'; they have weaker personality types and they are generally not interested in their work.

The students in the front seemed to have, as their teachers, a very negative image of the kind of students who sit at the back. Thus according to them:

1 The students at the back are careless and they do not take interest in their studies.

>S1: At the back only those boys sit who like to make mischief.
>S2: Bad boys. (6.1.2)

2 They have a lower ability level.

>S1: The boys at the back are not good in their studies.
>S2: They are all dull. (6.1.1)

>They hardly answer any questions. If they don't know they sit at the back. (6.4.1)

>Some boys who are weak in studies prefer to sit at the back. (6.1.2)

3 They lack confidence to answer the teachers' questions or participate in classroom activities in any other way.

>S1: Girls at the back prefer to sit there because they are afraid.
>S2: They are afraid of answering the teacher's questions.
>S3: They want to hide from the teacher so that she doesn't ask them any questions. (5.4.1)

>Students at the back hardly ever raise their hands. But the teacher asks them more questions. When Miss tells them to stand up and answer the questions very few can do so. (5.3.3)

>They suffer from an inferiority complex and then they don't work. (5.3.2)

3. They talk a lot.

>S1: They [students at the back] talk a lot and even disturb us [girls in the front].
>S2: That's what everyone says that girls at the back talk a lot - and it's true really.
>S3: Tall girls sit at the back and they are always talking. In front there are shorter girls and they don't talk. (5.4.1)

>S1: The students at the back make a lot of noise.
>S2: And then we [students in the front] also get a bad reputation.
>S3: And [because of the noise] we also don't understand.
>S4: They are always talking. (6.1.2)

There was a general agreement amongst the students in the front that some students 'fight to get a place at the back' because it is easier to talk at the back.

4 Students at the back do other work during the lesson.

>Whenever the teacher is teaching girls at the back are doing their home work of other subjects or doing some other work though they have their books open in front of them. (5.3.3)

S1: They read story books. And they are always talking.
S2: They do other work and Miss doesn't know about it. (5.4.2)

5 They do not complete their work.

A few students felt sympathetic towards the students who sat at the back and tried to

rationalize their apparent apathy and attitude of non-work as follows:

S1: [They don't try] Because they have household work to do.
S2: No, Miss. They suffer from inferiority complex.
S3: Their home environment is such that they don't get an opportunity to study at home because
they have to do household chores. But if they try they can also work. (5.2.1)

Thus it seems that the reasons for sitting at the back lie both in the personality types

and the home background of the students. But soon the back of the classroom becomes a

'safe haven' for these students - a place to 'hide' from the teacher, particularly when they

have not completed their work. Several teachers pointed attention to this 'vicious circle',

for example:

So some students don't work due to problems at home. Now when they haven't done their work
they sit at the back trying to hide from the teacher for fear of being scolded.

However, the few students at the back who agreed to be interviewed,[4] complained

that they were obliged to sit at the back due to their height:

S1: Sometimes I feel like crying for being so tall that I can't sit in the front.
S2: Girls who are short have a real advantage because they sit in the front while taller girls have
to sit at the back. (5.2.2)

They believed further that the teachers' differential expectations of students at different

locations in the classroom coloured their attitude and behaviour towards the students at

the back, thus:

S1: Even if a girl talks in the front the teacher is bound to suspect girls at the back.
S2: Miss this is true. No matter how hard they try girls at the back always have a bad reputation.
S3: Students both in the front and the back talk an equal amount but only girls at the back are
blamed for talking. (5.2.2)

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[4]As mentioned in chapter 3, the students who were selected by the teachers for learner interviews were invariably
found to be the brighter students in the class who sat in the front of the classroom. Though it was possible to ask
for student volunteers the second time round, i.e, if more than one group of learners was interviewed from the same
class, the students at the back were too shy and lacking in confidence to volunteer for the interview.

It seems significant that both teachers and the students in the front have a low opinion of students at the back. As a result, they have few expectations from them, which in turn affects their attitude and behaviour towards them. Similarly, the students at the back are very critical of the behaviour of the students in the front as well as the differential treatment received by them from the teachers.

8.6 Conditions and opportunities for learning

The students in the front are generally perceived as better than students at the back. However, are students in the front inherently 'good'? Conversely, are students at the back intrinsically 'dull' or do they become dull by sitting at the back? In order to answer these questions we need to look a little more closely at the conditions and opportunities for learning available for students located in the front and the back zones as well as 'in the middle' of the classroom.

8.6.1 The front zone

The front zone seems to be the choice location in the classroom. There was a general consensus amongst the students about the advantages of sitting in the front, the most important of them being a 'better' understanding of the lesson perhaps due to their close proximity to the teacher. Also there is less distraction and noise in the front. Hence it is comparatively easier for the students in the front to understand the lesson. This can be seen in the following comments of the students:

> By sitting in the front you understand better and get more attention from the teacher. (5.3.1)

> It's easier to understand [in the front]. (5.4.2)

> S1: Miss, it is easier to understand [in the front].
> S2: We understand more quickly. At the back students distract you by talking. (4.2.2)

> There are so many students. *Now what she teaches us, we in the front know and can understand* (my emphasis). But when girls at the back make a noise it becomes difficult for us to concentrate also because when we hear their noise it disturbs us a lot and we find it difficult to understand what Miss is teaching. (5.2.1)

As a result, students in the front are also able to complete their work on time:

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S1: You can't complete your work at the back.
S2: Yes, you can only complete it if you sit in the front. (6.1.2)

The front of the class also falls within the attention zone of the teacher. On one hand, this helps the teacher in keeping track of what the students in the front are doing; on the other, this constant monitoring by the teacher becomes a source of motivation for these students to work better. Thus according to one teacher,

> Girls in the front are 'smarter'. They understand more easily. If they are not working at least the teacher will ask them why they haven't done their work - so they will work and consequently know something. (5.1)

Several students also mentioned this as one of the major benefits of sitting in the front, thus:

S1: The boys in front sit quietly as they are under the teacher's eye.
S2: We like to sit in the front.
S3: It's easy to understand and the teacher asks you more questions.
S4: He asks what we have understood and we can answer all the questions.
S5: Sir also knows if the students in the front are understanding or not. (6.3.1)

S1: [In the front] The teacher pays attention.
S2: The teacher gives attention to girls in the front and ignores girls at the back.
S3: The teacher knows the names of girls in the front. If you sit at the back she doesn't even get to know your name. (5.3.3)

The teacher knows the girls who sit in the front because she sees them in front everyday but she can only see the girls who sit at the back when she stands up. (5.2.1)

According to the students, there are at least two further advantages of sitting in the front. They are:

1 Ability to see the blackboard and hear the teacher

S1: If you sit at the back and taller girls are sitting in front of you, you can't see (the blackboard).
S2: It's easier to see the blackboard [in the front]. (5.4.2)

You can see the blackboard easily and hear the teacher. (6.1.1)

(It's easier to understand in the front because) At the back you can't hear the teacher clearly. (5.4.2)

2 More opportunities for participation in classroom activities

Anyone who sits in the front row gets more turns to answer questions. (5.4.2)

The students in front raise their hands. They repeat all questions. It seems the teacher is teaching only these students. (5.2.2)

The students in the front are selected [to write on the blackboard]. No one at the back raises their hand. (5.4.1)

The students in front are also entrusted with certain privileged jobs such as that of a 'checker'; for example, a group of students told me that one of their friends was a 'checker', 'because she is in the front' (5.4.2).

As mentioned above, both the teachers and the students consider the students in the front to be better than the students at the back. The reasons for the better classroom performance of students located in the front zone can be summarised as follows:

1 The students in the front fall within the attention zone of the teacher. Therefore she can monitor their work more easily. This motivates them to work better.

2. They don't talk by virtue of being 'under the direct gaze of the teacher'. Hence they are able to concentrate on the lesson. As a result they understand the lesson which, in turn, enables them to complete their work.

3 They can see the blackboard and hear the teacher.

Thus the learning environment in the front zone of the classroom seems to be more conducive to learning. Moreover, the students in the front also get more opportunities to participate in classroom activities. It can, therefore, be concluded that the students in the front do not, necessarily, have a higher ability level. However, they seem to have an initial motivation for learning in the classroom. This along with the availability of the optimal conditions for learning in the front zone, including the general environment of work around them, motivates them further to work harder. As a result they become 'good' students.

8.5.2 The back zone

In contrast to the front zone, the atmosphere in the back zone seems to be distracting and non-conducive to work. In fact the conditions and opportunities for learning at the back of the classroom seem to be the mirror image of those found in the front.

The students (in the front) reported that there was a lot of noise at the back. As a result they believed that it was difficult for the students at the back to hear the teacher ('There is one teacher and she has to get herself heard by 85 students' (5.2.1)),[5] and consequently difficult to pay attention to the lesson, thus:

> At the back it's difficult to pay attention. In front the teacher is in front of you and you don't get distracted. I'm not used to sitting at the back. (6.1.1)

> S1: A lot of students at the back are always talking. You must have observed it also . . .
> S2: At the back it's difficult to hear the teacher so they begin to talk. (6.1.3)

Horne (1970) draws attention to acoustic limitations in learning a foreign language, particularly English. He is of the opinion, rightly in my view, that, 'the student needs to hear the foreign language 3 to 5 times more distinctly than he hears his native language in order to understand it' (p.145). The following comment from a student in the front seems to hint at the same phenomenon:

> *They can either not hear the teacher clearly or can't understand.* Even though the teacher encourages them to ask her if they don't understand anything they don't do so (my emphasis). (5.3.3)

The students at the back also complained that they could not hear the teacher. For example:

> I sit at the back while the teacher stands in front and teaches girls in the front only. We can't hear her at the back. She starts teaching immediately (as she comes into the class). The girls in front take out their books quickly while we get late. (5.3.3)

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[5]Holliday (1991c) also mentions poor acoustics as one of the major problems in large university classes in Egypt. As a result of this and related problems Holliday and his team developed a 'Distance Learning' methodology for use in large classes.

(During my observation of this class, despite my best effort, I was never able to hear the teacher's instructions directly from where I sat at the back of the class. The teacher had a very soft voice and addressed her instructions to the girls in the front of the class only. However, the message was somehow transmitted to us at the back of the class but it took a while to do so. It always reminded me of the Chinese whispers game.)

Furthermore, students at the back cannot see the blackboard clearly. This was observed to be true in most of the classes visited for the study as is illustrated in the following extract from my classroom observation notes:

> The teacher gives 'words/meanings' to the students by writing them on the blackboard. There is a great deal of activity in the classroom as the students take out their exercise books. Some students stand up to do so as they can't reach their bags easily due to limited space. (Mostly three students are sharing a dual desk meant for two students.) The teacher gives the meanings both in English and Urdu. Two students leave their seats to visit friends in other parts of the classroom. Some students have not taken out their exercise books uptil now and are still busy talking to their friends.
>
> Five students leave their seats to go to the front of the classroom to copy from the blackboard; another ten students at the back stand up at their seats to see the blackboard clearly. The teacher continues to write more words and their meanings on the blackboard. The three students sitting in the row in front of me are busy talking to each other.
>
> The teacher walks around the class to check if everyone is working (copying) or not. As she does so some students want to know which exercise book to write in ('Miss, rough or fair copy?'). Others want to know if they should write Pacific English [the name of their textbook] on the top of the page (as the heading) in their exercise books before copying the vocabulary list. Three students move closer to the blackboard to see it more clearly. Now approximately sixteen students are standing at their seats. A few students walk around the classroom (not always the same students) or change their place; however, all of them are busy copying from the blackboard. I ask the students in front of me why they are not writing and they immediately begin to look into their bags for their exercise books.
>
> One student is sitting on the floor in the front of the classroom; another student, who is standing in the front, rests his copy on the wall. All are busy copying from the blackboard. One student takes ink from the pen of another student. The teacher continues to write more words on the blackboard. She asks if everyone has copied. There is a multitude of 'Yes, Miss' and 'No, Miss'. (4-1-1/CO 7)

Thus as can be seen in the lesson above, when the teacher wrote something on the blackboard during a lesson, many students from the back either moved to the front of the

classroom, stood up at their seats or had to crane their necks forward in an effort to see the blackboard.

As the teacher teaches from the front of the classroom, the students at the back also face difficulties in understanding the lesson. The students reported that:

> S1: . . . because there are so many students, they can't pay attention to what the teacher is teaching. The girls in the front can still understand because at least they can hear the teacher, but the girls at the back are busy doing other things and no one gets to know what they are doing. But our teacher keeps an eye on girls at the back also.
> S2: Often she 'catches' girls at the back [aksar pi:che ki larkiyon per chaapa maarti hen]. Then they also have a problem at the time of exams because they don't know what the teacher has taught
> . . .
> S3: Because the room is also quite big students at the back don't understand what the teacher is teaching in the front. (5.2.1)

Consequently the students at the back do not complete their work; also:

> Because they sit at the back they can't understand. As a result they leave their work in between and their work remains incomplete. (5.3.3)

Further, their 'copies' are not checked due to their location in the classroom:

> S1: No matter how much they work their copies are not checked because the teacher will only
> . reach them after she's finished checking the copies of girls in the front, and if the entire class period is spent in checking copies of girls in the front then girls at the back are left.
> S2: No, this is not right. If you finish your work quickly your copies will also be checked earlier. Girls in the front complete their work on time so it's checked first while girls at the back don't do their work.
> S3: The girls at the back only do their work in the Sindhi period because the teacher is very strict. (5.3.2)

> As the girls in front study well, the teacher checks their copies first. (5.3.3)

As mentioned earlier in chapter 5, the students put a high premium on getting their work checked by the teacher. Hence the fact that the 'copies' of the students at the back are not checked by the teacher can be very de-motivating for them.

Thus it is established that in larger classes even the minimum conditions for learning, such as hearing the teacher and seeing the blackboard, are not available at the back of the classroom. Moreover, it seems that the difficult learning conditions at the back create an environment of non-work which also influences the 'good' students in that location. For example, one student told me:

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It happens with us also. Sometimes if we sit at the back it's as if the devil takes hold of us
[shaitan sir per aa jata he]. You are influenced by the environment around you. If everyone is
talking you also want to join in. (6.1.2)

Also, for the majority of students, sitting at the back can be very demoralising. In fact

unless they are not already very highly motivated, it results in their losing interest in their

work. This can be seen in the following comment given by a student:

There are one or two students who study even if they sit at the back. So if a girl wants to study
she can. But if she doesn't want to study she'll become more lazy by sitting at the back. (5.2.1)

Thus it seems that the non-availability of some essential conditions for learning in the

back zone, such as hearing the teacher clearly, influence negatively both the classroom

performance and the motivation level of the students in that location in the classroom.

8.6.3 The middle of the classroom

The students who perceived themselves to be 'in the middle' of the classroom mentioned

several advantages of their location as follows:

The benefit of sitting here [in the middle] is that the teacher doesn't ask us questions. She only
asks either the girls in the front or the girls at the back. (5.3.2)

Sitting in the middle has the advantage that you are also included in the praise when girls in the
front get credit for something. So that's nice. (5.3.1)

Similarly, another student explained the benefits of sitting in the middle of the classroom

as follows:

In fact, I prefer to sit in the middle. If I sit in the front the teacher's voice is very loud. At the
back you can't hear her clearly. In the middle it's OK. (4.2.1)

Thus the middle of the classroom seems to be an 'ideal' location for those students

who want to get the best of both the worlds, i.e., the front and the back, in a classroom.

Now to come back to the two questions which were posed above: Are students in the

front inherently 'good'? Conversely, are students at the back intrinsically dull or do they

become dull due to their location in the classroom? It seems from the above discussion

that, a) all the 'action' takes place in the front zone in large school classes in Pakistan, as

that is where the teacher and the blackboard are located during a lesson; and b) the

classroom behaviour and performance of the students is influenced significantly by their various locations in the classroom.

The students who are already highly motivated (and/or have a strong personality) choose to sit in the front. Further, the students in the front, by virtue of their being in the action zone, get increased opportunities for learning in the classroom. As a result their classroom performance is better as compared to the students who are located at the back of the classroom. This leads to a further increase in their level of motivation. In contrast, the students at the back have an initial low motivation. Also there are limited opportunities available for learning at the back of the classroom. The extra effort required in, for example, seeing the blackboard clearly and getting attention from the teacher in the classroom results in their losing interest in the lesson. Consequently the students at the back are unable to understand the lesson and/or participate in classroom activities and are, therefore, perceived as 'dull' by the teacher and other students in the classroom. This leads to a further lowering of their motivation level.

The effect of location on different types of students in large classes could perhaps be explained better by borrowing an analogy from the field of economics: in large classes, due to their various locations in the classroom, the rich (better students) become richer while the poor (weaker students) get poorer.

8.7   In or out of the action zone

Both the teachers and the students believed that the students at the back would improve in their studies if they moved to the front of the classroom. Indeed two students described how their classroom behaviour and, therefore, their performance had changed considerably, as a result of changing their location in the classroom as follows:

> S1: I used to sit at the back and didn't take much interest in my studies. But Miss advised me to sit in the front and to take interest in my work. So now I sit in the front and I've improved considerably. At the back I was mostly busy in talking. The teacher told me you can do well and that I should try and develop my hidden talent. So she told me to sit in the front and it has made a lot of difference. First I didn't study at all but since I've started sitting in the front I get a lot of attention from the teacher and I can also understand the lesson.

S2: All girls at the back are not dull. I also used to sit at the back but as I said earlier girls at the back are either very good or very weak. But you can work hard while sitting at the back also.
S3: Miss I have moved from the back of the class to the front. I didn't study at the back but since I've moved to the front I've started studying. (5.2.1)

This indicates that sitting at the back does not have an adverse effect on those few students who are highly motivated. However, these 'good' students at the back also try to move into the front or the action zone as soon as they can manage to do so.

According to the students, a lot of effort is required to gain entry into the action zone, because:

Even if they [students at the back] remain quiet they can't give as much attention to what the teacher is teaching. And there are two or three girls at the back who try to work but they are rejected. (5.2.2)

Furthermore, the students at the back made the following observation about trying to get the teacher's attention:

When students in the front are absent we [students at the back] move to the front seats. Also when there are [only] two girls on any front desk we go to sit there. (5.2.2)

However, it seems that by trying to participate in classroom activities (e.g., answering questions) students at the back have to put themselves in a position of greater risk than students in the front because both the teacher and their classmates, i.e., other students in the classroom, do not expect them to be able to answer correctly. Hence they are interrupted and generally not given an opportunity or encouragement to self-correct. This was observed by a student who sat at the back of the classroom:

Actually when a girl from the back begins to answer, before she gets a chance to complete the answer, a girl from the front gives the answer. So what the girl at the back was saying is cut short. The teacher considers girls in the front better so when they answer the teacher listens to them carefully. In this way girls at the back suffer. (5.2.2)

In fact the teacher and other students look down upon the efforts made by students at the back to participate in classroom activities. This is evident in the following comments by the students:

Even if (girls at the back) study at home but can't answer a question in class, the teacher calls us dull. One day when I couldn't answer a question I confessed I hadn't studied at home. But if you tell the truth you are in bigger trouble. (5.4.1)

S1: Girls at the back are afraid because if you make a mistake other girls laugh at you.

S2: Even if a student knows the answer they laugh at you. Now English is not our mother tongue and we can only learn the language by speaking it.
S3: So even if a student knows she doesn't dare to answer lest other girls laugh at her.
S4: Students laugh when girls at the back make a mistake because they think they are dull. (5.3.3)

Another problem is peer pressure:

S1: If girls at the back try to work their friends ridicule them and say: Oh! so today she's also become studious!
S2: Miss, I used to sit in the last row but I didn't pay heed to such comments.
S3: Even her friend is not good at studies but she didn't follow her friend and made an effort on her own without her friend's help.
S4: Now she (the friend) has also moved to the front. She's also improved a lot. (5.2.1)

One student who had 'graduated' from the back to the front of the classroom recalled how it had required a lot of effort on her part to get herself recognized and be accepted as a member of the front zone in the classroom, thus:

When I came to the arts group I was so confused because all my friends were in the science group. And I got a place right at the back of the class, so that's where I began to sit. Then I tried to work from there only. Miss, girls at the back talk a lot. But I tried to study in that only. Whenever the teacher asked a question I used to raise my hand very prominently [lamba lamba haath uthate]. (5.2.1)

It seems, from the above comments, that only a few students at the back have the necessary will power and determination to move into the action zone in the face of all odds, including pressure from their peers. But once they are successful in gaining the membership of the front zone they automatically gain access to other privileges, such as, increased amount of attention from the teacher, which are associated with this location in the classroom.

Though a few students manage to move from the back to the front of the classroom the location of the students generally remains stable during the course of an academic year. The teachers agreed with this observation, as is evident in the following comment by a teacher:

But what happens here is that children who sit in the front row do so for the whole year and those at the back remain sitting at the back. (6.3)

The teachers generally seemed to be as aware, as their students were, of the differential effects, both beneficial and harmful, of different locations (front and back) in the classroom. However, they often exhibited an ambivalence in their attitude towards

the effect of location in large classes. For example, on one hand, the teachers agreed that the location of the students, i.e., whether they are in or out of the action zone, has an important influence on their classroom performance and learning in general; on the other, they did not like to admit (probably due to their traditional role as an authority figure in the classroom) that they could not 'keep an eye' on all the students in a large class. The following observation by a teacher reflects this quite clearly:

> It is possible that they [students] become smart by sitting in the front. We tried to move them around but found that when you make them sit in the front they improve, whereas children at the back - I don't think they are inherently bad - but children in the front sit so close to the teacher that they automatically begin to study. They develop interest while a child at the back thinks, though it's not true, that he is out of the teacher's 'range'. Teachers can see all the children but they think they can hide from the teacher and therefore pay less attention. That is why they begin to lose interest thinking that they can get away and the teacher will not see them. (6.4)

A few teachers also made a conscious effort to improve the situation. Several teachers tried to keep the students at the back 'on-task' by using a number of strategies, such as calling upon them every now and again, during the lesson, to pay attention, asking questions in between the lesson, and allocating turns randomly to students at various locations in the classroom. This is illustrated in the following comments by the teachers:

> I try to ask a lot of questions - whatever I've just taught a minute ago. If I realise they are not paying attention at the back, I 'put up' a question. (6.1)

> If children in the front are taking interest, we try to nominate children at random to read. So the children become alert that Miss is not asking them to read systematically, by rows. But you have to warn them first, 'Now I'm going to ask any one of you to stand up and read so you must follow [the lesson]'. If some children are reading softly, we have to tell them to read loudly. But a lot of girls try to avoid getting a turn. If asked to read they come up with excuses such as, 'I have a bad throat'. But if you realise that a girl is becoming habitual in behaving like this then I tell her to read even if it's a very short passage. (1.2)

One teacher said that she tried to solve the problem of students' inattention at the back by changing the location of the learners regularly. (She teaches in a private school where a student is less likely to change his seat after the teacher has assigned it to him as the rate of absence is very low due to strict action being taken against absentee students by the school administration.)

> In my class I change their seats monthly - even duties and responsibilities, for example, 'board incharge', 'classroom incharge'. There are some children who always want to sit in the front seats while there are others who never want to sit in the front. So I change their seats monthly -

moving them row by row. They remember the date that on the 4th of every month they are to change their seats. Sometimes even if I don't remember, they remind me to do so. Because students at the back never want to come to the front but once they are there they know they have to work as they are in front of the teacher. (2.2)

A few other teachers also suggested that the optimal conditions for learning could be provided to all students, at least for some time during the school year, by moving the location of the learners on a regular basis in the classroom:

I feel that if their seats are changed continuously by the class teacher we will have good results. It will solve the problem of difficulty in seeing and hearing because then the students who are at the back [now] won't have the problem of seeing the blackboard clearly or hearing the teacher properly. (6.5)

It is significant that the teachers felt obliged to change the location of the students, particularly, at the time of the annual inspection. Several teachers explained the rationale for this practice as follows:

The teacher assigns the seats and at the time of inspection these intelligent children [in the front] are made to sit at the back and children from the back are moved to the front because the inspectors sit at the back. (6.5)

. . . especially at the time of inspection we have to do this - put the bright children in different corners of the room so that we get an answer from every part of the classroom - otherwise the inspection team gets a bad impression. (6.3)

I was told that sometimes parents also request the teachers to make their children sit in the front in order to get the teacher's attention.

Sometimes the teachers also tried to extend their attention zone by walking to the back of the classroom. This was done mainly to monitor the work of the students at the back of the classroom, but also to make them pay attention to the lesson. This is evident in the comments of different teachers, as follows:

If students are sitting around and looking at each others' copies, I have to go and see that they are working. From the front we can only see the students in the row opposite us. We can't see the children on the sides. Similarly we can't see children at the back and have to go there to see whether they are working or not. (4.1)

Whatever we write on the blackboard, children in the front copy it down quickly but you have to go and check the students in the back rows - whether they are writing or not. If they are not writing they have to be checked and told to write - told to take out their copies - like today one student said he didn't have his copy. Then he said he didn't have his pen, so I told him to use a pencil and he said it doesn't have a point. So he kept making excuses. When I told him to write with a marker, he said he didn't have one - so he wasn't ready to write and he was sitting at the back. Perhaps that's why he was sitting at the back - so that he didn't have to work. (6.5)

Also if everyone has their books open - one has to check that girls at the back are not doing some other work for the next period. So one has to keep an eye on the back rows. In some classes when we reach the back - and it's very embarrassing when other girls tell us that girls at the back are doing some other work. (5.3)

One teacher was found, during classroom observation, to 'position' herself always at the back of the classroom, while the students were copying something from the blackboard or answering a question or reading the text aloud, in order "to view them". Later, she explained her behaviour as follows:

"This is the main cause of standing back because by standing back we have an eye on each and every student and especially the back seaters are dull and they just want to pass on the time - that's why if the students are sitting in front of you, they are automatically conscious . . ." (4.4)

However, walking around the classroom to monitor the work of the students, or even to go to the back of an overcrowded classroom, was almost an impossible feat for many teachers, particularly in very large classes. One teacher, who taught a class of 75 students in a small room, confessed that even when she managed to reach the students at the back of the class it did not seem to be worth the effort, as she felt guilty when she realised that she had not been able to motivate all the students to work, thus:

Now I can see what students in the front rows are doing but I can't reach students at the back. My sarees [dresses] get spoilt because the aisles are so narrow and the desks are all broken. Even when I manage to reach the back row, I feel very bad because they begin to take out their copies after half the period is over. They think that Miss will not reach us before the period is over. (5.1)

Thus a few teachers tried to bring the students at the back of the classroom into the action zone by using various strategies, such as asking them questions; or they moved the location of the learners to bring them into the action zone, while continuing to teach from the front of the classroom. Furthermore, they sometimes made an effort to extend their attention zone, to include the students at the back of the class also, by moving around the classroom.

8.8   Summary and conclusion

To summarise, the teacher is always in the front of the classroom in large school classes in Pakistan. The students perceive the classroom space as well as their location in the

classroom vis-a-vis the position of the teacher and the blackboard in the front of the classroom. Thus the classroom seems to be divided into two zones, the front and the back zone. The students are usually assigned their seats by the teacher, at the beginning of the year, in the front or the back of the class according to their height. However, the students often rearrange their location in the classroom, after this initial allocation of seats by the teacher, according to personal preferences. Sometimes the students are also allowed to choose their own location at the beginning of a year. Further, the students are attributed certain behaviour patterns and character traits, by teachers and fellow students, in accordance with their choice of location in the front or the back of the classroom. In fact there is perceived to be a close link between different types of students and their varied locations in the classroom.

The front is the place where all the 'action' seems to take place. The learners in the front are able to see the blackboard (that is also situated in the front of the classroom) and hear the teacher clearly, and consequently are able to understand the lessons better. Due to their close proximity to the teacher, the teacher also finds it easier to monitor their work and generally to 'keep an eye' on them. This close monitoring by the teacher motivates them to work harder. As a result, the students in the front participate more actively in classroom activities and are usually perceived as 'smarter' than students at the back. Furthermore, the learning conditions at the back are less than optimal. The learners have difficulty in seeing the blackboard and in hearing the teacher. Consequently they don't pay attention during the lesson and cannot answer any questions in class. Moreover, they are out of the 'teacher's range' and therefore feel free to indulge in non-productive activities such as talking, or do other work while the teacher is teaching in the front. Thus, in a sense, they set up their own action zones in the classroom which are different from that of the teacher and the learners in the front of the classroom. However, this does not help them in understanding and/or learning the lesson. Hence they are considered dull and begin to lose self confidence. The back of the class then becomes a place of refuge - a place to hide from the teacher. It seems to have its own culture and

rules for classroom behaviour which members find difficult to break. However, some students who have a higher level of motivation manage to move out of the back zone by dint of sheer hard work and individual effort.

Thus, generally, teachers think that learners who are weak or lazy prefer to sit at the back so that they can 'hide' from the teacher. Learners, on the other hand, feel they are 'doomed' if they have to sit at the back, as they consequently lose interest and the motivation to work. However, interestingly, both the students and teachers are aware of the differential effects of different locations in the classroom. In fact, a few teachers even use some strategies to bring the students at the back into the 'action' zone or to extend their attention zone to the back of the class also. Despite this, a distinct difference can be observed in the nature and pattern of interaction between the teacher and learners situated at different locations in the classroom.

The above discussion points attention to two things in particular: First, secondary school learners in Pakistan seem to work better when they are under the 'direct gaze' of the teacher. In other words, their interest and motivation to work increases in direct proportion to the amount of attention (supervision) they get from the teacher. However, in large classes, close monitoring by the teacher is not only difficult due to problems of *inadequate space for the teacher to walk around the class*, it can also be very taxing for the teacher who teaches at least 3 to 4 large classes in a day.

Secondly, one suggestion given by most teacher educators for handling large classes is to devolve responsibility in the classroom by using different instructional and classroom management techniques such as pair and group work (e.g., Nolasco and Arthur:1988). In fact, these techniques aim towards training the learners to be independent of the teacher and to take responsibility for their own learning. However, as mentioned above, in most school classes in Pakistan, the learners seem to work better when the source of control is external and imposed rather than internal and voluntary. (See also the transmission model of teaching in Pakistani classrooms outlined in chapter

6, section 6.5.) Thus, as will be discussed in chapter 9, it becomes very difficult for the teachers to use group work effectively in these large classes.

Therefore, it seems imperative that teacher educators should take into account both the location of the learners and their perception of classroom space vis-a-vis the teacher, as well as the socio-cultural background of both the teachers and the learners before recommending 'solutions' that would help the teacher in extending the 'action' zone without eroding her status or authority in the classroom.

CHAPTER 9

INNOVATIONS IN LARGE CLASSES

9.1 Introduction

A look at a number of ESL classes in secondary schools in Pakistan (chapters 6 and 7) revealed a great degree of uniformity in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size. It was found that the classrooms were mainly teacher-centred. Also teaching and learning was largely geared towards the end-of-term exams which is more a test of memory (e.g., content of the reading texts in the prescribed textbooks, grammar rules etc.) than a test of students' ability to use language in their everyday lives. However, there were two teachers (amongst the 22 teachers whose classes were observed for the purpose of the study) who expressed dissatisfaction with the classroom methodology prevalent in the majority of school classes. In fact both these teachers had been introduced, during their recent in-service training course in ELT, to innovative instructional and management techniques for teaching English. As a result they were very enthusiastic about introducing innovations in their classrooms and were *experimenting with implementing some of these techniques in their* large (and smaller size) classes at the time of the study.

In this chapter I will begin with an account of some of the innovations that these two teachers were trying to introduce in their large classes. This will be followed by a look at some approaches to innovations that have been used in different parts of the world to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes. Finally some proposals will be made for developing a model of innovations for large school classes in Pakistan.

9.2 Introducing innovations in large school classes in Pakistan: The case of two teachers

9.2.1 Profile of the two teachers

The two teachers, Bina and Nighat, who were trying to implement innovative methodology in their classrooms showed a high level of commitment and motivation. Moreover, they also had the advantage of a richer background, compared to most teachers in their situation, in terms of a 'good' proficiency in the language as well as training in basic ELT techniques. Both these teachers also had vast experience of teaching English. As a result they had high status amongst their colleagues and were entrusted with the teaching of senior or Board classes in their schools. They were also involved in teacher training, though on a limited scale, both inside and outside their schools. Both Bina and Nighat perceived their classes of 49 and 50 students respectively as 'large' in size.

Bina had a spacious classroom with plenty of space to move around and with movable chairs; Nighat on the other hand, had fixed desks in her class and often three students had to share a 'dual desk' built for two students. However, there were wide pathways between the rows of desks.

9.2.2 Innovations in instructional techniques

The innovations in the classes of Bina and Nighat focused on classroom methodology rather than on changes in the content of the syllabus. This could be due to the requirements of following a fixed syllabus and a prescribed textbook for the exams and/or the expectations of the students to complete the course. Furthermore, the innovations were introduced mainly within the framework of the 'core' activity types described in chapter 6. Thus while the change was evident in methodology, both the innovative instructional and management techniques were employed to do essentially the same kinds of things, i.e. 'doing a lesson (text)' and 'doing grammar' (which included

teaching/learning a grammatical item and writing), as were being done in the classes of other teachers. The nature of these innovations can be seen more clearly in the following extracts from classroom observation notes. It must be remembered that the innovations were confined to the level of their individual classrooms only.

9.2.2.1 Doing a lesson (text)

<u>Lesson 1 (Nighat)</u>

(The lesson is based on a reading text entitled 'Nursing' from the prescribed textbook.)

46 students are present out of a total of 50 students.

The teacher begins the lesson by eliciting the names of professions from the students. Several students offer the answer, both individually and together.

11.25 There are three students sitting at most of the desks. The classroom looks very crowded. As they are big boys the students seem to be sitting close together rather uncomfortably.

The teacher makes a short list on the blackboard of the professions 'that serve human beings'. She tells the students to open their books on the relevant page (which they are told to find themselves by looking at the table of contents). She tells the students to read the first paragraph silently. In the meantime she writes some questions on the blackboard. The student next to me reads audibly. A student is standing and is told to settle down by the teacher. Another student raises his hand. The teacher walks *over to him and talks to him briefly. She sees three students sharing a textbook.* She takes a book from another student, telling his neighbour to share his book with him, and gives his book to these students.

(The door of the classroom is broken and there is constant noise from outside.)

The teacher elicits answers from the students. Then she sets another task: 'Read a part of the text quickly to find out the definition of nursing.' While the students are reading the teacher writes down a few questions on the blackboard. Two students *raise their hands volunteering to answer the questions. The* student who is selected reads out a portion of the text as the answer.

T: Anyone else?

A student self-selects to give the answer. The teacher refers the class to the first line in the text and reads out some words inviting the students to identify what kinds of words they are (grammatical class of the words). Some students offer, 'adjectives'. The teacher explains: 'When you use a definite article before them - 'the young' means young people.' She reminds them that they have met similar kind of words before also. She writes a word on the blackboard and asks the students to look for it in the text. She tells them to write the line number in which the word occurs and see if they can guess the meaning.

(It's very windy outside. Some students tell the teacher, 'Miss, it is raining outside'. The students break into excited talk about the weather.)

The teacher gives a further example of the word by using it in a sentence. The next task is set: 'Now, next paragraph. What personalities are mentioned?' The student next to me is busy writing something. I think he is copying the questions from the blackboard.

The teacher walks over to a student and asks him if he understands the task. She goes out briefly to talk to someone at the door.

Three students raise their hands. A student asks the teacher for the meaning of a word. The student next to me (at the back of the class) raises his hand. As one student begins to answer by giving the list of names several other students join in and give the list of personalities together with him.

T: Are they common people?

She tells the students to read the text again and find out what Islam says about the profession of Nursing (task 3). She instructs them to move their fingers on the lines as they read. [She said later that this gives her an idea about who is reading and who is not.] . . .

(For detailed classroom observation notes, see appendix 9 A).

(CO Notes 4-II-2/ CO 2)

(Section 7.2)

If we compare this lesson to the lessons of other teachers described in chapter 7, it is clear that the teacher is trying to do more than teach the text in the prescribed textbook only. Thus while one of her aims is to do a 'lesson' in the textbook, she seems to have other aims such as helping students to become independent readers. As a result she seems to operate under a different definition of reading (reading is more than being able to read the lines only) from her colleagues. The students are guided to understand the meaning of the text by breaking the text into short manageable chunks with simple tasks which help them to focus on the main points in the text. The students are encouraged to read silently and independently but the teacher is there as a guide to help them in interpreting the meaning of the text. It seems to serve two purposes: the students feel happy that they are doing an item on the syllabus (hence it is considered relevant to their immediate goal of passing the exam) while at the same time the teacher is helping them in developing their reading skills.

Discussing the response of the students to 'silent reading' which she had introduced in her large classes, Nighat said that,

"Students are quite satisfied [with silent reading]. In the beginning they were not. They thought I was just killing time or passing the time but now they realise that this is the way of reading or learning English, specially those students who are clever or who want to learn - at least they know." (4.2)

Her students also agreed about the benefits of 'self-reading':

S1: In 'self-reading' it's easier to answer questions, otherwise when you stand up and read you can't remember it [to zehan se utter jata he].
S2: When you stand up and read you don't pay attention to meaning.
S3: When the teacher asks questions, it's easier to remember. (4.2.1)

S1: Miss we used to like it [reading aloud] earlier but now as we have got used to understanding the text we don't like it any more.
S2: Now, it's easier to do 'self-reading'.
S3: Sometimes we read aloud. When we don't understand she tells us to stand up and read so that everyone can understand.
S4: In poem when she wants to focus our attention on a stanza, she makes us read it aloud. (4.2.1)

[You understand the meaning more easily] When you read silently - when you try and understand. (4.2.2)

Bina also encouraged her students to read independently (see appendix 9 B). She said that once the learners found that they could read and understand the text without the teacher paraphrasing it for them, she did not face any problems in using this method even in her large class. The students in her class also realised the benefits of this approach, thus:

S1: "Reading yourself is better.
S2: We don't know the difficult word, teacher can give them.
FS: How do you feel when you have to read the text silently, on your own as compared to the previous method (more or less useful)?
S3: More useful because we are reading only one para. Teacher asked us question - that's why - one one person - it will be two questions. The teacher will say why it happened - the student will tell it correctly - that's why. For example, if teacher asked why it happened then memory work. If the teacher will read, some are listening some are not listening. That's why. Now all the class will read." (2.3.1)

While the 'better' students liked this method of reading the text, several students still found it difficult to work independently of the teacher. Both these views are evident in the following discussion with a group of students from Bina's class:

S1: We read and understand ourselves.
S2: In this way we are motivated to read further and try to understand. If we have a problem then Miss tells us.
S3: If we don't know anything we just ask her and she tells us.
S4: Sometimes when we require the explanation of a lesson it is not given - only reading is done. That's what we don't like.
S5: When something is difficult Miss explains the lesson in her own words. (2.3.3)

S1: She is now a guide for us.
S2: In 8th we felt she is giving us all the work and she's doing nothing but now we don't. (2.3.3)

Bina also described how she used certain strategies such as changing the sequence of the lessons in the textbook to create interest. Moreover, she introduced several enhancing activities while doing different 'lessons'. This is illustrated in the following extract from a follow-up discussion which was held with her soon after one of her lessons:

> "[I change the sequence] from the point of view of variation also. We did 'King Faisal' because of Gulf War and Saudi Arabia was involved so we did this lesson first. We had a very nice session with the Head and all - the map of Saudi Arabia, currency, relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Then I gave another question: 'Do you wish to go to Saudi Arabia and why?' That's also not in the lesson. Then this poem on little things. I asked them to write on all the little things before doing the poem - so they wrote drop of water, piece of bread, a granule of sugar etc. I didn't even go through it but I made them think of all the small things. Then in 'Shopping' I told them to make a list of things bought. Then one day we did something on feelings - a poem or something - I can't remember - I made 3 columns - when you feel happy, sad and there was something else . . . (She shows me the work of one student who has stuck cartoon pictures in her exercise book showing different feelings.)

9.2.2.2 Teaching/learning a grammatical item

Nighat said that another thing that worked well in her classes was the innovation she had introduced in teaching of grammar, i.e, "individual-choral, choral drills and the way of presentation of a structure". She said that the students in her class liked to learn grammar, unlike students in other classes, though initially this was a new way of teaching-learning grammar for them:

> "They are quite used to changing the sentence into that particular forms which they are required, e.g., present to past, affirmative to negative. So now when we give them a situation, in the beginning they feel so strange: 'What is going on?' Eventually and quickly they like that type. Then I don't face a lot of difficulty because in grammar teaching everyone gets a chance to speak or to say something - to practice, so they enjoy." (4.2)

One reason for this could be that she allowed the students to 'say whatever comes in their mind' i.e., to make mistakes. Moreover, students were given an opportunity to help each other in correcting their sentences. In the following extract from my classroom observation notes, Nighat can be seen teaching a lesson on the difference between the use of 'since' and 'for' in the same situation.

Lesson 2 (Nighat)

44 students are present out of a total of 50 students.

9.00 The teacher tells the students to take out their class work copies. She announces, 'Today we'll do something else [i.e not reading].'

T: At what time does your school start?

Several students answer together and the teacher writes the information on the blackboard. Some students are still busy settling down.

T: When do you start studying?

She continues with similar questions such as: 'What's the time now?' etc. Then she draws a time line on the blackboard:

8.00 _____ 9.00

T: How much time is there between 8.00 and 9 o'clock?
SS: One hour.
T: What have you been doing here?
She repeats the question in Urdu.
SS: Study.
She writes a sentence on the blackboard as the students prompt her:
We have been studying for one hour.
T: All of you together.

She models the sentence and the students repeat it after her in chorus. The teacher points out that some children had used 'were'. She elicits from the class why the use of 'were' is incorrect here. A student in the front row answers. Another student tries to give the explanation of the rule. The teacher repeats the question and a student self-selects to answer. S4 and S5 add more information to the answer. All the students look very active. All focus their attention on the blackboard.

One student offers: 'Miss, it is in progress [jaari he].'

The teacher draws a diagram on the blackboard and encourages the students to guess what it is. The students guess, 'Earthworm', 'ladder' etc. She tells them it is a rail track. She adds small cabins to the diagram and writes different timings, as follows:

Ahmed 8.00   Ahmed and Rehana 8.30

Nazir 9.00   Aziz 9.30
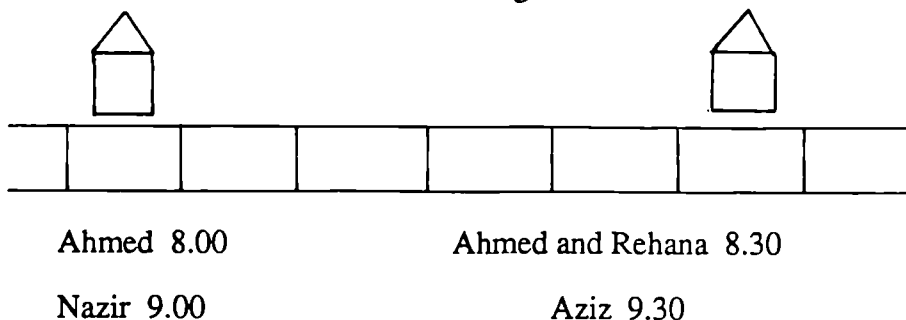
She tells the students to imagine that the time now is 10 o'clock.

(A student gets up to close the door to shut out the noise from outside. There is sound of marching feet in the corridor outside. The students wonder what it is. The teacher ignores it completely.)

She elicits the structure from the students by asking short questions: 'Since how long have they been waiting?' The students answer using the structure correctly, for example:
Ahmed has been waiting since 8 o'clock.
Ahmed has been waiting for one and a half hour.

She nominates a student to read out his sentence. Another student from the back of the class is nominated to repeat the same using 'since' or 'for'. A student is busy copying from the blackboard. Different students (about six) are nominated to repeat the sentence.

The teacher says: 'No one asked why we used 'since' or 'for'. Do you know?'

One student offers: 'Because in 'for' we don't know the time.' Another student thinks it is because it is continuous. The next student gives the correct explanation after which the teacher gives a brief rule for using 'since' and 'for'.

She sets them a task: 'Write similar sentences about Aziz and Nazir.' She tells them to copy the two sentences from the blackboard also, 'So there should be four sentences on your copy'.

All students get busy in doing the task. The teacher walks around the class monitoring their work . . .

9.16 The teacher elicits the first sentence from the students and writes it on the blackboard. She nominates a student in the front row to read the sentence written on the blackboard. Several students are told to repeat it individually. One student, who, it seems, has not written the sentence, hesitates but is encouraged by the teacher to read it from the blackboard. Four students raise their hands volunteering to read the same sentence.

The teacher elicits the next sentence. A student offers: 'Nazir has been waiting for two hours'. She points to the time on the blackboard and tells him to correct the sentence. Two students in the back row raise their hands.

S: Aziz has ben waiting for one hour.

The teacher encourages him to look at the time in the figure on the blackboard.

The next round of practice begins with individual students in the class reading out the four sentences from the blackboard, systematically, by rows . . . The lesson moves at a brisk pace.

9.22 The bell rings. The students in the third column are repeating one after another. Twelve students are still left. The noise in the class increases as the teacher focuses on individual students.

(CO Notes 4-II-2/ CO 5)

Unlike other teachers (chapter 6, section 6.3.1.2), Nighat presents 'since' and 'for' through a situation while encouraging the students, at the same time, to think about the meaning and use of these grammatical items. Moreover, she asks concept questions in between to check students' understanding of the meaning of these items. She also

provides a number of opportunities to the students to repeat the model sentences orally, both individually and together in chorus. Similarly writing is used both as a consolidation activity and for providing individual practice to the students. However, Nighat does not go beyond controlled practice for two reasons: a) she felt that the students were not ready to work independently of the teacher and b) she was afraid that she would not be able to give individual attention to the students in her large class and consequently lose control of the class. (See also her comments about problems in doing group work in large classes below.)

Although Nighat does not begin the lesson by giving grammar rules to the students, as was usual in all the other classes, she elicited them from the students at different stages in the lesson. In fact later, while discussing this lesson, Nighat observed that she saw no harm in giving grammar rules to the students *after* they had had sufficient practice in using a structure, particularly as the knowledge of rules was necessary for doing transformation exercises in the exams. Also the students were accustomed to being given *the rules from their earlier classes. She explained her rationale as follows:

"It is very important for the sake of examinations because then for further work they keep this in *mind and they insist on the rules because they have been getting them right* from the 6th class. So even if I don't give them some clever students who know the rules start saying them out - so it looks bad that the students are giving something and the teacher is ignoring them. Some students might also think that perhaps the teacher doesn't know how to present the rules so we have to *satisfy all the students and I don't think that there is* any harm in giving the rules because in examination they will be tested according to the rules." (4.2)

9.2.2.3 Writing an essay

One innovation which was radical in a number of ways was observed in Bina's class in teaching essay writing. She not only encouraged the students to produce an original piece of writing but she also provided guidance and support by organising them into small groups to do the writing task. This can be seen in the following classroom observation notes of her lesson.

<u>Lesson 3 (Bina)</u>

40 students are present out of a total of 49 students.

9.25 T: What fruits are available in the market these days?
The students shout out a list together.
T: How many like an apple? Is there any saying you remember about apples?
Several students offer, 'An apple a day keeps the doctor away.'
T: Any story you remember?
SS: Newton's apple.
T: Any other story?

The students try to recall a few more stories. They all seem to be thinking about it.

The teacher continues asking short questions such as: 'How many shapes, sizes of apples are there in the market?' Several student shout out different varieties of apples, their size etc. She tells the class to get into groups. The students seem to be familiar with this kind of classroom organisation as they immediately begin to move around organising themselves into small groups. There is a lot of excitement and noise in the class as they get into their groups.

T: Listen to the instructions.

Some students who still haven't got themselves into any group are told to do so by the teacher. She tells the class they are going to write an essay on 'an apple'. She draws 7 columns on the blackboard and asks the students if they know what the columns are for. The students shout out a number of things which the teacher writes as headings for the columns as follows:

|Shape | Size | Colour | Variety | Use | Advantages | Price |

The teacher has to speak very loudly to get herself heard above this noise. There is a lot of excitement and interest in the class.

I ask a group of boys next to me if I can join their group. They seem very shy so I join a group of three girls instead. [They seemed acutely conscious of my presence and perhaps for this reason worked with a lot of enthusiasm. The teacher told me later that these girls usually did not work very well.]

There are nine groups of unequal size, with 3-6 students in different groups. The teacher begins eliciting information from different groups. However, the girls in my group have discussed the information for two columns only.

9.40 The teacher prompts the students with short questions as she elicits information from them. The students offer a number of words to describe apples. When the teacher asks a question, several students shout out the answer together. The class is very active. Everyone wants to offer some information and/or answer the questions. Some students are still working. Due to the high level of noise in the classroom, the teacher has to speak very loudly. The teacher tries to enforce the one-at-a-time rule a number of times (e.g., 'Only group leaders will give the answers'), but the students continue to answer together.

One student draws the picture of an apple (a cross-section) on the blackboard and the teacher elicits vocabulary items from the students such as, peel, core, seeds, etc. and writes them on the blackboard. While the teacher elicits this information, several students continue with their discussion in groups. I can hear, in different groups, a lot of argument/disagreement amongst group members about price of apples, etc.

The teacher appeals to the students once again, 'One at a time'. However, the students are too excited to pay heed to it and continue with their discussion and shouting out answers together.

She asks the students, 'How will you write it?' The girls in my group ask each other for clarifications. She tells the students to start writing after reminding them to write all the points of one kind in one paragraph. The girls in my group are still filling in the columns. Several other students are discussing with each other. During this time, the teacher writes a few more vocabulary items on the blackboard. The students begin writing their essays individually but they continue to sit in their groups. There is an air of busy activity in the classroom. The teacher walks around the classroom to ensure that everyone is working.

(CO Notes 2-I-3/ CO 7.1)

As discussed earlier in chapter 6, the teachers usually gave essays or letters to the whole class on some 'expected topics' (either by writing them on the blackboard or dictating them to the students) which the students learnt by heart for exam purposes. The teachers mentioned several reasons for this practice as follows:

a) as everyone has the same essay, letter, etc. it helps in checking 'copies', particularly in large classes; and

b) there are no red marks in students' exercise books which leaves a good impression on their parents, Heads and inspectors.

Hence writing was seen mainly in terms of a finished product only. However, Bina wanted to provide her students an opportunity to write on their own also, though on a limited scale only. She felt that if the writing task was fairly well controlled by the teacher and the students were organised in small groups to do the task they would be able to do it successfully. However, while the students were told to work in groups during the initial brainstorming and discussion phase, they worked individually while writing their essays. (After this class when I pointed out some advantages of all members of a group producing the same essay such as, ease of marking, Bina tried it in one of her classes and told me later that she had found it very useful.)

Though the above lesson seemed to go very well and the teacher felt that she had achieved most of her aims for the lesson, the students observed that such 'enhancing' activities should only be done after completing their course. This was mainly because they could not see the immediate relevance of this activity for their Board exams.

9.2.3 Innovations in management techniques (group work)

Group work is usually suggested as a way of handling large classes (e.g., Littlejohn:1987; Sarwar:1983; Hubbard et al.:1983). However, Nighat felt that it was, in fact, the largeness of the class that prevented her from using group work in her class:

> "It is group work that I want to do but I always feel fear and I don't think that would be applicable in large classes." (4.2)

Some of the reasons put forward by her for her inability to use group work in her large class are as follows:

> "It takes much time, number 1. This time element affects everything. We, i.e., teachers who are teaching Board classes always have to rush towards the exams. And this [group work] requires a lot of time. Number 2 - the noise constraint, especially in government schools discipline is a real problem. If we let go the control even for one minute, the class will be chaotic. Number 3 - checking of the copies is the main problem. If we ask them to do their work in their rough copies, once or twice they do it, but in normal routine they always like to put the things in their fair copies [the students judge the importance of work by whether the teacher tells them to do it in their rough or fair copies], and we have to check the fair copies from the point of view of inspection, so it is very very difficult to check each and every word ...

> "The organisation of groups is also chaotic. [But] Basically getting them into groups is not the major problem. Once they are organised into groups, even then one or two boys will write and others will keep on talking and making some mischievous things and talking extra - like that. Then it becomes very difficult to control 50 students. Then it's no use if only one or two students in each group are writing. It should really be that every student should be involved in writing but the aim of group work is not being fulfilled then what's the use. If all teachers were doing group work, the students would be familiar and they would get involved. But only one teacher is doing it they wonder what it is. . . .

> "And group work is difficult. If we had a bigger room so that the different groups could be separated from each other so if one group made a noise, at least it will be identified. Now you can't identify who is making noise - so the physical size of the room also counts much. Even if furniture was available, and the room was bigger then perhaps I could do it. Now you have seen that 75% of the students are attending the classes - then 3 students share a desk. Some day when there is full attendance, only 1 or 2 students are absent, then they have to get desks from other rooms where more children are absent." (4.2)

If we analyse her reasons for not using group work, they have their source in a) constraints external to the classroom, such as the pressure of exams and the expectations of the students, and b) constraints that have to do with teaching-learning conditions inside the classroom, such as limited space and the 'fear' of losing control (see also chapter 5, section 5.2).

On the other hand, Bina regularly used group work in her smaller class (X B) and to a

lesser extent in her large class (X C). Discussing one of her lessons, she explained why

she had not used group work in her large class that day:

> "I didn't use group work in X C, because you see the class was better today- discipline wise - so I
> didn't want all of them to speak at the same time. Then you can't make out who is answering and
> who has got it, who didn't get it."

According to her, when students work in small groups in a large class, 'one doesn't

know about individual children'. However, she felt that when students worked

individually, it was easier for the teacher to check the progress of the students, thus:

> "But whose effort it was I didn't know. In a group you can't find out if 10% or 20 % have worked.
> The teacher should know - should make a point at stages- should know which child is making
> what amount of progress, who is making an effort and who isn't. You should also know this ...

> "[Today] When they couldn't answer I knew that that individual child could not speak. Which
> child has written the answer and who hasn't. When I went around I saw who hadn't done it and the
> ones who did it, I had a view - and then who didn't speak and the ones who had marked and didn't
> speak - I could make out. And now next time when I go around doing next province[1] I can ask
> them why you didn't speak or you must speak - things like that."

Another major reason for her hesitation in using group work in her large class seems

to be the difficulty in organising the large number of students in small groups. She

described this problem as follows:

> "To group them - that takes time and because they are more I need to have more groups and I
> waste my time.

> "And then, because more of them are weak I need to concentrate on making groups. Grouping
> them also requires a strategy: one should be weaker, one leader, etc.

> "[In friendship groups] One friend works the other doesn't work. So grouping requires some work
> - some effort on the part of the teacher to have fruitful results. You see you need to - You see in a
> large class you need to have more groups or bigger groups - if you land up with bigger groups that
> means that few do work the rest enjoy and talk. You need to have smaller groups ...

> "[There is] Discipline problem and less effort involved. If you have smaller groups - you see a
> good group is 5 to - 5 or 6 - that's a good group. If you have to make 10 groups at least you need
> two minutes for each group - like if you work according to a plan - like even if I give a cut out.
> OK make it still easier: A, B, A B, do that for everyone - whenever you do grouping you waste
> 10 minutes ...

> "It takes time as you've seen in my earlier class. It does take up some time. Then A-L-L the
> naughty ones and all the weaker ones get together. Because they sit - they make a point once A

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[1]The reading text is about the customs in the four provinces in Pakistan.

teacher moves out and B teacher starts work - all of the same kind, the whole lot get together at the same place." (2.3)

Other reasons mentioned for not using group work more frequently in her large class were: the size of the class, the ability level of the students in the large class and the problem of control (this group comprised both boys and girls). This is illustrated in her comments as follows:

"There are too many students and they are weaker. This was another reason. I didn't use it because the lesson was finished - 4 provinces; main problem is they are ability-wise weak. I wanted - and this lesson is quite important; a number of questions appear in the exam from this lesson like one on 'Sandli', one on barren land - then Baluchi life. You see two three questions do appear in the exams - so it is an important lesson and I wanted each and every child - therefore I planned one province that means one page for X C and I knew that X B could do the entire lesson . . .

"And then they get out of control. They just don't make an effort." (2.3)

On the other hand, Bina used group work in her smaller class (a girls-only class with the students, generally, of a higher ability level than her larger group) to encourage collaborative learning. She gave the following rationale for using group work in her smaller class:

"There my aim in doing group work was to cover up the whole lesson - one thing, in less time more work. That's the aim of group work - so I let different groups do different work then share. You share, pool in everything and the result is - " (2.3)

Bina also seemed to be aware of other benefits (in the affective domain) of using group work, which she described as follows:

"Yes when we go and sit with the group you come to know, you talk - ask about their brothers and sisters, where they live - so you come to know the child more - I've noticed that when you know about the children personally many difficulties are overcome of the child also. You know now how to help the child. That becomes better." (2.3)

However, she still felt that group work could be used more effectively in her smaller class than in her large class.

Thus several reasons were noted by the two teachers, Nighat and Bina, which help to explain the discomfort of teachers in using group work in larger classes as compared to smaller classes. Firstly, there is the fear that group work would result in chaos and create discipline problems in the classroom. Secondly, the pressure of completing the syllabus in the limited time available does not allow the teachers to 'waste' time in organising

group activities. Other problems that were mentioned relate to the workload of the teachers and the expectations of the learners. For example, if learners are allowed to work in groups and produce their own work, the teacher will have to correct their individual mistakes. In contrast, if all the students are given the same essay or answer the teacher has only to glance briefly at their work focussing mainly on spelling and handwriting, i.e., the mechanics of writing, while checking. Similarly, if learners are asked to write down the product of their group work in 'rough copies', the students are not happy because writing in the 'rough copy' implies that it is not serious work or at least not important for exam purposes.

Not withstanding the problems mentioned by teachers in using group work in large classes, the students in the classes of the two teachers above seemed to view group work very positively. The advantages of working in groups were seen by them mainly in terms of providing an opportunity for collaborative learning as well as a means of getting more attention from the teacher. However, some students, probably because they have been socialized through years of training into thinking that teaching can only take place when the teacher talks from the front of the classroom, still found it difficult to associate 'real' work with working in groups, as is evident in the following entry from my research diary:

> Bina told me this morning that one of the girls had been absent in her class for quite a few days. Today when she came to class Bina asked her if she knew what work they had done in class during her absence. She said she had asked her friends and they had told her that only grouping [i.e. no serious work] was being done in the English class. (Research Diary, 6.11.91).

9.2.4 The nature and scope of the innovations

The innovations introduced by Bina and Nighat in their large classes involved at least two things: a) changes in teachers' and learners' views about different aspects of the teaching-learning process, such as definition of reading (reading is more than reading the lines only), and the importance of both form and meaning in teaching/learning a grammatical item; and b) a redefinition of teacher-learner roles, for example, changing the role of the learners from passive recipients to more active participants in the

classroom. Moreover, all the innovations were introduced within the framework of the syllabus, the prescribed textbook and the exams , i.e., the 'constants' in the system (cf. Naidu:1991). For this reason the innovations did not conflict with the overall structure of the establishment as such. However, both the teachers, despite their high level of motivation, felt very stressed due to lack of collegial and institutional support. Also the effect of the innovations was limited to their individual classrooms only.

The two teachers mentioned above described their work as a drop in the ocean. Even if there were many teachers of the calibre of Nighat and Bina (both in terms of their background and level of personal commitment), the innovations introduced by teachers in this way would remain at the level of individual classrooms only - a matter of personal commitment instead of being integrated into the system as a whole. Hence we need to develop a model of innovations for large classes that can be introduced more systematically at all levels. However, before we outline our proposals for developing such a model for large school classes in Pakistan, it would be useful to look at the approaches to innovations in large classes that have either been used by practitioners or recommended by other change agents in different parts of the world.

9.3 Approaches to innovations in large classes

A look at the efforts of the two teachers above as well as other accounts of introducing innovations in large classes (see chapter 1, section 1.6) suggests three approaches to innovations in large classes. These can be defined as: 1) the small-class approach; 2) the problems-solutions approach; and 3) the socio-cultural approach. The scope of the innovations varies from the changing of methodology in individual classrooms to the entire reorganisation of a course at the institutional level thereby affecting more than one large class, course or tutor. Further, there is a great deal of variation in the demands on resources in implementing the innovations, i.e., from requiring no extra resources (Jenkins:1992) and/or a redistribution of present resources (Webster:1992), to a

provision of additional resources to make available self-access materials, workbooks, etc. for the students.

9.3.1 The small-class approach

Sometimes, as in the case of the two teachers above, the need for introducing innovations in classroom methodology and management techniques is assumed at the outset by teachers and/or outside change agents due to their dissatisfaction with the present teaching methods. Conversely, and more often, the innovations are introduced for their own sake under the belief that the new methodology is better than the traditional methods of teaching and learning in the classroom. However, these innovations are often developed in small classes and in teaching-learning conditions which are at great variance from the realities of the classroom and the culture of the host community in which they are introduced.[2] Thus when these innovations are exported to situations where the size of the class is much larger, large classes are seen as a constraint in implementing these innovations (e.g., Nolasco and Arthur:1986). In other words, in the small-class approach, class size is not taken into account by the change agents *before* introducing the innovations; in fact it is identified as a problem by the teachers as a *consequence* of their non-success in implementing the proposed innovations in their large classes. (This is in contrast to the other two approaches discussed below, where the innovations are developed in *response* to the problems in large classes, which are assumed to be related directly to class size.)

The small-class approach to innovations in large classes has two further consequences: 1) large classes become the reason or 'excuse' for an outright rejection by the teachers of the innovations; and/or 2) a few 'cosmetic' changes are grafted on to the original innovations for use in large classes. However, it would be too simplistic to attribute the non-success of these innovations to any single variable such as class size.

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[2]These innovations, as pointed out by Holliday (f.c.,a), are mainly developed in Britain, North America and Australasia for a very different classroom context (e.g. language schools).

This is because, as discussed in chapter one, it is difficult to isolate class size as an independent variable, particularly in educational contexts such as Pakistan, where class size is but *one of the major problems* in the teaching-learning situation (Shamim:1991a). Furthermore, the effectiveness of these innovations in large classes becomes suspect in relation to the amount of time and effort invested in introducing these innovations, as is illustrated in the comments of Nighat and Bina above about using group work in their large classes.

To summarise, it seems that the small-class approach to introducing innovations in large classes is ineffective for two reasons: firstly, the innovations that are introduced in large classes are developed in small class situations without taking into consideration the variable of class size. Secondly, the innovations are introduced without a previous understanding of the culture of teaching and learning in the host environment. As a result, the teachers in this situation consider large numbers as the major impediment in using the proposed innovations in their classes. On the other hand, there is a strong tendency, on the part of the administrators and outside change agents, to dismiss large classes simply as another 'excuse' given by teachers (who are thought to be lazy and lacking in motivation and professional commitment, in any case) without trying to understand their 'real' problems in introducing these innovations in large classes.

The different stages in the small-class approach to introducing innovations in large classes can be seen more clearly in figure 9.1. As mentioned earlier, large classes are not taken into account at the initial stages of introducing an innovation in the small-class approach; instead they are identified as a 'constraint' *after* the non-success of the innovation in these classes.
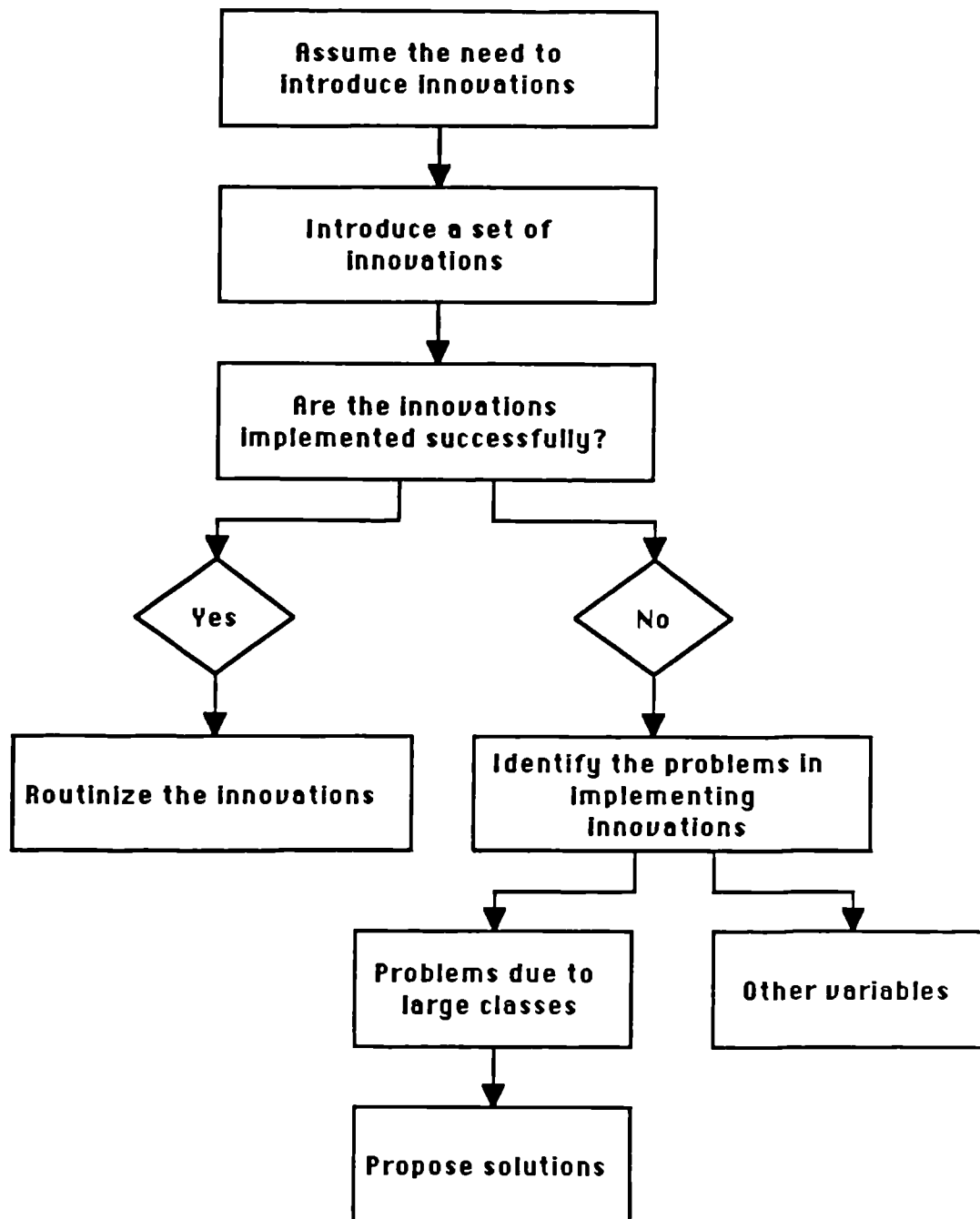
Figure 9.1: The different stages in the small-class approach to innovations in large classes

9.3.2 The problems-solutions approach

In contrast to the small-class approach above where innovations are often introduced for their own sake, the innovations in the problems-solutions approach are developed in

response to the difficulties faced in teaching-learning in large classes. Often when large classes are a recent phenomenon in a specific teaching-learning situation and/or the experience of the participants, it is easier to identify the problems which are due to increased class size. In this situation, everything else being equal, large classes are seen as *the major problem*. Consequently different kinds of 'solutions' are developed either by individual teachers or by teacher educators for handling large numbers in the classroom, without sacrificing the quality of education imparted.

If the problem of an increase in class size is felt at the institutional level, it is likely that everyone in the system would agree to the necessity of implementing these solutions and collegial support would be provided, which would consequently ease the task of the teacher in introducing these innovations in her large classes. However, sometimes when a problem in teaching-learning in large classes is identified by one or a few teachers only, it is more difficult to implement the 'solutions' which are worked out by an individual or a small group of teachers except at the level of their own classrooms (e.g, the system of student checkers in very large school classes in Pakistan). As the problem is perceived as a local problem specific to the classrooms of one or a few teachers, it is more difficult to get the support of colleagues and to convince them to collaborate in experimenting with these innovations. The different stages in the problems-solutions approach to introducing innovations in large classes can be seen more clearly in figure 9.2.

As can be seen in figure 9.2 there are several assumptions underlying this model of innovations for large classes. They are: a) large classes (which might be a recent phenomenon in the specific teaching-learning situation) are here to stay, i.e., there is no likelihood of a reduction in the size of the present classes; b) the problems arising out of an increase in numbers can be identified, everything else being equal; and c) these problems can be solved pedagogically. Hence there is a search for better methodological solutions such as, developing ways to create small-class-like conditions for improving the
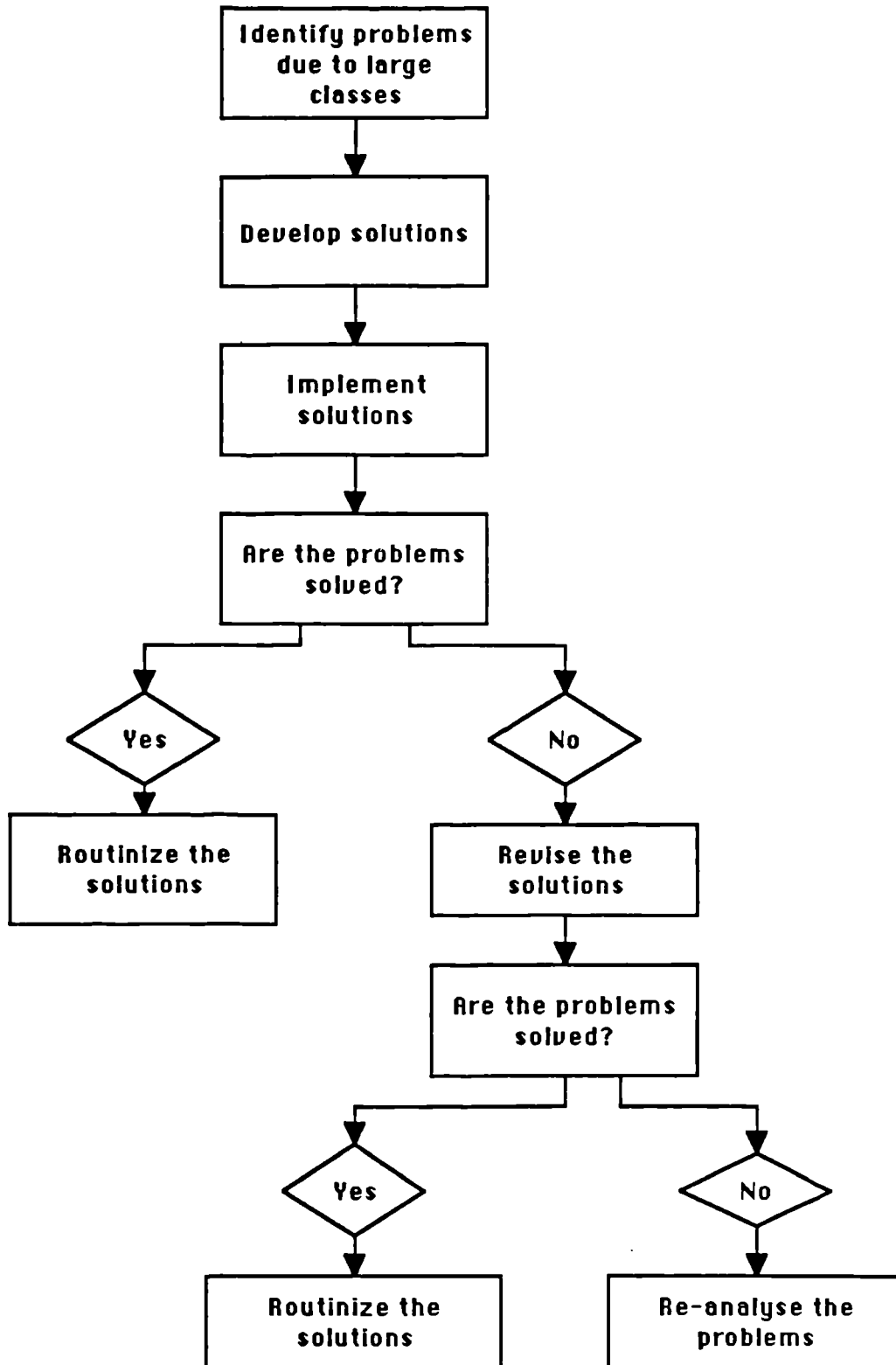
Figure 9.2: The different stages in the problems-solutions approach to innovations in large classes

effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes. The nature of this approach, as exemplified in the work done in recent years at the Oxford Polytechnic[3] in the UK, can be seen in the table 9.1 from Gibbs and Jenkins (1992). (See also Habeshaw, Gibbs and Habeshaw:1992.)

Area of difficulty resulting from large classes	Characteristic methods adopted	
	'Control' strategies	'Independent' strategies
1 Lack of clarity of purpose	a) Use of objectives	a) Use of learning contracts
	b) Highly structured courses	b) Problem-based learning
2 Lack of knowledge of progress	a) Objective testing	a) Development of student judgement
	b) Programmed instruction and CAL	b) Self-assessment
3 Lack of advice on improvement	a) Assignment attachment forms	a) Peer feedback and assessment
	b) Automated tutorial feedback	
4 Inability to support reading	a) Use of set books	a) Development of students' research skills
	b) Use of learning packages	b) More varied assignments
5 Inability to support independent study	a) Structured projects	a) Group work
	b) Lab guides	b) Learning teams
6 Lack of opportunity for discussion	a) Structured lectures	a) Student-led seminars
	b) Structured seminars/workshops	b) Team assignments
7 Inability to cope with variety of students	a) Pre-tests plus remedial material	a) Variety of support mechanisms
	b) Self-paced study (PSI)	b) Negotiated goals
8 Inability to motivate students	a) Frequent testing	a) Engaging learning tasks
	b) High failure rates	b) Co-operative learning

Table 9.1: 'Control' and 'independent' strategies for dealing with difficulties arising from large classes (from Gibbs and Jenkins:1992, p. 44)

[3] This is now called Oxford Brookes University.

The problems-solutions approach to innovations in large classes varies in its usefulness in different educational contexts. For example, it seems to work well in situations where large classes are perceived as *the major problem* such as Oxford Polytechnic in the UK where a recent increase in class size led to a number of clearly identifiable problems which in turn necessitated a reorientation both on the part of the teachers and the students to this change in their teaching-learning situation. However, it seems to have limited usefulness in developing countries where large classes are but *one of the major problems* in the teaching-learning situation (Valerien:1991). This is because, as mentioned above, it is not always possible in these situations to ascribe the cause of one or more problems in teaching and learning in large classes to a single variable such as class size.

To summarise: one positive aspect of the problems-solutions approach to innovations in large classes is that the innovations are developed in response to a felt need (intrinsic motivation) as against being imposed from the outside. Thus the innovations offer solutions to specific problems which are identified by the teachers in teaching their large classes. Hence it eases the task of implementing the innovations at the classroom level. However, the problems-solutions approach seems to be simplistic in regard to the problems it seeks to address, as it is often difficult to identify problems that arise due to large classes only. In fact sometimes class size may mask other problems at a deeper level (Shamim:1991c). Hence by assuming a one-to-one relationship between the problems in large classes and the proposed solutions, the problems-solutions approach fails to take account of the complexity of difficulties faced by teachers in teaching English in difficult circumstances (West:1960).

One question which arises at this stage is: to what extent are the 'solutions', developed locally according to this approach to innovations in large classes, transferable to other educational contexts which might be vastly dissimilar in regard to the resources available and other factors such as, perception of teacher-learner roles? Moreover, to

what extent are the 'solutions' developed in response to problems identified in large classes in other subject areas relevant to the teaching-learning of English in large classes? Though at the surface, the problems reported by teachers in different educational contexts seem to be similar in nature, an indepth analysis of teachers' difficulties in large classes may reveal differences in the source of these problems. Also as was found in the present study, teachers in different parts of the world may have varied operational definitions even of some 'common' terms in ELT which they use for reporting their difficulties in large classes. Hence even if we agree that the nature of the problems in teaching-learning in large classes is universal, at least at the surface level, we need to question the extent to which a 'universal' model of innovations, developed in the West (UK or North America) in response to these problems, can be implemented effectively in different developing countries due to the differences in the teaching-learning situations and socio-cultural norms of 'host cultures'.[4]

9.3.3 The socio-cultural approach

In this approach, as in the small-class approach above, the need for introducing innovations is assumed at the outset. However, the socio-cultural approach is based on a further assumption that a socio-cultural understanding of the host culture is necessary before any innovations can be introduced in that culture. Thus the innovations are organically developed after a realistic appraisal of the teaching-learning situation which includes the size of the classes in which these innovations will be introduced. Thus, in contrast to the small-class approach above, the likely 'constraints' in introducing the proposed innovations, such as large classes, are taken account of at an early stage instead of being identified as problems at the later stage of implementing these innovations. Another major difference between the small-class and the socio-cultural approach to

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[4]The term is taken from Holliday (1991c). Holliday uses this term in his analysis of the problem of 'tissue rejection' in ELT projects. According to him, one major reason for the non-success of ELT projects in introducing change is that they are undertaken without first doing a 'means analysis' of the 'host culture' in which the innovations will be introduced.

innovations in large classes is that while the former is based on a belief in a 'universal' model of innovations, the socio-cultural approach assumes a diversity in the cultures of teaching and learning in different educational contexts. Hence when large classes are identified, during an initial ethnographic study of the 'host culture', as an essential feature of the teaching-learning situation, they are not treated simply as one of the undesirable elements which need to be removed for a successful implementation of innovations in this culture. In fact, one of the major strengths of the socio-cultural approach is that the reality of classroom conditions including the largeness of classes is taken account of *before* any changes are proposed in classroom methodology in these classes.

Thus in the socio-cultural approach, the need for introducing innovations (e.g., a task-based approach) is established at the outset either by teachers themselves or by an outside change agent. This is followed by an ethnographic study of classroom culture or 'means-analysis' in order to gain an understanding of the teaching-learning situation including the models of teaching currently prevalent in the host environment.[5] Thus a knowledge of the developments in the field of education (e.g., active learning in the classroom) is combined with a rich understanding and appreciation of the 'host culture' to evolve a model for introducing innovations in large classes.

The socio-cultural approach to innovations in large classes is particularly significant in that it is based on a deeper understanding of the problems in introducing innovations in large classes. This understanding is arrived at through a systematic (and pragmatic) study of the prevailing teaching-learning situation including both the 'constants' or fixed elements in the system such as large classes, as well as the positive aspects of the classroom culture. Moreover, on one hand, the innovations are developed in *response* to large classes as one of the essential features in a specific teaching-learning situation; on

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[5] The means analysis could be undertaken by the teachers themselves (e.g., Naidu:1991) or an outside change agent (e.g., Holliday:1991c).

the other, it is realised that large classes are but *one* of the major problems in the successful implementation of these innovations.

The socio-cultural approach to innovations in large classes is exemplified in the work of Holliday (1991a; 1991b; 1991c; f.c.(b)) and Naidu (1991) and Naidu et al. (1992; 1993). Holliday and his colleagues developed a 'distance learning' methodology for large classes at the Centre for English Language Teaching (CDELT), Ain Shams University in Egypt, in response to the findings of his ethnographic study of classroom culture in that situation. An important finding of this study was that 'the largeness of class size was only *one* contributor to the difficult conditions prevailing in university classes' (Holliday:f.c. (b), p. 7). Some other 'constraints' in the situation were identified, such as poor acoustics and classroom furniture, which comprised fixed desks which were arranged in rows usually with no space between the rows for the teacher to walk around the classroom. However, at the same time it was realized that there were some positive aspects in the classroom culture, such as 'student propensity for cooperation and ability to be responsible for their own learning' (p. 15) which could be built upon in designing a classroom methodology for this situation. Thus the 'distance learning' methodology was developed to 'address the problem of distance between students and lecturers created by large numbers and poor acoustics' (ibid.).

Holliday emphasises that 'the innovative methodology *emerged* in reaction to what was learnt about the classroom culture and the host educational environment' (op.cit., p. 2). At the same time he concedes that it would be naive to assume that 'a new methodology . . . could solve the problem of harsh classroom conditions'. In fact, according to him the aim of the innovation is, 'more realistically to *improve* the quality of learning which can take place under such conditions' (p. 21).

The classroom interaction group of the English Language Teaching Community, Bangalore, also began with an ethnographic description of the traditions of teaching-learning in their situation. Consequently, it was felt that it was important for the teacher

to remain in the front of the classroom for various reasons, such as the status and role of the teacher in the community outside the classroom and the expectations of the learners. Thus a teacher-fronted classroom was taken as a given. Furthermore, it was assumed that large classes as well as several other features of the teaching-learning context (e.g., prescribed textbooks and exams) were likely to stay that way for a long time to come. In the light of a realistic appraisal of their situation the group felt that there were three major problems in their large classes (Naidu:1991):

a) Heterogeneity: The group felt that while the problem of heterogeneity is also found in smaller classes, the large numbers in the classroom increase the degree of this problem manifold in large classes.

b) Involving the students: This problem was stated very simply as: 'HOW CAN I INVOLVE AS MANY STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE in interaction, keeping the noise factor at a bearable level?' (p. 6)

c) Discipline

After an ethnographic description of the lecture mode prevalent in the educational system, undertaken in order to enrich their understanding of what is involved in this mode of teaching-learning in the classroom, the group considered what could be the best way of making their classes more interactive within the given constraints of their situation. Thus 'the interactive mode' was developed as a model for teaching and learning in their large classes. The nature and development of the model is described as follows:

> Divergent methodological strategies were complemented by convergent management techniques while negotiating with the text and the students. Some of these 'constants' were the texts in use, a common task, 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. (Naidu:1991, p. 10)

The problem of discipline was tackled by changing the notion of discipline from a silent class to one 'in which most 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 members felt that the use of the interactive mode of teaching and learning outlined above helped them in coping with large classes in a number of ways. For example, they believe that the strategy of 'mental streaming' of students based on a pre-course test and watching learner responses during the first week of term helped them in addressing different kinds of questions more skilfully at different students in the classroom, according to their ability level. (The group is presently working on a project for enhancing the questioning skills of teachers in large classes.) Another example is the use of 'warm-up' tasks at the beginning of the lesson to involve the students. The different stages in the socio-cultural approach to innovations in large classes can be seen more clearly in figure 9.3.

Thus the socio-cultural approach to innovations in large classes seems to represent a meeting of the two worlds - the local 'culture' of teaching and learning in the classroom which is shaped, to a large extent, by the culture of the community outside the classroom, and the advances in the the ELT world in the West. Thus this approach is commendable because the innovations take account of classroom conditions and the prevailing norms of behaviour both in the culture of the classroom as well as in the community outside. In other words, this approach to innovations in large classes does not throw out the baby (cultural traditions of the host community) with the bath water(traditional classroom methodology). As a result, the chances of the acceptance and integration of the innovations developed under this approach are greater than the 'small-class' and 'problems-solutions' approaches mentioned above.

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┌─────────────────┐
│  Assume the need│
│   to introduce  │
│   Innovations   │
└─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│    Undertake    │
│   ethnographic  │
│   Investigation │
└─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│     Develop     │
│   Innovations   │
└─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│  Implement the  │
│   Innovations   │
└─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│     Are the     │
│   Innovations   │
│   Implemented   │
│  successfully?  │
└─────────────────┘
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Yes   No

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┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐
│  Routinize the  │    │ Investigate other│
│   Innovations   │    │    problems     │
└─────────────────┘    └─────────────────┘
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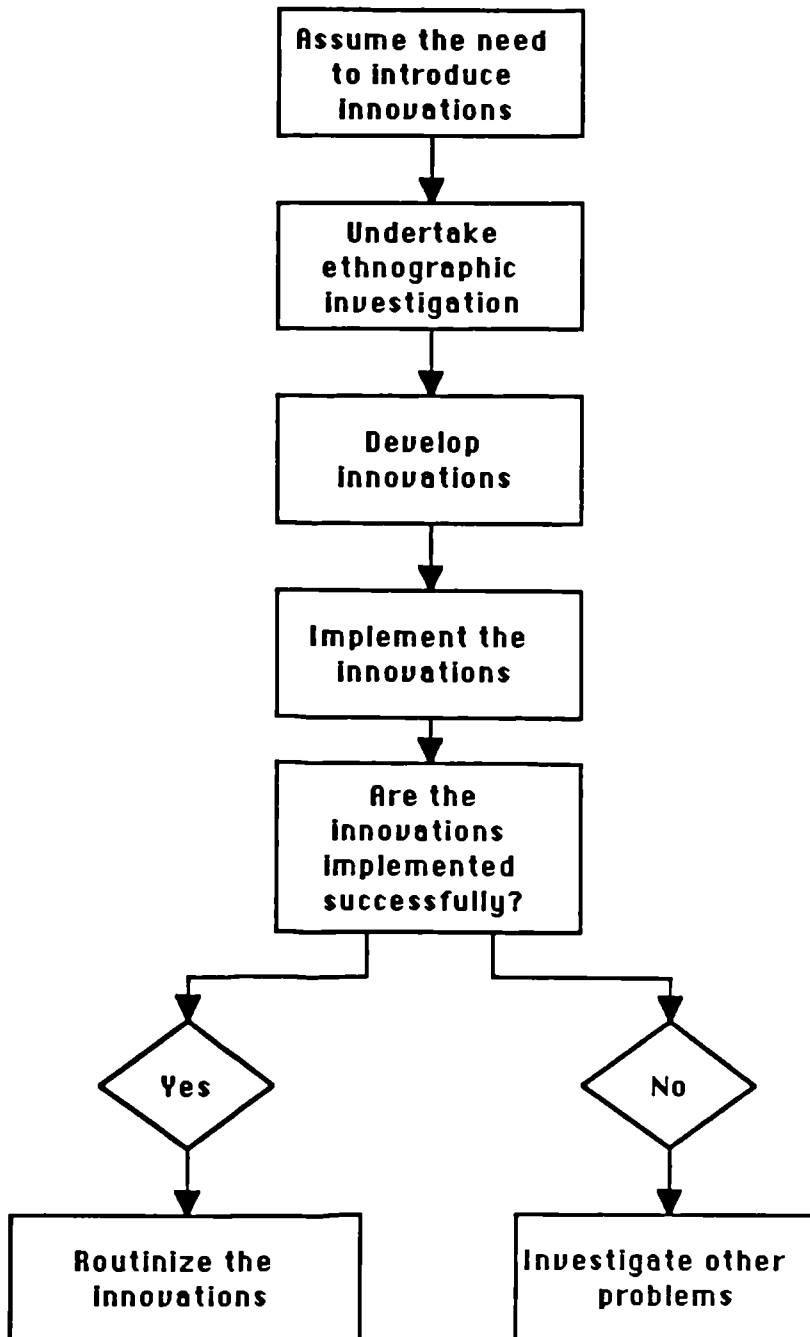
Figure 9.3: The different stages in the socio-cultural approach to innovations in large classes (adapted from Holliday:1991c, p. 411)

The major characteristics of the three approaches to innovation discussed above are summarised in table 9.2.

Approach	Stage I Motivation/need for introducing innovations	Stage II Planning for action and change/procedure	Stage III Implementation	Stage IV Consequences of introducing innovations
The small-class approach, e.g., Nolasco and Arthur: 1986; innovations introduced in secondary school classes in Pakistan - cf. the present study	Assume the need to introduce innovations	Introduce innovations; focus on classroom methodology, management techniques, etc.	Large classes identified as one of the major problems in successful implementation of these innovations	Innovations rejected by teachers in the host culture
The problems-solutions approach, e.g., Burgess:1989; Chimombo:1986	Identify problem(s) due to large classes - (large classes are seen as the major problem)	Develop 'solutions' in response to problems identified at stage I; focus on specific problem(s); one-to-one relationship between problems and solutions	Innovations congruent with host culture, therefore easier to implement	The problem is solved and/or reduced

(Table 9.2 continued)

	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV
Approach	Motivation/need for introducing innovations	Planning for action and change/procedure	Implementation	Consequences of introducing innovations
The socio-cultural approach, e.g., Holliday:1991c; Naidu:1991	Assume the need to introduce innovations, such as, a task-based approach	Conduct a means-analysis/ethnographic study of classroom culture; large classes identified as one of the major problems; develop solutions in response to 'constraints' in the given situation including large classes; focus on classroom methodology, management techniques, etc.	Innovations more likely to be accepted by 'host culture' even if developed by outside change agents	Identify other problems in introducing the innovations; adapt innovations and/or devise ways, such as a staff development programme, to deal with these problems

Table 9.2: The major charcterisitics of the three approaches to innovations in large classes

In the next section, I will discuss some ways in which the efforts of individual teachers could be built upon and institutionalized so that the impact of the innovations is felt at a wider level in the system.

9.4 Towards the development of a model of innovations for large school classes in Pakistan

The efforts of the two teachers in introducing innovations in their large school classes in Pakistan, outlined in section 9.2 above, suggest that these teachers are essentially following the small-class approach to innovations in their large classes. Thus when these teachers tried to implement innovative instructional and management techniques in their classes, they came across a range of problems, despite the fact that both the teachers were highly motivated, with a great deal of personal commitment as well as training in basic techniques of English Language Teaching. While some of these problems can be attributed directly to the specific characteristics of large classes (e.g., limited space for group work), the majority of these problems are inextricably linked with the non-availability of other 'felicity conditions', such as, teacher-learner views of the teaching-learning process and their definition of teacher-learner roles, for introducing 'active' learning in these classrooms.

Thus we find that firstly, the innovations were being introduced because the teachers felt that a different methodology for the teaching and learning of English would be more useful than the traditional methods which are currently in use in secondary schools in Pakistan. In other words, the innovations were not introduced in response to an analysis of teachers' and learners' problems in teaching-learning in large classes (assuming for the moment that it is possible to do so). In this situation the implementation of the innovations required, particularly as the innovations were imported from abroad, a major readjustment in the ways of perceiving the process of teaching and learning by the participants as well as a redefinition of teacher-learner roles in the classroom.

Secondly, when the teachers experienced problems in implementing the innovations, such as group work, it was difficult to separate the problems which were caused by class size only from other problems in the teaching-learning situation. This was because, as discussed earlier, the variable of class size interacts with and upon various other teacher-learner variables in the classroom. Moreover, the perception of class size depends on a host of variables such as, physical space in the classroom and the average class size in the educational context (chapter 4). Consequently, the effects of class size are felt variously by different participants, under different conditions, both inside and outside the classroom.

Thirdly, the scope of the innovations, which were being introduced apparently at the level of the classroom, seemed to transcend the boundaries of the classroom, and even the institution, to the wider community outside the classroom. Hence the innovations in classroom management, which conflicted with the traditional role of the teacher and learners in the classroom, were less successful in large classes than innovations in teaching/learning of grammar where the teacher was still very much in control of classroom events.

In this situation the largeness of the class might be perceived by the teachers, rightly or wrongly, as the major constraint in introducing innovations in their classes. The evidence from a large class is concrete and tangible (it is easy to count the number of people in the classroom just as it is equally easy for anyone to observe the overcrowded conditions in a large class), and, therefore, very convincing. However, the largeness of the class might mask the real, and perhaps more important, problems in introducing these innovations. Conversely, large classes may be used as a scapegoat - an 'excuse' to resist innovations that threaten the traditional culture of teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus innovations, particularly those which require a change not only at the level of classroom methodology but a change in the 'whole person' of the participants, both

inside and outside the classroom, [6] tend to be rejected. Unfortunately, this is when the problem of large classes promises to become a solution!

Which of the three approaches to innovations described in section 9.3 above is more suitable for large school classes in Pakistan in terms of both effectiveness and the ease or difficulty of implementing the innovations? One approach to introducing innovations that seems workable in this kind of scenario is the socio-cultural approach. As mentioned earlier, this approach takes into account the 'constraints' of the teaching-learning situation, such as the size of the class, and the cultural traditions and expectations of teacher-learner roles in the community along with developments in the field of English Language Teaching abroad. Moreover, as is exemplified in the work of the English Language Teaching Community, Bangalore, it can be initiated collectively by teachers at the grass root level. Further, it does not depend on the procurement of extra financial resources. In fact what it requires is a change in the thinking and attitudes of the teachers which can only be arrived at by the teachers themselves after a careful investigation and understanding of the teaching-learning process in their own classrooms (cf. Prabhu:1992).

It would be simplistic to assume that such an effort at change can be initiated easily even if the teachers are motivated enough to do so. In this regard, Valerien (1991) says, rightly in my view, that:

> It is important that the action taken to set the teaching of such [large] classes on a new footing should not depend on the devotion of individuals or small groups, however competent they may be. Such action can really be useful and effective only if it is backed up by a firm political determination at the national level and if it entails cooperation among all those involved in the educational process. (p. 33)

However, such an effort could be initiated through action research projects at the level of a group of teachers or a cluster of schools with similar size classes, or the same kind of

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[6]A danger is that due to large classes, the 'real' and sometimes more important sources of difficulty in introducing the innovations are not considered. (For further discussion on introducing innovative methodology in classrooms in Pakistan, see Shamim, f.c.)

learner population (Allwright:1993; Somekh:1993). Thus, by using this procedure for introducing innovations in large classes, while the form of the innovations would be shaped by the teachers concerned, the teacher educators could act as 'catalysts' to facilitate the development of a structure for teachers to work together in small networks of mutual support.

9.5 Summary and conclusion

This chapter described the case of two teachers who were trying to introduce innovations in their large school classes in Pakistan. This was followed by a discussion of three approaches to innovations in large classes derived from reports of introducing innovations in large classes in different parts of the world. It was revealed that the innovations in large classes often require more than a change of methodology at the level of the classroom. Consequently, a procedure was outlined for the development of a model of innovations for large school classes in Pakistan.

Two questions were raised in chapter 5 (section 5.2.6) about the relationship between teachers' beliefs about larger and smaller classes and the prospects of introducing innovative methodology in large classes. They are: 1) To what extent are teachers' beliefs related to (a) their unfamiliarity with alternative instructional and management techniques, and (b) their unwillingness to change (even in the face of overwhelming problems in large classes)? 2) To what extent are these teachers prepared through teacher training courses to analyse their problems in large classes and to develop an alternative methodology that does not conflict with their own or the community's view of teaching and learning in the classroom? A closer look at the innovations introduced by the two teachers in the study revealed that, at least in their case, the difficulties in introducing innovations in their classes arose mainly from their using the small-class approach to innovations in large classes (cf. section 9.3.1). Furthermore, these teachers do not seem to have been prepared adequately, during their teacher training courses, to analyse their problems in teaching-learning in large classes in terms of their immediate educational

environment as well as the socio-cultural context of the community outside the classroom *before* introducing innovations in their classes.

The two teachers felt, in the light of their experience, that some innovations are more difficult to introduce in larger than in smaller classes. However, it seems that these teachers faced greater difficulty in introducing those innovations in their classes, (e.g., group work) which were incongruent with the shared culture of teaching in the context of teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in Pakistan. In contrast, other innovations such as, silent reading and the teaching of grammar through situations, which were within the framework of core activity types or shared culture of teaching (cf. chapter 6, sections 6.3 and 6.5) seemed more acceptable to the students and were, therefore, easier to introduce even in large classes.

The above observations indicate the need for further studies of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size classes in different socio-cultural contexts as necessary input to introducing innovations in large classes (cf. Holliday:1991c, 1984).

CHAPTER 10

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHER-LEARNER BEHAVIOUR AND CLASSROOM PROCESSES IN LARGE ESL CLASSES IN PAKISTAN

10.1 Introduction

According to Jackson (1968) classrooms are different from other situations which involve a number of people in terms of the length of association with other members in the crowd, the specific structure of the classroom event and the non-voluntary nature of group membership, thus:

> Buses and movie theatres may be more crowded than classrooms, but people rarely stay in such densely populated settings for extended periods of time and while there, they usually are not expected to work or to interact with each other. Even factory workers are not clustered so close together as students in a standard classroom . . . Only in schools do 30 or more people spend several hours each day literally side by side. Once we leave the classroom we seldom again are required to have contact with so many people for so long a time (p. 8).

Jackson is of the view that the crowded social conditions in the classroom have several important effects on the teacher and the learners. The question that the reader would naturally ask at this stage is: If all classrooms are characterised by 'crowds' which affect both teacher and learner behaviour in the classroom, how are large classes different from other 'normal' classrooms? Conversely, what characteristics (if any) do large classes share with smaller size classes?

To put this discussion into perspective, I will first make an attempt, in the next section, to interpret the findings of the present study in terms of the specific context of teaching and learning in school classes in Pakistan. Next, the overall findings of the study will be summarised. After that some conclusions will be drawn about teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in large school classes in Pakistan. Finally, some directions for future research on the question of class size, particularly in developing countries, will be suggested.

10.2 Towards an understanding of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan

The present study largely confirms the findings of some earlier studies on teachers' experience and perceptions about large classes and teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in 'small' and 'large' classes (cf. chapter 1, sections 1.3.2, 1.3.3 and 1.4.2). It is thus established that a) both teachers and learners prefer classes which are smaller in size than their present classes (whatever the size of their present class may be); b) teachers face difficulties in teaching larger classes as compared to smaller classes; c) learners see the size of their class in relation to other instructional variables such as getting attention from the teacher and/or opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom; and d) there is no fundamental difference in 'core' activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours and classroom processes in larger and smaller classes.

The stability found in instructional methods and classroom processes in larger and smaller classes has, in the past, been interpreted very simplistically, in my opinion, as evidence of *no effect of class size on teaching and learning in the classroom*. But we cannot ignore the overwhelming evidence of the present study, as well as various other studies on class size (e.g., Coleman:1991c; Okebukola and Jegede:1991; LoCastro:1989; McLeod:1989), which establish quite clearly that teachers find teaching large classes both problematic and highly stressful in their professional lives.

Little attempt has been made to investigate the sources of teachers' difficulties in teaching and learning in large classes; likewise, the likely determinants of the similarities (and differences) found in teacher behaviour and classroom processes in large and smaller classes have not been explored. Therefore, in this section, an attempt will be made to a) locate the source(s) of teachers' and learners' difficulties in teaching-learning in large classes; and b) identify the likely determinants of the homogeneity and differences found

in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in the teaching-learning of English in varying size school classes in Pakistan.

10.2.1 The sources of participants' difficulties in large classes

The problems of inadequate space or overcrowding in large school classes in Pakistan can be noticed immediately, even by an outsider, particularly if he/she tries to make his/her way to the back of the classroom (as I did) to find a place to sit in a discreet corner for observing the class. While the problems of limited space and noise seem to be related closely to large numbers in the classroom, the other difficulties faced by teachers and learners in large classes, such as the amount of teacher attention and checking of written work, seem to derive more from the 'hidden' culture of teaching and learning in the immediate educational context as well as the culture of the community outside. Thus the source of these problems can only be inferred indirectly from a holistic picture of the classroom situation and some understanding of how the culture of the community operates outside the classroom.

For this purpose, we need to begin by looking at the definition of the role of the teacher and learner and their 'job descriptions' in Pakistani society. In Pakistan, the teacher is seen largely as a 'knower' and a role model for the students. This is illustrated in the following excerpts from teacher interviews:

> "Teaching is conveying your knowledge to others. I want it to be their possession, to hand it over to them whatever I know." (TI No.1, 3.3)

> The responsibilities of a teacher are very important. She is believed to be the builder of the nation - not only giving academic education but also character building. (TI No.1, 6.2)

Moreover, the teachers believe that, 'Children should be very obedient and interested in their studies' (TI No.1, 6.5). Furthermore, 'It is the responsibility of the learners to be attentive in class and listen with full concentration' (TI No.1, 2.1). This ideal of learner behaviour, and its consequences for creating a harmonious relationship between the teacher and the students, is further illustrated in the following comment by a teacher:

"If the learner is attentive, punctual, does everything according to the wish of the teacher . . . the teacher and learner go very well." (TI No.1, 3.3)

Both teachers and learners seemed to have an implicit understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the teaching and learning of English in the classroom. Their views about teacher-learner jobs are summarised in table 10.1.

Teachers' job	Learners' job
To teach [parhaana]	To study [parhna]
To read a 'lesson', translate and/or explain the meaning of the text (make the students understand) [sabaq parhaana, samjhaana]	To 'read' a 'lesson' and understand it [sabaq parhna, samajhna]
To make the students read the text aloud [parhvaana]	To read the text aloud [parhna]
To give 'words-meanings', 'questions-answers', grammar rules, essays and letters, etc. [likhvaana]	To write (copy) the material given by the teacher [likhna]
To check students' 'fair copies' [kaam check karna]	To get their 'fair copies' checked [kaam check karvaana]
To revise and make the students learn (memorize) [yaad karvaana]	To learn (memorize) [yaad karna]

Table 10.1: Participants' shared beliefs about teacher-learner jobs in the teaching and learning of English in the classroom

The majority of teachers seemed to be quite clear about what the job of teaching [parhaana] entails in Pakistani classrooms. Several teachers, who appeared to be almost indifferent to whether they were getting any response from the learners or not in the classroom, expressed their unhappiness at the students' lack of interest in their work. A few teachers also ascribed the lack of learner response in the classroom to their failure in doing their job properly. This is evident in the following comment by a teacher:

"I get an idea of whether I've done a good job or not from the response I get from the children. If they are very active I feel they have done something. When I try again and again and fail to get a good response I feel unhappy because they are children. It's my duty and my responsibility to make everything clear. I feel I'm not doing my job properly. Then I think about what I should do so that the children can pick up more easily (my emphasis)." (2.2)

Due to the 'high status' of the teacher, as well as other socio-cultural factors in the community, it seems that learners' 'time-on-task' increases in school classes in Pakistan in direct proportion to the amount of attention they receive from the teacher. There was clear evidence of this in all the classrooms that were visited during the study; this is illustrated in the following entry from my research diary:

> Once a teacher was called to the Head's office to attend to a telephone call while I was in her class. As soon as she left the class, the students immediately began to talk to each other. They had been assigned a task to work on individually and had been working on it quietly before the teacher left the class. Some learners left their seats to converse with their friends in different parts of the room. The student next to me went to his friend to copy the answers from his 'key' book. The students seemed to be aware of my presence in the class and looked at me hesitantly before leaving their seats. Some students, if they caught my eye, also asked my permission to do so. All talked in hushed tones as if they did not want me to hear what they were saying. However, order was immediately restored as the teacher was seen approaching the class. The teacher seemed quite surprised at their orderly behaviour (obviously she had expected chaos in the classroom in her absence) and commented to me later that this unusually 'good' behaviour of the students could only be attributed to my presence in the classroom (Research Diary, 13.11.91).

Similarly it was observed, on a number of occasions, that if the teachers left the classroom even for a short while the students immediately stopped working and instead began to talk loudly to their friends or left their seats to visit friends in other parts of the classroom. Thus the teacher had to bring them back to order on her return. Sometimes this also created problems of discipline and control for the teacher.

Regarding another problem, mentioned particularly by the teachers, i.e, the problem of checking written work (see chapter 5, section 5.2.3), one immediate response of an outsider could be: But why do teachers feel obliged to check *all* the written work of the students *all the time*? In any case, realistically speaking, it is almost impossible to check the work of all the students regularly in a large class. However, the teachers' inability to check the work of all the students left them with a feeling of guilt at not doing their job properly. Moreover, checking of written work by the teacher was perceived, both by teachers and learners, as a source of motivation for doing the work in the first place. Also, as discussed earlier (cf. the model of teaching and learning in Pakistani classrooms; chapter 6, section 6.5), the students generally committed to memory what they had

written in their exercise books for their exams. Thus the teachers felt obliged to check their 'copies' in order to ensure that the students did not copy, and therefore reproduce, incorrect answers in the exams. The teachers also felt obliged to check the work of the students due to the annual inspection, when one of the most important measures of the performance and efficiency of a teacher was whether she had checked all the written work in the students' exercise books or not.

When I recommended peer correction to some teachers a number of them said that a) checking was the job of the teacher; b) everyone including the students, their parents, the Heads and the inspectors expected the teachers to check the work of the students; and c) the proficiency level of the students was so low that, in any case, they would not be able to identify each others' mistakes.

In order to do their respective jobs well or successfully both teachers and learners used a number of strategies which seemed to have a number of consequences for them. For example, one reason for giving the 'questions-answers', essays, etc. to the students was to make easier their task of checking the students' written work later. However, the copying of 'ready-made' answers from the blackboard or the textbook, being a mechanical activity, encouraged the learners to be passive and have low confidence in their ability to do anything creatively and independently. Thus, by the time they reached the last year of secondary school, they became indifferent and sceptical about their ability to learn English and, generally, sat through the ordeal of the class period with glazed looks. In fact there was not even a flicker of interest when the teachers sometimes tried to elicit some information about their personal experiences from the real world. In contrast, the enthusiasm of the younger learners, particularly those who were in their first or second year of secondary school, who had not been fully socialised into this way of teaching and learning in the classroom, was almost contagious. One of the teachers observed that the majority of the students wanted to learn, but the teachers could not give them enough attention due to the large classes. Hence they lost interest in their studies by the time they reached higher classes.

Thus the difficulties faced by the participants in large classes could be due to the specific characteristics of the large class situation, such as limited space and greater physical distance from the blackboard; they may equally well be a result of the 'culture' of teaching and learning prevalent in the educational context (cf. the transmission model of teaching) and reinforced by the ways of thinking and believing in the community outside the classroom.

The saving of available resources in a smaller class, due to fewer demands being placed on them, is perceived   by both teachers and students as potentially conducive to making more opportunities for learning available in the classroom. However, it must be remembered that smaller classes increase the potential opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom only which cannot, in and of themselves, lead to an increase in the achievement level of the students. More importantly, the extent to which these increased opportunities for teaching and learning in smaller classes are 'actualized' or translated into 'reality' by the participants depends as much on their individual biographies and views of teaching and learning in the classroom as on the specific characteristics of larger and smaller classes (chapter 7, section 7.4).

Furthermore, the almost one to one relationship between teachers' perceptions of difficulties in large classes and the relative advantages of smaller classes, described in chapter 5, seems to be significant in more ways than one. It suggests very strongly that many of the difficulties faced by teachers in large classes result from their trying to do the same kinds of things in their large classes which they were doing earlier in classes of a smaller size. In fact, some of these activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours might be suitable for smaller classes only (cf. Holliday:1991c).

10.2.2 The likely determinants of the homogeneity in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size

It could be theorized, in the light of the evidence of the present study, that the homogeneity found in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan is due to three factors. They are as follows:

1 A universal system of examinations and use of prescribed textbooks

2 The shared beliefs of teachers and learners about what counts as teaching and learning in the classroom. (This includes their beliefs about teachers' and learners' respective jobs and responsibilities in the classroom discussed in section 10.2.1 above.)

3 The relationship between teachers' threshold levels of class size and their teaching style.

As discussed in chapter 6, the teaching and learning in school classes in Pakistan is geared largely towards the school leaving examinations which are conducted by the Board of Secondary Education for all schools (both in the government and private sector) in a region. In fact even the classroom tests and internal exams are modelled on the pattern of Board exams right from the first year of secondary school.[1] Hence rote learning of given answers for the purpose of passing the exams (cf. transmission model of teaching in chapter 6) begins early in school life. This is evident in the following comments by a teacher of class VI (first year of secondary school) below:

> Keeping in view the interests of the children we [the teachers] decide on a few topics together. When we are given the syllabus we are told that all teachers of class VI will give the same essays, e.g., My school, My best friend. So topics such as these are chosen together and given to the students - so that in exams the children do not face any problems and they can also solve the paper

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[1]At least in one of the schools visited, the teachers were given written instructions to model the papers for the half-yearly exams on the pattern of the examinations conducted by the Board of Secondary Education.

easily. When the exam paper is set one teacher sets it in consultation with all the teachers who are teaching different sections of this class. (6.6)

In classes IX and X (the last two years of secondary school), the constraint of the Board exam and getting good marks is felt by both the teachers and students alike. The 'backwash' effect of exams on teaching is illustrated in the following comments by two teachers:

"Like in X B there are so many constraints, like you have to teach certain things, give questions-answers and see that every child writes answers to those questions and do it on the same pattern - even if a word is out of order they won't pick it up. They'll shut their eyes, ears, everything." (2.3)

. . . the biggest constraint [in introducing innovative techniques] is the Board exam. Because of that we have to focus on the same topics which are expected in the exams. We have to give them [likhaane perhte hen] the type of questions they will get in Board exams, but in reading I apply my techniques. But again after that for the sake of examinations I have to shift over - as you observed that for short notes, I did them through comprehension questions but I couldn't ignore them. (4.2)

(The teachers also feel obliged to complete the syllabus for the exams.)

Thus it seems that the backwash effect of the exam system on what happens in the classroom is one of the major contributing factors towards the homogeneity found in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in the teaching and learning of English in varying size school classes in Pakistan (see also Khanum:1992). Furthermore, the use of a common textbook, at least in government schools, facilitates the existence and continuation of this shared culture of teaching and learning in the classroom.

The homogeneity in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes also seems to derive from a tacit understanding between teachers and learners about what is (or should be) involved in the teaching-learning of English in the classroom (cf. chapter 6, section 6.3.1). For example, it seems that both teachers and learners consider the general aim of reading a text as the understanding of the meaning of the text at the literal level only; likewise they believe that this aim can only be achieved if the teacher translates and/or explains (paraphrases) the text to the students. Furthermore, it is considered essential to know the meanings of all the 'difficult' words in the text in order to understand the reading passage. Similarly, both the teachers and learners believe that learning of

grammar rules helps the students in improving their general proficiency in the language. Also writing is conceived of as a finished product only.

As mentioned above, the findings of the present study also indicate that teachers do not change their teaching style if two (or more) classes, which might be different in terms of numbers, fall within the same 'threshold level' or 'size category' for the teacher.

This relationship between teachers' threshold levels of class size and their teaching methodology helps to explain, to a certain extent, the stability found in some earlier studies of class size in teacher behaviour and classroom processes in 'large' and 'small' classes. In contrast, there is some evidence in the literature (chapter 1, section 1.6) that a redefinition of class size, either due to a dramatic increase in numbers and/or some other significant change in the teaching-learning situation, such as the experience of the participants, can motivate the teachers to devise radically different ways of handling their large classes .

To summarise, it seems that the uniformity found in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan is due to at least three factors. They are: external constraints, such as a universal system of examinations and prescribed textbooks; the tacit understanding between teachers and students about what counts as the 'act' of teaching and learning in the classroom; and the teachers' perception of two or more classes as being in the same size category in regard to their threshold levels of class size. However, further research is required to find out the extent to which each of these three factors contributes towards the homogeneity found in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller classes in Pakistan.

10.2.3 The likely determinants of the differences in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size

The differences in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in classes of varying size seem to be related to the specific characteristics of the large class context and

the shared culture of teaching and learning in the classroom (cf. chapter 8) as well as to the individual biography and personality type of the teachers. For example, it was found in the present study that while enhancing activity types were done by different teachers in both larger and smaller size classes, there was a difference amongst individual teachers in the degree and frequency with which they used enhancing activity types in large and smaller classes. More specifically, at least one teacher (who was teaching both a large and a smaller class) reported that it was easier to do more enriching activities (and introduce innovative classroom methodology) in her smaller class than in her large class.

Thus there is some evidence to suggest that teachers feel more stressed in trying to do the same kinds of activity types in their large classes as they did (or would like to do) in smaller classes. As a result they do fewer enhancing activity types in large classes as compared to smaller classes (also see Johnston 1990a and 1990b).

10.3 Findings of the present study: A summary

The present study used a qualitative approach to arrive at a holistic picture of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan. More specifically, it presents a descriptive-interpretive account of the insiders' view of the 'reality' of teaching and learning, and consequently of what happens, particularly in terms of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes, in large ESL classes in secondary schools in Pakistan.

The study was designed on an initial assumption about the multiple nature of the 'reality' of class size according to the varied perceptions and experiences of the participants, even in a relatively homogeneous educational setting such as secondary schools in Pakistan. The field work was done over a period of six months at six different sites (secondary schools) in Karachi, the largest urban centre in Pakistan. During this time, 232 classes of 22 teachers were observed in two phases at each site. (These classes were perceived by the teachers variously as 'large', 'very large' and 'neither small nor

large'.) At the same time 20 teachers and 21 groups of learners from the same classes were interviewed for the purpose of the study.

Before I present a summary of the findings of the study it might be useful to recapitulate the final research questions as outlined in chapter 2 (section 2.2). They are as follows:

1) How do teachers and learners define varying size school classes in Pakistan? What factors contribute to their varied perceptions (and therefore definitions) of class size?

2) What are teachers' and learners' beliefs (based both on their perceptions and experience) about larger and smaller size school classes in Pakistan? What parameters are used by the participants for describing their beliefs about the teaching and learning of English in classes of varying size?

3) What happens, in terms of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes, in large school classes in Pakistan?

4) How does the large class context (e.g. the location of learners in the front or the back of the classroom) relate to the participants' perceptions and experience of the opportunities for teaching and learning available in large school classes in Pakistan?

5) What is the nature and scope of innovations in large school classes in Pakistan? How do they relate to the experiences of other teachers in introducing innovations in large classes in different parts of the world? What can we learn from this cumulative body of knowledge on innovations in large classes for developing a model of innovations for large school classes in Pakistan?

6) What are the determinants of teachers' and learners' difficulties in large classes?

7) What are the reasons for the similarities and differences in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan?

It was found that participants perceive numbers as necessary but not sufficient in defining 'large' classes. In fact it was established that a number of other factors, such as the physical conditions in the classroom and the opportunities for teaching and learning available in the classroom (both real and perceived), influence teachers' and learners' perception of the size of their classes. As a result, a difference in numbers alone does not guarantee a change in teacher-learner behaviour in the classroom (cf. chapter 7, section 7.5). This finding is particularly significant, as discussed in 10.2.2 above, as it explains, to some extent, the uniformity of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes which was found in the present study and which has also been reported in various other studies of class size (e.g., Oakley:1969; Wright et al.:1977).

Secondly, both teachers and learners reported a number of difficulties in teaching and learning in large classes. Furthermore, it was established that the participants perceive the differences in teaching-learning in larger and smaller size classes in terms of the ease or difficulty of doing essentially the same kinds of activity types in classes of varying size. Thus, for example, teaching more students is perceived by the teachers as problematic in terms of more 'copies' to check and more people to 'keep an eye' on or control in the classroom as compared to a smaller class. Similarly, in a large class there is less space both for the students to sit comfortably and for the teacher to walk around the classroom to check or monitor their work. It was also reported by the teachers that teaching a large class is more exhausting (physically) and a source of greater tension than a smaller class. In other words, teaching a large class leads to an increase in both the workload and the stress level of the teachers. In contrast, teachers feel relaxed in a smaller class.

The students also described their difficulties in large classes in comparison to their perception of the advantages of having a smaller class. However, unlike their teachers above, they perceived the difficulties in large classes more in terms of their effect on the conditions and opportunities for learning, such as seeing the blackboard and getting of teacher's attention, than physical discomfort in the classroom.

Thirdly, it was revealed that there exists a shared culture of teaching and learning in school classes in Pakistan (based on the transmission model of teaching) which seems to cut across the differences in class size. Thus teachers were found to use the same kinds of activity types in classes of varying size, i.e., classes which were perceived by them as 'large', 'very large', and 'neither small nor large'.

Furthermore, while the 'culture' of teaching and learning was found to be essentially similar across classes of varying size, at least two differences were noticeable in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in larger and smaller size classes. They are as follows:

1) difference in the pattern of teacher-learner interaction and learner participation in classroom activities according to their location (vis-a-vis the position of the teacher) in the classroom; and

2) difference amongst individual teachers in terms of activity types and accompanying teacher-learner behaviours with main and enhancing functions.

In terms of classroom methodology, while on one hand, all teachers felt obliged to do the 'core' activity types in their classrooms, irrespective of the number of students in their class, on the other, there was a propensity for teachers to use more activity types with an enhancing function in their smaller classes in comparison to larger classes. In other words, enhancing activities such as creative writing, which were usually more open-ended and consequently involved more risk for the teachers, were gradually dropped with an increase in class size.

Furthermore, it was found that, in larger classes, the use of activity types with an enhancing function was ancillary to the essential business of 'survival' or getting on with the 'act' of teaching and learning in the classroom. Even teachers who did not face any problem of indiscipline in their large classes seemed to be able to maintain this precarious balance mainly by doing core activity types only which did not require learner

participation and which were predictable in terms of interactional outcomes. For example, during the course of my classroom visits, one teacher said that she did not invite the students to come to the blackboard in her large class (an avoidance strategy), partly because it takes more time for the students to get out of their seats and find their way to the blackboard but, more importantly, because this 'disruption' invariably leads to discipline problems in the classroom. This indicates that with an increase in numbers, teaching-learning in the classroom is gradually stripped of all its enhancements as the teachers in large classes are often too busy in their efforts to survive in their 3-4 large classes per day.

It was also observed that sometimes, when the size of the class becomes very large and/or when class size is perceived as the major problem in the classroom, teachers tend to develop 'survival' strategies, such as creating a smaller class within the large class, in order to carry on with the 'act' of teaching in their classrooms. Conversely, alternative ways are devised to do the same kinds of things effectively in larger classes as were done earlier in smaller classes, such as appointing student checkers to help the teacher in correcting the large amount of written work in very large classes.

Fourthly, it was found, particularly in larger classes, that the space in the classroom is defined by the participants not only in terms of physical space per student but, more importantly, in terms of the location of the students vis-a-vis the position of the teacher and the blackboard in the front of the classroom. As the teachers always teach from the front of the classroom, their 'attention zone' is limited, in large classes, to the students in the first three rows or the 'front' of the classroom. Also the students in the front can see the blackboard and hear the teacher clearly; they are asked more questions and they get more opportunities to participate in classroom activities. Moreover, the teacher can easily 'keep an eye' on the students in the front and therefore guide them in their work. As all the 'action' takes place in the 'front zone' of the classroom, the students in the front of the classroom get increased opportunities for learning and, consequently, work better as compared to the students at the back. In contrast, the students at the back are outside the

'action' zone by virtue of their location in the classroom; they are also disadvantaged in terms of having difficulties in seeing the blackboard and hearing the teacher. It was also discovered that the students located within each of the two zones in the classroom, front or back, are perceived both by teachers and learners to have certain characteristics, both positive and negative. Similarly, their membership of different zones seems to have a profound effect not only on their classroom behaviour and level of participation but also on their own and their teachers' expectations of opportunities for teaching and learning available in the classroom.

Fifthly, it was found that even well-trained teachers, with a good proficiency in language and a high degree of personal commitment, introduced innovations in the teaching and learning of English in their classrooms only *within the framework of 'core' activity types* (cf. chapter 6, section 6.3). Furthermore, the two teachers (out of the 22 teachers whose classes were observed), who were experimenting with introducing innovative instructional and management techniques in their large and smaller size classes in the present study, reported that some of the innovations, such as group work, could be introduced more easily, and were consequently more effective in terms of the investment of time and effort, in a smaller than in a large class. Thus the reasons mentioned by these teachers for their discomfort in using group work in large classes include the logistics of organising the large number of students in small groups and the fear of the crowd turning into a mob (cf. Waller:1932). However, the teachers also hinted at another source of the problem in using group work in large classes, i.e., students' unfamiliarity with working independently of the teacher in Pakistani classrooms (see the transmission model of teaching, chapter 6, section 6.5).

Sixthly, teachers' difficulties in teaching large classes seem to be as much a result of the specific characteristics of large classes as the culture of teaching and learning shared by the participants in the given educational context and their views of teaching and learning in the classroom (cf. section 10.1 above).

Finally, it seems that the homogeneity found in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan (cf, chapter 6, section 6.3) is due to one or more of the following three factors:

1 A universal system of examinations and use of prescribed textbooks

2 The shared beliefs of teachers and learners about what counts as teaching and learning in the classroom.

3 The relationship between teachers' threshold levels of class size and their teaching style.

Furthermore, the differences in teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan (cf. chapter 7, section 7.4) can be attributed to the specific characteristics of the large context and the shared culture of teaching and learning in the classroom (cf. chapter 8) as well as to the individual biography and personality type of the teachers (see the discussion in section 10.2.3 above).

10.4   Conclusion

Thus we can conclude that large classes have an effect on teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes not only at the interpersonal level, i.e., the social aspect of the classroom event (cf. Walberg:1969), but also on the substantive content of the lesson. Though the differences can be observed in small discrete teacher-learner behaviours and classroom processes the effect of class size is often felt cumulatively by the teachers in terms of increased stress or fewer opportunities for teaching and learning in the classroom.

More specifically, the findings of the study as well as the discussion in section 10.2 establish   that:

1) Teachers find it *difficult* to do the same kinds of things/activity types in their larger classes that they are accustomed to doing (or believe they can do) more easily in classes of a smaller size.

2) There is a close relationship between participants' difficulties in large classes and the shared 'culture' of teaching and learning in Pakistani classrooms. Thus a number of teachers' problems in large classes (such as checking of written work) seem to derive largely from their efforts to use the same classroom methodology in their larger classes which they are accustomed to using in classes of a smaller size.

In addition, the combined evidence of teachers' beliefs and the observation of teacher-learner behaviour and classroom processes in varying size school classes in Pakistan indicates that many of the present instructional and management techniques used for the teaching and learning of English in school classes in Pakistan are more suitable for smaller classes as compared to larger classes (cf. Holliday:1991c; f.c. (b)).

The findings of the study also suggest that some innovations are more difficult to introduce in larger than in smaller classes. More importantly, they underline the importance of the 'culture' of teaching, in a given educational context, in regard to its effect on what actually happens in the classroom irrespective of class size. This indicates the need for further studies of classroom culture in different socio-cultural contexts as necessary input for introducing innovations in large classes (cf. Holliday:1991c; 1984).

It is significant that the criteria used by the participants in the present study, both for defining the size of their classes as well as for describing their experience and perceptions of larger and smaller size classes, are very different from the researchers' criteria which have traditionally been used in research on class size. For example, traditionally class size has been operationalised in terms of numbers only. However, it was revealed in the present study that participants view numbers *in relation to other variables*, such as the

space in the classroom, to define the size of their classes. In other words, numbers are necessary but not sufficient for defining class size. To take another example: the participants in the study seemed to view larger and smaller size classes in terms of a difference in the *degree* rather than the kind of activity types and teaching-learning behaviours used in these classes. Hence they discussed their experience and perceptions of classes of varying size in regard to the ease or difficulty of doing essentially the same kinds of things in larger and smaller classes. This seems to be in sharp contrast with the view of the researchers who have typically looked for differences in the kinds of instructional behaviours in large and small classes (see chapter 1, section 1.3.3).

One major finding of the present study is that the shared culture of teaching and learning in the immediate educational context (which is often derived from the culture of the community outside the classroom) seems to cut across the variable of class size. Thus all teachers felt obliged to do the 'core' activity types, that were assumed to constitute the act of teaching, in varying size school classes in Pakistan irrespective of the size of their class (chapter 6). Furthermore, it was discovered that teachers also continue to use the same teaching style in two or more classes if these classes (which might be different in terms of numbers) are perceived by the teachers to be in the same 'size category' according to their threshold levels of class size (chapter 7, section 7.5). These observations helped to explain the homogeneity found in teacher-learner behaviour in varying size school classes in Pakistan in the present study. However, in my opinion, these observations also explain to a certain extent, the findings of some earlier studies on class size, particularly, the stability found in teachers' behaviour in small and large classes even if the size of their class was drastically reduced (cf. chapter 1, section 1.3.3).

It seems that as more opportunities for teaching and learning are available in smaller classes, such as more space and less physical distance between the teacher and the students, there is more likelihood of these opportunities being used by the participants for improving the quality of teaching and learning in smaller classes. In contrast, the

conditions for teaching and learning in a large class are less than optimal. Consequently better opportunities for teaching and learning have first to be *created* by both the teachers and learners before they can be used effectively in large classes. Thus extra effort is required to maintain the desired quality of teaching and learning in large classes; this, in turn, affects the morale and attitude of the participants in these classes. In fact, the greater amount of effort involved in teaching and learning in large classes could prove demotivating for all except the most enthusiastic of participants. This dilemma of large class teachers was summed up very succinctly by a teacher as follows:

> [The biggest problem is the] Strength of students. One teacher has to deal with 80-100 students - to check their copies. So teachers do the job half-heartedly. They don't bother whether learners understand or not. (TI NO. 1, 6.4)

10.5 Directions for future research and action

The results of the present study indicate that class size is neither an independent nor the controlling variable in the classroom, as it was once assumed to be. In fact class size is perceived by the participants in relation to other variables in the teaching-learning situation. Also it seems to interact with and upon other variables to produce an effect - positive or negative - on both the social aspect as well as the substantive content of a lesson. Thus, firstly, future research on large classes needs to take cognizance of other factors that impinge on and/or interact with class size to bring about a change in the dynamics in the classroom, and consequently, in learning and achievement.

Secondly, we need to focus on finding pedagogic 'solutions' to the problems posed by large classes. More specifically, we need to consider how to teach large classes well in *different socio-cultural settings*. This is because, unlike North America, large classes are a fact of life in developing countries such as Pakistan - 'a hard reality' to be reckoned with in terms of the countries' limited resources. The need for an interest in the pedagogy of large classes in developing countries is reinforced by the difficulties reported by teachers in introducing progressive ideas in education and English language teaching, i.e., for promoting active learning in large classes. The majority of these innovative ideas

and techniques have been developed in small classes for use with a small number of language learners in 'acquisition rich' environments in the West (Holliday:f.c., a). Hence it is a daunting task for the teachers, to say the least, to use them effectively in their large classes which are vastly dissimilar, in terms both of class size and of the educational and socio-cultural environment, to the classes in which these ideas were originally developed.

Thirdly, instead of a frontal attack on the problem of large classes in developing countries, i.e., undertaking efforts to reduce class size, which is beyond the fiscal resources of most of these countries in any case, other alternatives to reducing class size should be explored. At the same time our developed understanding about teaching and learning in large classes could be used as an argument for reducing class size or, more realistically, for discouraging further increases in class size in different countries.

Thus while we agree that language learning should ideally take place in 'small' classes, a pragmatic approach to the class size question in countries such as Pakistan is to channelise the country's limited resources towards developing indigenous ways of teaching and learning effectively *within the present configurations of class size as well as other 'constraints' in the educational and socio-cultural environment.* In other words, what is being recommended is a shift in focus in the age old debate on class size from 'politics' to 'pedagogy', i.e., to developing methodological 'solutions' for improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes.

It seems that at least a few teachers, instead of waiting for conclusive research findings on the relationship of class size and achievement, have already taken up the challenge of teaching large classes in their various teaching/learning situations. The challenge of teaching large classes has sometimes resulted in introducing large-scale innovations at the institutional level. However, these innovations are more often a consequence of the efforts of individual teachers or small groups of teachers working at the level of their individual classrooms (chapter 1, section 1.6). It is significant that while, earlier, the teachers considered the problem of large classes as 'insoluble' (cf.

Carver:1988b), now there seems to be a growing awareness that large classes are not inherently negative in nature (e.g., Saraswathi:1990). In fact, as mentioned earlier, in some instances the 'problem' of large classes has led to major rethinking about the effectiveness of prevalent teaching practices and to the introduction of pedagogical innovations, which are organically developed at the grass roots level in response to a felt need for improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes (e.g., Naidu et al.:1992).

It has been speculated that the attempts to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in large classes can be misinterpreted by planners and administrators (perhaps deliberately!), but also by teachers of large classes as a way of legitimating the existence of 'large' classes (e.g., Coleman:1991e; Allwright:1989b). It is, therefore, important to discuss openly the issues involved in research on the question of class size. In other words, both the 'politics' and the 'pedagogy' of the class size question, the two essential elements in any debate on class size, need to be discussed collectively by teachers, researchers and administrators in forums established particularly for the study of class size such as the International Network for Class Size Studies (INCLASS).

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Appendix 2 A

Interview schedule for principals/administrators

Interview Schedule for Principals and Administrators

1 How would you define the average class size in your institution on the following continuum of class size?

   Very large Large   Neither small nor large   Small

   _____

2 Can you tell me some reasons why you described it as X above?

3 Is the size of the classrooms in your institution too big/ too small or just right for the number of students in each class?

4 If the size of the rooms is too big or too small, in your opinion, what kinds of problems can it lead to (a) for the teacher (b) for the learners?

5 What is the number of students in an average size class in your institution?

6 In what ways do you think having a large number of students in the class (a) constraints the teacher, (b) affects the learners?

7 Do you think the problem of large classes could be solved in any way?

8 What are your suggestions for dealing with the problem of class size at the (a) national level (b) institutional level?

9 Why, in your opinion, do large classes occur?

10 What, in your opinion, should be the maximum class size for effective teaching-learning to take place?

11 In what ways can this (your preferred class size) facilitate the teaching-learning process?

12 Do you think effective teaching-learning can take place in large classes?

Appendix 2 B

Interview schedule for teachers (No.1)

Interview Schedule for Teachers (No. 1)[1]

I Biographical details:

1 Name

2 Institution

3 Experience

4 No. of classes taught in any one week/school term

5 Level

6 Teacher training

   a) Dates

   b) Length of course

   c) Type of institution

   d) Type of course

7 Present and previous posts held (including type of institution, major responsibilities, scaled post)

8 Qualifications

   a) Academic

   b) Professional

II Views on pedagogy

9 What aspects of teaching do you enjoy the most?

10 Could you tell me which aspects of teaching you dislike, if any?

11 What would you say are your strengths as a teacher?

12 What would you say are your weaknesses (if any)?

13 What are some of the things you think your students should know by the end of the year?

14 How do you see your role as a teacher (in terms of the amount and kind of help which you offer)?

---

[1]Adapted from Hargreaves (1985).

15 When do you feel most satisfied/dissatisfied with a learner's performance?

16 What, in your opinion, are the major responsibilities of a learner?

17 How do you manage the checking of written work?

18 What is your policy regarding homework? Reasons?

III Problems: Origin, nature and consequences for classroom practice

19 As a teacher, what do you feel are the major types of problems with which you are confronted? (Most _ Least Important) How do you deal with these problems?

IV Sources of influence

20 Given your whole teaching career, what factors would you say have influenced your present teaching style more than any other?

Appendix 2 C

Interview schedule for learners

Interview Schedule for Learners

1 Tell me at least three things that you like about your present English class.

2 Is there anything that you do not like very much about your present English class?

3 In what ways is attending the English class helpful for you?

4 How would you describe your present English class on the following continuum of class size?

Very large   Large   Neither small nor large   Small

5 Why do you think it is X?

6 Are you satisfied with the number of students in your class?

7 How would you feel if the size of your class was larger than your present class?

8 How would you feel if the size of your class was smaller than your present class?

9 Do you ever work in groups with other students?

10 What are some of the things you like/dislike about group work?

11 Where do you usually sit in the class? (If students are not assigned fixed seats by the teacher)

12 Why do you choose to sit there?

13 Can you easily hear the teacher?

If not, what do you do when you can't hear the teacher?

14 Can you easily see the blackboard from where you sit in the classroom?

15 Do you feel you get enough attention from your teacher?

16 What do you do to get the teacher's attention/ask for help from the teacher?

17 Using some of the techniques you have mentioned, are you always successful in getting the teacher's attention? What do you do when you are unsuccessful?

18 What do you do to avoid getting the teacher's attention directed at you?

19 Do you always try to do the work assigned to you in class/for homework?

If yes (or no) please give reasons.

20 If you do some work in class/at home, do you always want your teacher to correct it? What do you do if he/she can't do so?

21 How do you feel when the teacher doesn't check (correct) the work done by you?

22 To what extent do you feel you are learning English in your present class? (Reasons)

23 What do you do outside the classroom to learn English?

24 If you were given a choice, how many students would you prefer to have in your English class? Why?

Appendix D

Interview schedule for teachers (No.2)

Interview Schedule for Teachers (No. 2)

1 Think of one of your present English classes which is typical of your teaching/learning situation. How would you describe the size of your class in terms of the following continuum of class size?

Very large Large   Neither small nor large   Small

_____

2 Why do you think it is X?

3 How many students do you have in this class?

4 Would you teach the lesson that you taught today in the same way if the size of your class was

    a) smaller than your present class?

    b) larger than your present class?

5 In what ways would it be different? Why?

6 What kinds of problems do you face (if any) in teaching English to your present classes?

7 Do you think you would have faced the same problems if the size of your present class was smaller/larger?

8 What are the kinds of things/activities you can do well in your present class? Why?

9 What are the kinds of things you find difficult to do in your present class? What makes it difficult to do them?

10 What are the kinds of things that you find impossible to do in your present class?

11 What, in your opinion, does the teaching of grammar involve? What do the teachers and learners need to do in order to teach/learn grammar?

12 Do you find the teaching of grammar easy or difficult in your class? What makes it easy/difficult?

13 How do you find out if your students' have learnt any grammar or not?

14 Do you prefer to teach 'text' or grammar? Why?

15 Do you think that it would have been easier/more difficult to teach grammar if the size of your present class was smaller/larger? Why?

16 In your present class, how do you know when you are doing a good job/ not doing a good job in the classroom?

17 How do you find out if the students are paying attention or not?

18 What do you do to deal with student inattention and/or to keep everyone involved in the lesson?

19 In your opinion, what kinds of students sit in the front/ back of the classroom?

(Or if the teacher assigns seats to students which are fixed for the term - What factors do you consider when assigning seats to the students in your class?)

20 Do you think there is any difference in your interaction with students who sit closer or at a greater physical distance from you, i.e., who sit in the front or back rows?

21 (If the class has been described as 'large' or 'very large') Why do you think you have so many students in your class?

22 Is the size of your classroom too big/ too small or just right for the number of students you have in your class?

23 Do you think the problem of class size can be solved in any way?

24 What in you opinion can the teachers do, at the level of their own classrooms, to solve the problem of large classes?

25 If you were given a choice, how many students would you prefer to have in your class and why?

Appendix 4

Numbers Questionnaire (modified version)

Numbers questionnaire (modified version)

Dear Colleague:
I am working on a Research Project on the teaching/learning of English in small and large classes in Pakistan. I shall be grateful if you could kindly fill in the following questionnaire. Thank you.

IMPORTANT: Please think only of English language classes.

1 How many people are there:
    a) in the largest class which you regularly teach?
    b) in the smallest class which you regularly teach?

2 What is your usual class size?

3 What is your ideal class size?

4 What class size do you consider to be uncomfortably large?
    a) At what number do the problems begin?
    b) At what number do the problems become intolerable?

5 What class size do you consider to be uncomfortably small?
    a) At what number do the problems begin?
    b) At what number do the problems become intolerable?

6 Among all your problems, how important is class size? Is dealing with large classes (please ring the appropriate letter) :

the major problem	a
one of the major problems	b
a problem, but not a major one	c
a very minor problem	d
no problem at all	e

7 Is the institution you teach in: (please ring the appropriate letter):

primary/elementary?	a
secondary?	b
college/university?	c
other (please specify)?	d

8 Is the institution, you teach in, run by : (please ring the appropriate letter):

the government?	a
some private organisation?	b

FAUZIA SHAMIM   23 OCTOBER,1990.

Appendix 6A: Doing a lesson (text)

Classroom observation notes of 'doing a lesson' (4 class hours) in the classroom
of one teacher at site 5

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

5-I-3/CO 1

Class: VIII

Date: 25.11.92

No. of students present: Missing data

Topic for the day: 'The Nobel Prize' - a reading passage from the prescribed textbook

The students are in class VIII (third year of secondary school). The room is full to capacity with students sitting on dual desks (often three at a desk). The desks are arranged in four rows with narrow pathways in between. Although the windows are open the room is very stuffy. There is a teacher's desk and chair in the front of the room. The teacher has easy access to the blackboard from where she sits.

The students stand up to greet me as I enter the class. I walk to the back of the class and perch precariously on a dual desk, sharing it with two other girls. The desk does not have enough work space for the three of us. Seeing my discomfort in taking notes one of the girls puts her book on her lap.

9.25 The teacher tells the students to take out their books and open them on Page 64. They are also told to take out their 'copies' to write 'words/meanings'. As the students take out their books and exercise books, the teacher writes the title of the lesson on the blackboard - 'The Nobel Prize'. (It is a fairly long reading text from the prescribed textbook, followed by comprehension questions and some (unrelated) grammar exercises.) She elicits the meaning of the title from the class. She starts reading the 'lesson' aloud.
[There is a map of Europe on this page but she does not refer to it.]
She stops now and again to give meanings of difficult words (identified by her) in the reading passage. The teacher selects a student to read from amongst 6 or 7 students in the first two rows who offer to read by raising their hands. The selected student stands up and reads the first paragraph aloud. The teacher corrects her pronunciation and/or prompts by modelling a word or a phrase whenever required.

The teacher reads the same paragraph again stopping after each phrase and sometimes even after a 'difficult' word to translate it into Urdu. All the students follow in their books. The teacher pauses occasionally to write a difficult word and its meaning (in Urdu) on the blackboard which the students copy with great alacrity in their exercise books. As the teacher translates the text, sometimes some students do it with her softly. (I am so uncomfortable sharing a desk with two other girls. There is hardly any elbow space and it's very difficult to write.) Some students put their exercise books on their laps to get more work space to write. The students are very quiet. The students next to me asks her friend where the teacher is reading from. There is complete silence in the classroom. All students seem to be following in the book as the teacher continues to read and translate the text.

A student in the front row is nominated to read again the paragraph just read by the teacher. Another student reads the text. The students are sitting with their heads bent on their books open in front of them. The teacher translates the text and explains in a very mechanical way. She does not have any eye contact with the students. Even if she sometimes looks briefly at some students it is only at the girls in the first two rows. The teacher just looks down at her book when she reads and even when she translates the text. Sometimes some students give meanings of words in Urdu in response to an elicitation by the teacher. There seems to be no problem of discipline in this class. The

girls are very quiet and passive, coming to life only when they copy from the blackboard. Whenever the teacher elicits the meaning of a word about 8-10 students, from the front of the class, volunteer to answer by raising their hands.

The second mistress comes into the classroom and reprimands two students who are responsible for writing the daily attendance record of their class on the board outside the Head's office where the attendance record for each class is written everyday. She warns these girls of dire consequences if they do not do it first thing in the morning next time. As the teacher continues with the reading of the text the students sit very quietly. A student in the front row is nominated to read and the teacher corrects her pronunciation. However, she looks down into her book all the time. The procedure continues till the end of the class hour. During this time the students continue to sit passively, with their heads down, listening (apparently!) and copying mechanically, it seems to me, from the blackboard. All students have their books open in front of them. Most of the time there is complete silence in the classroom. A student asks for permission to go out as she is not feeling well.

The students in the back row often stand up to see the blackboard clearly. I can't see the lower half of the blackboard from where I am sitting at the back of the classroom. The teacher, whenever she addresses the students, seems to focus on the girls in the front rows only. She has read a page and a half of the reading passage and given meanings of 22 words uptil now. The teacher goes at break neck speed. [I think she wants to complete the lesson before the half-yearly exams beginning next week.]

9.50 The bell rings.

[The teacher read and translated the text in the same level tone (doing a job, it seemed) without worrying too much about trying to establish any kind of rapport with the students. The students seemed to be familiar with this procedure and fully conversant with classroom rules. No instructions were given by the teacher and no clarifications required by the students. There seemed to be perfect harmony between the teacher and the students. As the teacher continued with the lesson in her 'robot-like' manner I had to make a real effort to keep myself awake. The teacher made no effort to make eye contact with the learners. In fact, she kept her eyes glued to the book both while reading and translating the text.]

5-I-2/CO 2

Date: 25.11.92
(Continuation of the morning's lesson on the same day in the 5th period after recess.)

11.45 There are still a lot of students in the ground outside. In the class the students are still busy settling down. The teacher starts reading but realises that the students are not ready and pauses for a minute to allow the class to settle down. The teacher continues reading from where she left it off in the last period this morning.

A student is nominated to read and the teacher corrects her pronunciation as she reads. A student peeps through the window looking for a girl. Then she comes into the room (the teacher gives her permission to do so with a nod of her head without stopping the lesson), talks to two girls quietly and goes out. Two more students walk in (after getting the teacher's permission in the same way as before) and talk to a girl in the front row. The teacher's circle of eye contact is a few girls in the front of the class only. Two more students come in and ask for a girl. She jumps out of her seat at the back of the class and goes out of the class with them with the teacher's permission.

Several students in the back row stand up to see the blackboard to copy down the words and meanings from the blackboard. [The teacher carries on the lesson like a robot

programmed to read and translate in a monotonous level tone. She keeps her eyes on her book all the time.] The students do not seem to be paying attention when she reads (though all of them look down into their books) but everyone takes down the words/meanings from the blackboard very assiduously. Another student comes into the classroom and talks to the teacher. The teacher continues with the lesson in the same way. [There is a noise of whistling from outside. Also there is a lot of noise in the compound.] The student who had gone out a while ago comes back with a pile of exercise books which she takes with her to her seat. The teacher reads the text following it with her finger in the book. She sometimes pauses to ask some questions which she often answers herself. It seems she doesn't expect the students to answer the questions [or perhaps she doesn't want to waste time].

The student next to me underlines a number of words in her book. She is very shy and reticent and with great hesitation tells me her name. All the students sit passively with their eyes on their books in front of them and are listening to the teacher apparently. The student next to me follows in her book as the teacher reads the text. There is complete silence in the classroom. [Is it the effect of my presence?] It is very seldom that one or two students talk briefly, and very quietly, to their neighbours. The student next to me looks very dull and uninterested. I wonder if she is actually listening to the teacher. All students sit without any expressions on their faces. The teacher doesn't ask the students to read aloud as was done this morning. She is in a hurry to complete the lesson [she says so a couple of times during the lesson and also mentions it later during her interview] and therefore does not want to waste time in making the students read aloud first.

The bell rings. The teacher writes more words and meanings on the blackboard and everyone immediately gets busy in copying them down. Several student at the back stand up to see the blackboard.

5-I-3/CO 3

Class: VIII

Date: 26.11.91

No. of students present: 72 out of 93 students.

9.30 The teacher comes in a little late and apologises to me. She tells me she was busy in the office.
[While we were waiting for the teacher I took the opportunity to introduce myself to the class and explain the purpose of my visit.]

The teacher starts reading out the exercises following the reading passage that was read yesterday. A few students answer, more from guess work it seems, than any real understanding of the questions or the text. The teacher translates the statements into Urdu. As some students answer, the students in the back row try very hard to listen to these answers in order to mark them in their books.

The Head walks into the classroom and asks all those students to stand up who are not in 'proper' uniform. She scolds the students for not being particular about wearing the correct uniform. As she sees me sitting at the back of the class, she leaves the class after warning them, 'Because you have a visitor, I'll deal with you later'. She tells the teacher to send all the miscreants to her office after this period.

The teacher continues with the lesson from where she had left it almost as if there had been no interruption at all. As soon as the teacher confirms or gives the right answer to a question, the girls next to me mark it quickly in their books. They seem to do it almost mechanically. The students in the last few rows don't even make an effort to answer.

Neither does the teacher encourage them or wait for them to do so. As soon as a student from the front rows gives the answer, the teacher confirms it by repeating it out aloud for the rest of the class and all the students try to mark it in their books quickly. Sometimes the student next to me answers in a soft voice which the teacher doesn't hear. The teacher goes at break neck speed. The next exercise (matching words with their synonyms) is done in the same way. Similarly, for the next exercise the teacher reads out the words from the list and 8-10 students shout out the correct antonyms from the given list. Sometimes the teacher stops to give the meaning of a word in Urdu. She moves to the next exercise. One of the students at the back has the answers already marked in her book. She tells me she is using her brother's book from last year. A student comes in with a message. The teacher carries on with the lesson.

9.45 The bell rings.

5-I-3/ CO 4

Class: VIII A

Date: 27.11.91

No. of students present: 76 out of 93 students

9.20: The students are settling down, taking out their books and copies. [No classes are being held upstairs today as the students are busy cleaning their classrooms for the annual school inspection on the 30th.] The teacher announces: 'page 71' and immediately begins to do the exercises from the textbook. (These exercises are a continuation of the exercises done in the previous class). One student answers. The teacher calls out the number of each word in a sentence in the exercise: 'Rearrange the words in correct sentences'. She continues with this procedure for all the sentences in the exercise. [There is a lot of noise in the corridor outside. Some students are cleaning the compound. Others are putting up charts on the notice board outside the Head's office.] A student comes in to talk to the teacher. The teacher talks to her briefly and continues with the lesson without any break. Sometimes a few students ask the teacher to repeat the answer which she does as: 'he, no.4; received, no.5; the, no.6; Nobel, no.7', etc.

The students are told they will also get dictation in their half yearly exams scheduled to begin from the third of December. The teacher sits down at her desk in front of the class after completing the exercise. She now gives the students the syllabus for the exams. I can't see her or hear her clearly from where I am sitting at the back of the class. The teacher announces the syllabus: 'Translation from English to Urdu - any paragraph from your textbook; Urdu to English translation of sentences in different tenses'. She gives an example of this question type. The students next to me (in the back row) are bending down closely over their books. The student next to me is busy writing something in her book. I wonder if she is listening to the teacher at the same time. I don't think so. Now she seems to be reading something in her book very intently.

The teacher continues to give more question types which they need to prepare for the exams:
T: A question type will be: 'Do as directed' as in the matric exams (she explains). She writes various examples on the blackboard such as:
I read a book. (Negative)

[It is very dusty in the classroom.]

The teacher does a few more examples on the blackboard.
The student next to me tells me that she can't see the blackboard but she is trying to understand by listening to the teacher. On one of the side walls I can see a complete essay written on 'Hockey', probably as preparation for the forthcoming exams.

The teacher continues to tell them the topics for the half yearly exams.

T: There will be a question on the three forms of verb, e.g., put, put , put.

All the students are looking very attentively at the teacher. The teacher points to some common mistakes (e.g., 'good-gooder-goodest') and comments on them. Several students in the back row stand up to see the blackboard. The teacher tells them not to copy down everything but just to listen to her and try and understand the pattern of the questions.

I talk briefly to the student next to me. She confesses that she can't follow the teacher as she can't see the blackboard. She is quite short. She tells me that she sits at the back because there in no place in the front. When I ask her if she has talked to the teacher about her problem, i.e inability to see the blackboard from the back, she says that she is afraid of the teacher scolding her.

The teacher continues giving examples of exam questions on the blackboard:

> They are eating mangoes. (Future)

A student peeps through the window and talks to the student in front of me. Everyone seems to be very attentive. Two students talk to the girl outside through the open window occasionally glancing in the direction of the teacher. Despite my height (compared to other girls in the classroom) I can't see the lower half of the blackboard. [The teacher doesn't stop to ask the students at the back whether they are following her or not or even if they can see the blackboard.]

More sample questions are written on the blackboard. For example:
> Letter asking for rupees 100 and some essays.

The student next to me shows me two letters written in her exercise book dated 21.11.91 and 23.11.91. She tells me that they were given to them by the teacher. After the teacher finishes giving the exam syllabus she calls some students to her desk to check their copies. Immediately there is a buzz in the classroom as the students begin to talk to each other.

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Appendix 6B (1-6):   Doing a lesson (text)

Classroom observation notes of 11 lessons in varying size classes
of six teachers at different sites

Appendix 6.B.1

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

6-I-1/CO 5

Class: IX

Date: 8.1.92

No. of students present: 53 out of 74 students

Topic for the day: ' 'The Role of Women in Pakistan Movement' - a reading text from the prescribed textbook

9.05 The teacher tells the class, 'You left a very bad impression on Miss Fauzia in the last period yesterday'. (Yesterday one of the teachers was absent; Shahida had invited me to come to her class in the 8th period also, which was a 'broken' period.)[1]

She reminds them that she had asked them to bring their textbooks today and tells them to stand up if they don't have them now. She goes around the class to check if everyone has got their books. As she finds each culprit she slaps the boy lightly and tells him to stand facing the wall in the front of the classroom. She punishess some more students by telling them to stand in different corners at the back of the class. The student sitting next to me shows a great interest in me and wants to know several things about me including why I come to their class everyday. He complains that they don't get an opprtunity to talk to me as I leave their class soon after it is over. When I suggest that he should ask me whatever he wants in class only, he says that he doesn't do so because his friends will laugh at him later.

The teacher starts reading the 'lesson' and gives the meanings of difficult words as she reads. She reads the text while walking between two rows, [instead of standing in front of the class, which seems to be the norm in other classrooms]. The students follow it in their books. All the students sit with their heads bent on their books. The student sitting next to me follows the text in his book with a pen. The teacher continues to read while walking around the classroom at the same time. She tells Rashid to read the same paragraph again. He reads at a fast pace while the teacher continues to walk around the class monitoring the students. If he falters at any word, she helps him by modelling that word for him. There is pin drop silence in the classroom. The teacher nominates Nadeem as the next reader. She prompts him as he reads haltingly. She tells him he is not reading well today. She asks Ali if he would like to read. He says no. One student volunteers. The student next to me also raises his hand hesitantly. The teacher selects the first student and encourages him constantly as he reads. The students who were punished stand quietly in their corners as the teacher continues to walk up and down the classroom in the narrow pathways between different rows.

The teacher reads the reading passage again from the beginning and translates it at the same time, often phrase by phrase. She goes at a very fast pace. As she comes across some verbs she stops to remind the students about their 2nd and 3rd forms etc. All the students listen in silence. They all have their eyes glued to their books which are open in front of them. The teacher stops and asks them the meaning of a sentence she has just

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[1]There were 9 periods for English per week. The six 'regular' periods were held at 'prime time', i.e., before recess while the three periods called 'broken' periods were usually the second last or the last period. The 'broken' peiords were used mostly for correction work by the teacher or the stuents were given some written work to do. I was not encouraged to visit the classes during the 'broken' periods in any school visited.

translated. She tells them she is asking them to check if they are listening or not. Waseem answers correctly. She tells him non-verbally to sit down. She elicits the opposite of 'majority' from the students and tells them they can get it in their exams. Only Rashid volunteers by raising his hand. After surveying briefly all the students in the class, she decides to provide the answer herself and then continues with reading aloud the text and translating it. As she walks around reading, there is complete silence [discipline] in the classroom.

She stops momentarily to elicit the meaning of 'struggle' reminding the students that they have met this word before. She asks them a question:
T: What did they struggle for?
A student comes in to call Mohsin. The teacher asks the boys if there is someone in this class of that name. (She obviously does not know all the students by name.) A student identifies himself as Mohsin and goes out.
T: When was Pakistan established?
Three students raise their hands.
T: Kashif?
Kashif: 1947
The teacher tells him to say it in a complete sentence. She nominates Waseem to do the same task and helps him by telling him to look for the answer on the first page in the lesson.

[I'm sitting at the back of the class next to the window and I can hear a student reading aloud in the next classroom.]

The teacher nominates a student, 'You' and signals to him that he should read the answer from the book. She tells him to repeat the answer loudly. The teacher models a word for him and he repeats it after her a couple of times. Ali raises his hand. She asks the class if there is any problem with understanding the paragraph and moves on to the next paragraph without waiting for their answer. The student next to me is following the lesson in his book. The majority of the students turn the page noisily as the teacher finishes reading a page. The students who are punished try to communicate with each other non-verbally, sometimes stealing a glance in my direction also. The teacher nominates a student in the 2nd row to read. He reads haltingly and the teacher helps him by modelling words for him. She points to another student nominating him to read next. He doesn't know where to read from. The teacher reprimands him, 'That is why I asked you because I knew that you were not looking at your book'. She asks him, 'You are a new admission? Where have you come from'? The student replies: 'Punjab'.
T: Didn't you read in your last school?
Next Kashif is nominated again. She tells him to read carefully. She models the pronunciation of a word for him and tells him to repeat it after her, after spelling it first. A student prompts him from behind. The teacher decides to read herself and the students follow in their books. All of them sit with their heads bent on their books. There is complete silence in the classroom as the teacher reads and translates the text.

9.25 Some students are beginning to get restless. The teacher pauses in her reading, repeats a sentence she just read and asks a student, 'In what tense is this sentence'? She translates the question into Urdu. The student answers incorrectly. The teacher explains the task to him again. This time he answers correctly. The teacher asks him further short questions, e.g., 'How do you know it is in the 2nd form?' She repeats the rule for identifying the tense for the whole class. She advises the students to think about it and also to consider how it is translated. The student next to me had also mumbled the answer earlier.

The teacher continues to read pausing now and again to ask short questions such as, 'In comparison to what'?
Some students answer together: Hindu women.
T: 'In spite of'? You have heard it before in the lesson on Helen Keller.

A student self selects to answer but does it incorrectly. The teacher nominates Waseem and tells him to repeat the answer. Then Rashid is nominated, though three other students had also raised their hands.

T: Now tell me the meaning of 'forward'. You use forward in the tape recorder.

As the teacher ends the class the students begin to talk.

6-I-1/CO 8

Class: IX

Date: 12.1.92

No. of students present: 54 out of 74 students

Topic of the day: "Eng (Text) Q. Ans. The Role of Women in Pakistan Movement."

9.03 The students stand up as I enter the class. The teacher tells the students to vacate a seat for me. She tells the student next to me to move to the front and explains to me she wants him to sit closer to her. She writes on the blackboard:

Eng (text) Q. Ans. The role of Women in Pakistan.

The student in front of me is doing some other work. Waheed who had changed his place to sit next to me for the last couple of days has moved back to his place. Obviously Waheed's curiosity about me and the purpose of my visit seems to have been satisfied. The class looks very overcrowded today.

(I had spent a few minutes yesterday with the class on the teacher's request, introducing myself and telling them about my research. The teacher told me that they asked her about me everyday and she thought it would be better for me to answer all their questions myself rather than her telling them about me.).

T: Question 1 is on page 54.
She walks around the class instructing the students to open their books. At the same time she reads out the question to the class. She tells them she will only write the answers on the blackboard and that they should copy down the questions from the textbook themselves. She warns them not to submit their copies with blank spaces (which they presumably leave for the question when they copy the answers from the blackboard). Kashif has also changed his place today, I wonder why.
T: Who will give me the answer?
Several students give the answer correctly which the teacher writes on the blackboard.

9.07 The students begin to copy down the answer from the blackboard. As the teacher writes the answer to the first question on the blackboard the student behind me reads it out softly to himself. He tells his friend to start copying as he gets ready to write himself. He takes a pen from his friend and starts writing.
A student asks, 'Miss, what is X - was the mother of'?
The teacher reads out the complete answer. There is an air of busy work in the classroom as the students copy intently from the blackboard. As the teacher completes writing the answers, I notice that the student next to me hasn't even started copying as yet. He is still getting ready, turning pages of his exercise book. The teacher changes the spelling of 'sacrifice' (written correctly) to 'sacrifyse'. She asks the class if they have copied down [likh lia he] the answer to question number one. She asks Saleem where he was for the last two days. A student checks the spelling of a word with the teacher. She urges him to hurry up. She nominates Waseem to read out question number two. Other students are still busy copying.

Some students request the teacher to move from in front of the blackboard. The teacher listens to Waseem as he reads out the next question from the book while the majority of the students are busy copying. She reads out question number two again and goes to the blackboard to write the answer. As she erases the first two lines on the blackboard some students protest. There is a low murmur in the classroom and the teacher tells them to work quietly. The student next to me has only copied a couple of lines whereas Kashif in front of me is writing [copying] very seriously.

A student wants to know, 'Miss, is it the answer to the third question'? The teacher tells them she is continuing the same answer from the bottom of the blackboard.

The teacher writes the answers on the blackboard without the help of any notes, just using the information in the textbook. All students are busy copying. They look very active. A student asks the teacher if he can take her bench to sit on while writing. Two more students move up to the teacher's desk [bench] in the front (in fact they run to get a place). Students help each other in reading the answers from the blackboard and spellings etc. A student asks the teacher, 'What's that word in the corner of the blackboard'? She spells out the word for him. She reminds him that she gave them the meaning of this word yesterday. She asks Rashid to give the meaning now. She cleans the blackboard and several students look around asking each other if they have copied it down or not. The teacher reprimands Nasir (he tells her his name is   Shahid and not Nasir) for not writing [copying] in his exercise book but only scribbling on a piece of paper. Even Kashif was not able to copy the complete answer which the teacher has erased from the blackboard. A student from the back goes to the front and sits on his feet as he copies down from the blackboard.

The teacher starts writing the answer to question number three. All students get busy copying it down once again. This seems to be real work for them as everyone looks very active. The comments of students to their friends and neighbours are also work related, for e.g., 'What's the word after X'?

A student in the front calls 'Miss' and stands up to get the teacher's attention. The teacher reads out question three and then the answer she has written on the blackboard. The students continue to copy from the blackboard very diligently.

9.20 The teacher goes to the blackboard to complete writing the previous answer. After she finishes writing it she walks around the classroom monitoring the students. She goes back to the blackboard and erases a part of the blackboard without confirming from the students whether they have copied down what she is erasing or not. She begins to write the answer to the next question. She stops to read out the question (number four) and elicits the answer from the students. Three students volunteer to answer by raising their hands. One of them is selected and he answers correctly. A student yawns as the teacher turns her back to write on the blackboard. The class is alive with an air of activity as students copy from the blackboard.

The teacher reads out question number five but is interrupted by a student who wants to know the spelling of a word on the blackboard. She reads question number five again and then nominates a student to read the same while Kashif volunteers by raising his hand. The teacher translates the question into Urdu and Kashif answers it. She tells him to repeat the answer and praises him for answering correctly, 'except you used 'take',' she points out to him. She refers the class to the use of 'did' in the question and tells them that in such a case they should also use the 2nd form of the verb in the answer. A student tells the teacher that her spelling of a word on the blackboard is different from what it is in the book.. She tells him to look in the book and correct her if she hasn't written the correct spelling.

The student in front of me tells his friend to keep quiet and not to disturb him. The teacher reads out the answer to question number five from the blackboard and then walks around to check if everyone is working or not. All students are copying very assiduously but I think they are all doing it quite mechanically. The teacher asks something from a student in the back row. A student asks permission to come in and talks briefly to the

teacher. The students keep craning their necks to see the blackboard clearly. Some stand up occasionally to see the blackboard. The teacher erases the answer to question number three from the blackboard and tells them she will give them short notes now.

9.30 (I can hear the teacher 'teaching' in the next room.)
The teacher draws a line after answer number five on the blackboard and writes: Short notes on Bi Amma. She reminds the class that the question in which they have to write short notes in the exam carries 2 or 3 marks.

The bell rings. She tells them to try doing it themselves for homework, reassuring them, ' [Write] Only four lines'.

Appendix 6.B.2

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

6-I-4/CO 3

Class: VIII C

Date: 3.1.92

No. of students present: 43 out of 57 students

Topic for the day: 'The Nobel Prize' - a reading text from the prescribed textbook

11.05 The teacher tells the students to clean the blackboard and open their books on page 65. She writes 'English' on the blackboard and starts reading the text as students follow it in their books. All students have their books in front of them and sit with their heads bent and with their eyes on their books. All seem to be very attentive, apparently at least.

I ask the student next to me to identify for me in his book the place where the teacher is reading from but he is unable to do so. It seems that he is just following the classroom norm of acceptable behaviour (heads bent and eyes down as the teacher or other students read the text). The teacher nominates Naseem to read. He sits in the second row. He reads in a loud, clear voice. The teacher and all other students follow in their books as he reads. Occasionally the teacher stops him to correct his pronunciation of a word.

(At least six desks in the room are broken. Three students, sitting at a broken desk, rest their books on their laps.)

The teacher nominates Gafoor in the front row to read next. As he reads she stands in front of the class, following it in her book, but also keeping an eye on the rest of the class. In between she reprimands different students frequently for not paying attention. At the same time she also prompts the student as he reads hesitantly, sometimes modelling words and even phrases for him. All students sit very quietly. I can see a student following in his book with his finger. The teacher nominates Uzair in the front row to continue reading. All students read one paragraph each. There is complete silence in the class. All students look down into their books. Even the student next to me seems to be paying close attention. Kamran in the front row is nominated next. As he hesitates the teacher asks him if he has read it at home. He says 'No' very quietly. Without pursuing it further or wasting any more time the teacher makes a general solicit for volunteers from the class, particularly focussing on the students at the back of the class 'Why are all of you so quiet?' Apparently she doesn't expect a response to her question but only means it as a warning to the students at the back to pay attention, for she promptly nominates a student from the front row to continue reading. Another student volunteers. He is selected and the teacher tells the student who was nominated earlier: 'Let him read first.' She corrects him as he reads. All students continue to look into their books. The teacher wants to know why the other children have not read it at home. She warns them that tomorrow everyone will be asked to read aloud.

(Later she told me that she tells all the students, a day before doing the lesson in class to read it at home. She confessed that very few children actually read it at home. However she said that she continued to emphasise it as she wanted the children to be mentally ready, at least, to read that lesson in class.)

She notices a student who is engaged in some other work and walks over to him and slaps him lightly on the head. Soon after, she begins to read the same text herself from the beginning. She reads the first sentence and stops to ask Naseem to translate it into

Urdu. He does the task. The teacher reads the second sentence and nominates another student to translate it. As he is unable to do the task she opens it to the whole class asking for bids: 'Anyone else?' When no one volunteers she nominates Shahid who does it haltingly. She encourages him as he seems to be making an effort to do the task. She continues to read herself stopping briefly to elicit the meaning of 'started' from the students as she comes across this word in the text. Several students call out the meaning in Urdu in a low voice. She repeats the meaning and nominates Naseem to translate the next sentence. Apparently she is satisfied with his answer as she immediately allocates the next turn to Arif.

T: Arif, next line.

She encourages Arif to answer. She continues with the lesson in the same manner at a brisk pace, occasionally stopping to elicit the meaning of a word from the class (nominated SS). She nominates Shams in the front row to answer. Another student, Jamal, volunteers and is selected to answer with a brief instruction to Shams: 'Shams, sit down'. Jamal does not answer correctly and Naseem self selects to answer. His answer is partially correct, as is evident from her brief comment. She deflects the question back to Shams who answers it correctly.

11.15 The bell rings. The teacher continues with the lesson reading the lesson line by line and asking students to translate the text. A student who is selected to answer from those who volunteer, is reminded: 'You should only say what is written in the text.' Naseem and then Shams are nominated to answer. Both of them answer correctly, it seems, as she moves on immediately to allocate the next turn after they answer.

She apologises to the class [or me, I wonder!] : 'We couldn't do much today as I got late but tomorrow we will complete the lesson '[reading of the text].

6-I-4/CO 4

Class VIII C

Date: 8.1.92

No. of students present: 40 out of 57 students

10.50 Some students are still in the ground outside. (This period is immediately after recess.) As the students come in the teacher tells them in a stern tone to come back to class on time.

The teacher announces: 'Page 65'.

(There is a lot of noise and running around in the corridor outside.)

T: Where do we have to read from?
A few students: Third 'para'.
A student is standing waiting for the teacher to find out where to read from. Two more students come in. One student begins to read the text. The teacher tells the other students where he is reading from. She urges them to find the correct place in their books quickly.

She nominates Naseem and tells the class, 'Now Naseem will read loudly'.
Two students are talking to their friends outside the window. Two more students come in. (The noise and the running and shouting of boys continues outside.) Two more students come in. The teacher tells them to stand outside as punishment for coming late. She goes out to reprimand them.

The teacher reads the text. Another student wants to come in. The teacher tells him to stand outside also. The teacher reads and translates the text. (The noise outside subsides somewhat, but the two students are still engaged in conversation outside the window.)

A student raises his hand. The teacher spots a student who is trying to communicate with another boy outside the classroom through the open window and sends him out of the classroom as punishment. She selects the student who raised his hand earlier. He translates the sentences which the teacher has just read. S3 raises his hand volunteering to translate the text further. The teacher keeps a vigilant eye on the students and is very alert to any signs of misbehaviour. Another student raises his hand and is selected, 'Yes, Kamran'.

He gives the translation of the next sentence in the text.

T: Naseem, you.

Naseem gives the translation of the next sentence. The students seem to be very familiar with this procedure. As soon as the teacher looks up after reading a sentence two or three hands shoot up immediately volunteering to translate the next sentence. Jamal is nominated and he answers correctly, which the teacher repeats for the whole class.

T: Next line?

She looks around the class briefly and then nominates Naseem. He reads from the wrong place and the teacher corrects him. Another student stands up to translate. The teacher points to a word and tells them, 'I've already given you this word'.

T: Yes, Gafoor.

As he reads the teacher corrects him.

T: What does it mean?

Kamran volunteers to answer by raising his hand. The teacher selects him to answer, 'Yes, Kamran'. He answers. The teacher repeats the answer but he continues standing [He is not sure of the answer, I think.]. The teacher tells him to sit down.

She makes a general solicit, 'Next'.

As no one volunteers she is annoyed, 'You haven't read it at home'. She nominates Naseem but then points to another student, 'You tell me'.

Three students in the front row raise their hands as he answers.

T: Good, carry on. complete the line.

(The two boys are still standing outside the class deep in conversation. All students have their books open in front of them. They look into their books as the teacher reads and translates the text.

T: Next. Naseem.

[It seems the teacher is carrying on the lesson with the help of three or four bright students in the class only.]

The noise outside subsides.

The teacher continues reading and nominating students to translate. The lesson goes at a very brisk pace. Sometimes she just nominates the students non verbally. She nominates Kamran, 'Yes, Kamran'. But before he can answer another student self-selects to answer. The teacher tells Kamran to sit down. However she tells him that he can read after Naseem has translated the sentence. The student begins to read haltingly. The teacher nominates Naseem to continue reading. He reads a sentence and then translates it into Urdu. She tells him to continue reading.

11.05 The teacher tells the class to take out their 'words/meanings copy' and warns them at the same time, 'What we've read today, I'll asks you to translate it into Urdu tomorrow'. The students begin to talk quietly as they take out their exercise books and get ready to copy the word list which the teacher has started writing on the blackboard. The students get busy drawing margins, looking for their pens etc. Some students have started writing [copying from the blackboard].

11.08 There is an an air of busy work in the room as all the students settle down to copying from the blackboard. There is complete silence in the classroom and all students seem to be working very hard, copying assiduously from the blackboard. The teacher is writing on the blackboard with her back towards the students but there seems to be no need to monitor them at this stage. The students seem to be very familiar with this work routine and fall into it without any hassle. They look very active. Some students stand up occasionally to see the blackboard. The teacher has already written 11 words with their meanings on the blackboard and is still writing some more.

11.10 The students who were sent out of the class earlier peep into the classroom occasionally through the window. (The door is closed.) There is a low murmur in the classroom but it seems to be related to the work they are doing. All students look very serious and seem to be actively involved in the task of copying words and their meanings from the blackboard. A student asks the teacher for some clarification. The teacher explains it to him, mainly, but she also tries to involve the other students by glancing at them occasionally as she explains.

T: Any other word?

A student stands up to ask the meaning of 'very well'. Two students give the meaning. The teacher announces to the class, 'We have to finish this lesson tomorrow'. It seems she has done the work she had planned for the day. Now she assigns home work, 'What I've done today, translate it into Urdu for home work'. She stands looking idly at the book, then asks the students: 'Have you finished'?

A mixture of 'Yes, Miss' and 'No, Miss' can be heard.

T: Take out your translation copies and begin to translate this para into Urdu'.

She urges the students to hurry up. A student wants to know, 'Miss, text copy'?

She asks the class, 'I want to know if you have understood or not'.

(It seems she hasn't heard him.) Another student wants to know which paragraph they have to translate.

The teacher tells the class again pointing to the page number in the book.

[The students don't seem to be interested in me at all.]

The teacher walks around to check if the students have taken out their exercise books urging them to begin their work quickly.

11.15 The teacher goes out briefly to check the students outside. As the students copy from the blackboard they ask each other talking quietly. However, there is still an air of busy work in the classroom. All the students seem to be making an effort, at least, to do the task.

The teacher tells Asif that his name will be 'cut'. The teacher asks the class if they know the boys who have been standing outside their class. A student tells her they are Asif's friends. The teacher warns Asif not to call such rude and insolent friends to school again. She talks to him in a very stern tone. She asks him where he lives. Other students listen quietly to this exchange between the teacher and Asif.

T: Do you have your father? What does he do? Bring him tomorrow.

She tells Zubair to ensure that he doesn't come to class again till he has brought his father. (She is also their class teacher.) The teacher urges them to hurry up with their work. She goes to Naseem to check his work and comments on it briefly as she checks it. She walks around the classroom checking some other students' work.

T: (scolding a student in the back row) You haven't done anything. All the bad students sit in the back row.

Most of the students in the back row have not started working as yet. There is complete silence in the classroom.

She asks Zubair, who is probably the class monitor, (in this school the monitors don't wear a badge or any other identification mark) if some children left the class while Miss Shani was still in class the other day. She asks for a list of their names. She warns Asif again, 'I'll take you to the headmaster'. Zubair gives her the list of names. She hands it back to him telling him to give it to her tomorrow in the first period.

11.22 The teacher stands in front of the class monitoring the students as they work very quietly.

T: (addressing the class in general) If you don't know any meanings, ask me.

A student asks her something and she goes close to him to answer. She stands watching over them with a no-nonsense look. As the students work there is complete order and discipline in the classroom. No one can be seen looking around as the teacher stands watching over them. She asks Zubair if any child ran away [left the school before the end

of the day] yesterday. She admonishes Kamran in a loud voice and wants to know why he doesn't work at home any more. She asks him, 'What have you failed in'?
She tells the students, 'Some of you should show me your work'.
She stops next to Naseem to talk to him briefly. He has finished his work and shows it to the teacher.

11.25 The teacher urges the students once again to start doing their work (if they haven't started doing it already).

She signals to me that the class has ended.

6-I-4/CO 5

Class: VIII C

Date: 13.1.92

No. of students present: Missing data

As we enter the class a boy is painting the blackboard. The teacher waits for the students to settle down.
T: Page 67, exercise (...)
The students take out their books. She nominates Naseem to read out exercise A. She reads out the first sentence again. Some students answer, 'T'.
T: What's 'T'? Raise your hands.
A student in the front row stands up to read out the sentence and says, 'True'. (It's a true and false exercise.)
The teacher confirms that it is correct and asks, 'No. 3'?. A student in the back row reads out the sentence and says 'false'. The teacher confirms the answer. The next sentence is done by a student in the front row. The students raise their hands for each question (sentence) and the teacher selects the students sometimes by calling their names and at others non-verbally only.
She nominates Naseem before anyone gets a chance to volunteer, 'No.6, Naseem'. Then, 'Next, Shahid'. [The student who was painting the blackboard is still busy doing it.]
T: Gafoor.
He reads the next sentence and the teacher confirms by repeating it. Another student is nominated. She addresses the students at the back, 'Why are you so quiet'? and calls on Mairaj. He stands up but is unable to answer. She moves to the next student, 'Jamal'. He answers correctly. She reprimands Mairaj and nominates another student who also answers correctly.

T: Exercise B. Naseem, read the exercise.
She repeats the sentences he has read and tells him to give the answer.
As he hesitates, some students offer, 'Miss, b'. The teacher looks for the answer in the book [it doesn't seem to be correct] and then asks Shahid. He doesn't respond. She decides to provide the answer herself.

11.05 Mairaj is nominated once again. He answers correctly and is told to sit down. The lesson is carried on at a brisk pace. She admonishes the students at the back of the class: 'Why is it that only students in the front answer'?
She continues with the same procedure. Different students (mostly from the front of the class) volunteer and are selected as answerers.
T: Mairaj?
He answers, 'a'. She tells him to read it out. He doesn't respond and she moves on to the next sentence.
She again reprimands the students at the back for not answering the questions. She calls on Jamal and he reads the next sentence. The students in front are discussing the answers

with each other quietly. Five students raise their hands. She selects Maqbool from the front row. A number of students answer together, 'Miss, b'.

The teacher accepts the answer and moves on to the next exercise, 'Okay, exercise C. Naseem, what do we have to do'?

He reads out the instructions.

The teacher nominates another student, 'You'. She tells him to tell her his name first. She moves on immediately to the next question. She is going at a very brisk pace eliciting answers from different students. Students in the first two rows are participating very actively and bid to answer the questions while students at the back usually wait for the answer to be provided either by students in the front or the teacher and then mark it in their books, almost mechanically, it seems. When several students give different answers and the teacher is unsure she asks Naseem to confirm the answer.

T: Why are students at the back quiet?

[She seems to be conscious of the fact that the students at the back are not participating at all.]

11.10 The student who was painting the blackboard asks the teacher if he can go out to wash his hands.

Even before she can say 'next', several students have raised their hands.

T: Exercise D.

Shahid is nominated and he says, 'Miss, No.3'. She tells him to read out the sentence. The answers are mostly given as, 'No.3', No. 5' etc. The student next to me quickly marks the number of the answer in his textbook.

Naseem is nominated. The teacher walks to the back of the classroom and looks around. She asks Abbas in the back row and he answers correctly. She nominates another student from the back row to answer the next question and he says, 'No.10'. She tells him to read the sentence. The attention of all the students is focussed on him and some offer to read the sentence by raising their hands. As he can't do so (presumably he was prompted earlier) the teacher reprimands him for not working.

She asks him, 'Why didn't you study at home? How will you feel if I have to beat you - such grown up boys'? He gives the right answer (which has most probably been supplied to him) and sits down with a triumphant grin.

T: Naseem, read out the sentences in order.

She tells the students to number the words in the exercise in their textbooks. All students have their books open in front of them and seem to be listening intently for the answers.

Seven students volunteer (out of which six are in the front two rows). One student is selected and answers correctly. [I suspect he already has the answers marked in his book.]

The teacher wants to know again, 'Why aren't students at the back answering'?

She nominates a student in the back row. He reads the sentence reordering it correctly and she encourages him. Then Naseem reads the next sentence which is also correct.

T: Shahid, next.

He answers correctly and the teacher confirms, 'It is right'. She also repeats the answer for the whole class. Asif gives the next sentence. The teacher corrects his pronunciation. In answer to the next question several students offer '8' as the answer while some say '9'. The teacher confirms the correct answer as '8'.

T: No.11. Okay, it is enough for today. We'll do the rest tomorrow. Now take out your copies, write lesson number. Which one?

SS: Ten.

T; Yes, ten. Write the title of lesson and do it neatly (i.e. copy the exercises done orally just now in the fair copies).

The bell rings.

Appendix 6.B.3

Teacher's perception of class size: Very large

5-Il-1/CO 3

Class: VI B

Date: 2.3.92

No. of students present in class: 59 out of 75 students

Topic for the day: A poem from the prescribed textbook

11.20 The class has moved from the corridor to a classroom next to the staff room. The teacher is trying to solve a dispute between two students. This classroom is much smaller than their previous classroom (where I observed their classes during phase 1). The students greet me profusely as I enter the classroom. The teacher tells them to take out their writing copies and green or black markers.

The desks are arranged closely together almost to the front wall of the classroom. There is hardly any space for the teacher even in the front of the classroom.

The teacher writes the heading on the blackboard. She tells them how to copy it in their exercise books explaining the format on the blackboard. Students have their books open in front of them. The teacher holds up an exercise book and tells them where to write the heading. She tells them to write it with a green or black marker.

The teacher begins to read the text on page 76 phrase by phrase, which the students repeat in chorus following her model. (It's a poem for recitation in the prescribed textbook.) Then she translates the same and the students once again repeat after her as earlier.   The teacher draws four columns on the blackboard. She reads out the poem again with the students repeating after her in chorus as before. However, this time she pauses now and again to write 'difficult' words and their meanings in Urdu on the blackboard.
e.g.
wants chahna

T: Wants means 'chahna'.
Students repeat after her with rhythmic unity and with a lot of gusto and enthusiasm. She keeps writing words and meanings on the blackboard and modelling them for the students. The students seem to enjoy this activity very much.

[The poem is about a small girl crossing the road. However, the teacher makes no effort to relate it to how the girls cross the road and what they should do before crossing a road in real life. Also there are two pictures related to the text on the same page in the textbook but the teacher does not refer to them at any point before or after reading the text.]

By now there are more than 10 words written on the blackboard. All students have their books open in front of them. The students at the back discuss how to form the shape of /h/ as they copy down the word list from the blackboard. The teacher tells them to write [copy] it neatly in their exercise books. She tells the class that in the meantime, i.e. during the time the students are copying from the blackboard, she will go around checking their previous work. Several students from different parts of the room urge the teacher to start from where they are. She starts checking from the front left hand corner of the class. She spots a number of girls sitting very crowded together and looking uncomfortable and looks around the room for a vacant place for them. Naheed is sitting in the 2nd last row today.

11.33 The teacher, as she goes around the class checking different students' work, stops to talk individually to a girl asking after her mother's health. The students seem to take a lot of interest in their work. The teacher doesn't have to discipline them or tell them to keep quiet. They all seem to have settled down to work [copying from the blackboard] without any hassle. They all look very active and alive taking keen interest in what they are doing. The students next to me has also started writing after drawing the margins and writing the heading. As the teacher goes around the class the students stand up to show her their work and get it checked. She comments on each student's work as she checks it. There is an air of busy activity in the classroom. The teacher reprimands several students when she finds out that they have not completed their previous work.

11.38 Some students talk quietly to each other. The student in front of me is still writing the heading before beginning to copy from the blackboard. The teacher is now at the end of the first row. All students seem to be working with great interest. The teacher reprimands a student, as she checks her work, for writing with a pen when she still needs to improve her handwriting. The teacher's comments are mostly on handwriting, formation of letters and neatness of work - the mechanical aspects of writing [probably because this is their first year of learning English and they are learning to write in English]. She tells two students in the back row to go to the front if they can't see the blackboard. A student calls the teacher pointing her attention to an extra /g/ in 'again' on the blackboard. The teacher tells her to go and erase it from the blackboard. She acknowledges her mistake to the class and tells them to rub off the extra /g/ in their exercise books. The student next to me helps the students in the back row by reading out words for them from the blackboard.

11.45 The teacher asks the students to collect their exercise books and hand them over to her. The monitor goes to the teacher requesting her to check her work now. The teacher tells her to collect all the exercise books in the meantime and give them to her.
[Later she asked the monitor to sit with her in the staff room and help her in checking the exercise books.]

Appendix 6.B.4

Teacher's perception of class size: Very large

5-I-2/ CO 5

Class: X A

Date: 28.11.91

No. of students present in class: 55 out of 85 students

Topic of the day: 'The village fair' - a reading text from the prescribed textbook[2]

Even though many students (thirty) are absent today, the students sit huddled close together while leaving the desks at the back vacant.

The teacher goes around the classroom checking the work of the students and whether they have covered their exercise books or not. (They were told to do so the previous day for their annual inspection next week.)
The teacher writes the topic on the blackboard:

> Text: The village fair

A student is told to read the text aloud. She reads the first paragraph and then translates it into Urdu. The rest of the students sit with their heads bent, apparently following it in their books. The teacher reads the same paragraph again, translating it phrase by phrase as she reads. 3-4 students volunteer to read the next paragraph. The teacher nominates Kausar to read next (she sits in the 2nd row and is one of the star students in the class). After this the teacher reads it herself again. [The teacher reads haltingly, pausing almost after every word.] Now about 8 students raise their hands volunteering to continue reading the text. The students are sitting very quietly. Sometimes the teacher stops briefly to elicit meanings from the class, for example:
T: Crowded means ?

Some students mumble the answer in low tones. Several students offer to read. They are all from the first two rows of the class. A student is selected to continue reading after which the teacher reads the same paragraph once again, translating it at the same time. The lesson continues in the same manner. The teacher calls on the students at the back to pay attention, reprimanding them at the same time for being 'sleepy'. She nominates a girl from the 'back' of the class to read.

The same students (from the front of the class) raise their hands each time. The students sit with heads bent over their books. They have glassy looks and seem to be sitting through an ordeal. There is hardly any sign of life in the class except when the students in the front two rows raise their hands bidding for a turn to read the text.

The teacher nominates a girl to read who had not volunteered to do so earlier. As she stands up to read the teacher walks towards her threateningly, and the girl begins to read the wrong paragraph. She was obviously not paying attention. The teacher reprimands a student for writing something when they are supposed to be reading.

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[2]It seems that this is a revision class (though the teacher does not say so at any point during the lesson) as the students already have the words-meanings and questions-answers written down in their fair copies. It is probably being done again today as preparation for the annual inspection, or to leave a good impression on me - an outsider.

[The smooth rhythm of the class seems to be disrupted each time a student from the back of the class is nominated to read the text. It strikes a jarring note as the girls at the back stumble through the text and are scolded by the teacher for not reading correctly.]

The teacher reverts to her earlier procedure of asking selected students in the first two rows to read. It seems definitely easier both for the teacher and the students. As the teacher looks at the girls, most of them try to avoid meeting her eye and bend down further over their books giving the impression of a lot of concentrated attention and hard work.
The teacher once again calls on a student from the back row to read. [This seems more like a control strategy than any real interest in the students at the back of the classroom.]

The peon comes in to call the teacher to the Head's office. She tells him she will come in a few minutes. She asks the monitor if she has brought the plastic cover for the register and her diary and instructs her to cover them quickly as the Head wants to see them. [All this seems to be in preparation for the annual school inspection next week.] As the teacher gets busy with her work she tells Kausar to make the students read [siraf reading kervao, translation naheen]. Kausar nominates the students to read, and plays the role of the teacher by correcting their pronunciation and helping them by modelling the 'difficult' words while they read. Kausar goes to stand close to a student as she reads hesitantly.

Appendix 6.B.5

Teacher's perception of class size: Neither small nor large

2-I-2/CO 3[3]

Class: VII B

Date: 16.10.91

No. of students present: 41 out of 44 students

Topic for the day: "Unit 5 (p. 43)"
(It is a short reading text entitled 'Penguins' from 'Concept', the prescribed textbook for class VII used in a number of English-medium schools. This textbook is of a much higher standard than the textbook prescribed by the Sind textbook board for class VII in government schools.)

8.40 The students are shuffling their books and 'copies'. The teacher sends one student to the staff room to bring their exercise books. As the teacher writes 'Unit 5' on the blackboard a number of students raise their hands volunteering to read aloud the text. Kamal [the bright boy] is sitting in the front row today. A student begins to read. The other students request him to wait a while. The teacher is angry with one of the students and tells the student who self selected himself to read to sit down. She nominates another student to read from the beginning. Other students follow in their books.
T: Is it clear to all of you what she has read? What are they talking about?
SS (together): Birds.
T: Let me explain to you first.
She asks several questions as she explains the meaning of the passage read by the student earlier, for example, 'What birds can't fly'?
She checks from the class, 'All of you know 'swift'.
One student offers, 'For example, eagle'.
T: Yes, very good.
T: Just let me know, is it clear to all of you?
Kamal gets the next turn to read, after which the teacher explains what he has read. She asks the class if they know 'penguins'. She draws the picture of a penguin on the blackboard. The students looks very excited. They all seem to   recognize the bird.
T: Has anyone seen it in real?
Some students: Yes, Miss.
T: Can it fly?
SS: No, Miss.
The students share information with each other and tell the teacher what they know about penguins.
S1: They live in water.
S2: No, on land (etc.).
The teacher explains the meaning of 'handicapped'.

One student at the back takes off his shoes and sits with his feet on the ledge in front of him. I don't think the teacher can see him from her position in front of the class. One student tells the teacher that the meaning of the reading passage is not clear to him.
T: I must explain it from the beginning.
She explains the meaning of the paragraph from the beginning. She explains in English only. (In fact, English is used almost entirely in the classroom both by the teacher and the students.)
The teacher confirms again from the class: 'Is it clear?'

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[3]English is used almost entirely as the language of communication in this classroom.

SS: Yes, Miss.
A number of students volunteer to read. One student is selected and he reads aloud the passage.

9.00 The teacher reads aloud the passage again as she explains it. The students follow in their books. All students have their books open in front of them. They are sitting with their heads bending down on their books. Some more students are nominated to read in a random order.
T: I've explained to you the difference between British and American English in pronunciation and accent. The students offer examples such as 'schedule'.
Kamal: Miss, what do we use in Pakistan?
T: American English [which is not true].
The teacher also explains in Urdu. Two students at the back have the wrong page of the book open in front of them. The students seem to be getting distracted.
T: How does the penguin walk?
One student acts it out. Kamal talks quietly to the teacher. She goes to stand closer to him. The majority of the students seem to have lost interest in the lesson.
The teacher realises this and asks the class: 'Are all of you listening at the back? Yes or No'?
Some students (quietly): No, Miss.
The teacher walks over to a student in the back row and asks him to repeat what she had been explaining. All students look back at him and wait anxiously. The teacher goes to another student in the second last row, and asks loudly: 'Today what is the problem? Why aren't you getting it? You have not given such a good response'.
She decides to change the pattern of organisation of the class and announces: 'We'll do as in poetry. We'll make two sections. Boys in section A, girls in section B. Are you ready?'
One boy complains to the teacher: 'Miss, the girls fight with us.
The teacher rearranges the class telling several students to change places so that all girls sit on the right hand side of the class and all boys are on the left hand side.

[All units in the book start with a 'thought for the week' which is pinned on the notice board in the class. The teacher did not refer to it while beginning the unit today but told me later in her interview that she had tried to use it in her other class for discussion and it had worked very well. She said that next time she would use it in this class also]

There is a lot of excitement in the classroom. [The teacher seems to be very sensitive to the students' lack of response.] The girls invite me to join their side. The teacher draws two columns on the blackboard and calls them 'A' and 'B'. Everyone is suddenly more alive. The teacher explains the rules of the game. She tells them that she will explain first and then one student from each group will have to explain the same thing again.
T: Are you getting it?

9.10 T: Shall I start asking questions?
SS (in a very loud voice): Yes, Miss.
The students sit up on their chairs. The room is vibrating with excitement. The teacher reads out a question and confirms from the students, 'Got it'?
A student from team A stands up to answer the question. Other boys from his group try to prompt him. The teacher gives 5 points to the boys' team. A girl answers the next question. Some boys point the attention of the teacher to Sobia who is trying to look into her book. There is a lot of dispute amongst the two teams over the awarding of points. All girls look around anxiously. They discuss with each other and urge/encourage several members of their team to answer the question. The teacher gives the turn to the boys' team. A lot of students raise their hands offering to answer the question.

9.15 The bell rings. No one pays attention to the bell. The boys complain to the teacher pointing her attention to the score board, 'You haven't given the girls a zero'. As the

teacher cancels a point of the girls' team, there is a lot of protest from the girls. There is a lot of excitement in the classroom.

2-I-2/CO 6

Class: VII B

Date: 21.10.91

No. of students present: 39 out of 44 students

Topic for the Day: "Unit 5 (Comprehension) p. 45"

8.50 The teacher writes the topic for the day on the blackboard. Then she asks the class: 'Everyone ready"?

She revises previous work asking them what they remember. A lot of children bid to answer, raising their hands. All students look very active. S1 stands up from the back row to answer. The teacher asks short questions. A number of students shout out the answers together.

There is someone at the door. The teacher tells the class, 'Excuse me children for a while' and goes to the door. The students talk quietly to each other and look around. The teacher comes back. S3 offers to answer. He makes a lot of effort to do so and when he is at a loss for words to describe it in English, he acts out how a penguin flies. The teacher asks further comprehension questions. The students look for the answers in their books before answering. The teacher writes the answers on the blackboard.

T: Shall we start the next (part of the) lesson?
The students suggest different things.
T: Question one.
Two students raise their hands. More students volunteer to answer. A student in the back row stands up. The teacher asks a student who doesn't know the answer and therefore keeps standing. Another student answers correctly. The teacher reads out question two from the book. A student reads the answer from the book.
The teacher confirms from the students, 'Class'?
SS: No, Miss.
The teacher encourages him to read it again and then elaborates on his answer.

T: Question Three.
The same procedure is repeated for answering this question also. All the students are very vigilant. If a student gives an incorrect answer many students shout out together, 'No, Miss' and offer to give the correct answer instead. Some students stand up, other raise their hands half standing as they bid for a turn. The student who was standing previously gives the correct answer and is told to sit down. A number of students raise their hand offering to answer even before the teacher has read the next question.

There is an interruption as a student comes in. The teacher talks to her quietly for a while and then continues the lesson. The students try to answer in English. As a student answers, the teacher corrects his use of the pronoun. The students are concentrating on their books. The teacher writes the meaning of a word on the blackboard. The students look at the blackboard or in their books. They are all attention. The teacher writes more meanings of words on the blackboard after eliciting them first from the students but only one or two students try to give the meanings. The others wait for her to give the meaning and get busy in copying it down immediately.

9.00 [At this point I decided to focus on two students, one in the back row and one in the front of the class for ten minutes each.]
Qayyum (back row)

He looks very attentively at the teacher as she asks a question. He has his textbook open in front of him. It seems he's trying to think of a sentence/answer. He comments briefly to his friend who urges him to offer the answer. He comments to his neighbour on the other side [confirms answers?], then talks to his friend again while at the same time looking for and then underlining a word in his textbook. He shows it to his friend and then sits back in his chair shaking his feet and looking at his book. Occasionally he looks up at the teacher. He looks at his book following the text with his pencil. As someone answers he laughs quietly to himself, then bends forward to listen. He relaxes again and begins to turn pages in his book. He comments to his friend and laughs quietly once again. He looks very attentive. As his friend offers a sentence he looks at him listening carefully. Then he discusses something with his friend [it seems to be related to what's going on in the class.] He looks very serious and constantly looks at his book.

9.10 Shabir (one of the bright students - he sits in the third row)
Shabir gives a sentence which is incorrect. The teacher tells the students to prepare the four words for tomorrow. Shabir stands up to answer again, then takes his book to the teacher at her desk to show her something. It seems the students have to get their exercise books checked today. They had reminded the teacher earlier about it. As she sits down at her desk a number of students rush to her desk with their exercise books. Some students protest suggesting that she should check 'line-wise'. She tells the students to take their seats while she gets up to write on the blackboard. Shabir is still standing with his open book in his hand. He decides to sit down.

The teacher gives a model on the blackboard telling them how to write the answers and tells them to begin working. There is a lot of discussion amongst the students as they take out their exercise books but there is no indiscipline. Very quickly most of the students settle down to work. A few students (4 or 5) take their exercise books for checking to the teacher's desk. One student goes to the cupboard in the front right hand corner of the class to fill in ink in his pen.

Sobia is told by the teacher to check if all the students have done their previous work. Some students tell her that Sobia's own work is not complete. The teacher decides to go around the class herself and check the work of the students. Kamal [the most brilliant student of the class] is absent today. There is a rustle of paper and noise of opening of pencil boxes in the class. Shabir has begun to do his work. Most student seem to be working bending down on their work. As the teacher walks around she finds defaulters - students who haven't completed their previous work and reprimands them. She also reprimands students who, she finds, have not covered their books. Shabir stands up and walks over to a friend to talk to him.

The bell rings.

The teacher is still going around the class, checking the students' work. She pulls the ears of some students and lightly slaps a few others for not having done their work. She punishes a boy by sending him out of the class.

The students point her attention to some one at the door. The teacher goes to talk to her briefly. The students are still busy working. The teacher goes to each student individually to check if they have done their work or not. (This is the job of the the two student monitors, Sobia, who hadn't done her work today and Kamal who was absent.)

She punishes some students by telling them to stand up. The students begin to talk quietly. The teacher shouts at them and there is complete silence once again. The teacher reprimands severely some boys and also beats them lightly. She tells the monitor that they should be made to stand the whole day as punishment for not having completed their work.

Appendix 6.B.6

Teacher's perception of class size: Neither small nor large

1-I-2/CO 1[4]

Class: X

No. of student present: 33 out of 50 students

Date: 2.10.91

Topic for the day: 'Dignity of Work' - a reading text from the prescribed textbook

9.15 As I enter the class the teacher is asking some questions in English. She writes on the blackboard:

        Lesson   paragraph
        Poem   stanza
        Dialogue   talking

The topic of the day is already written on the blackboard as follows:
        English Reading
        Page 34
        Dignity of Work.

S1 reads the text in a loud clear voice. The teacher corrects her pronunciation and explains the meaning of the passage in English. She asks short questions on the passage which the students answer in Yes or No. There does not seem to be adequate space to sit for all the students. Two students are sharing a chair. [I wonder where the other students sit when they are present.] Humera is nominated by the teacher to continue reading. She sits in the front row and reads in a loud clear voice. The students follow in their books while she reads aloud. The teacher listens carefully correcting pronunciation of words now and again. She explains the meaning in English. Most of the students sit passively. Only students in the front row answer the teacher's questions. The teacher nominates another student (S3) to read. The student stands up to read. The teacher corrects her pronunciation and also helps her when she stumbles on any word. Once again the teacher explains the meaning of the paragraph read by the student in English.

9.30 T: Do you know what's a 'widow? (etc.)
She gives the meanings of these words in Urdu. She asks short questions on the text such as, 'What else did he do?', 'What did Hazrat Ali do?' [I can't figure out the reason for asking these questions as she answers most of them herself.] However for one question, 'Who was Hazrat Fatima?' the students answer in chorus. The teacher does not offer any comment on the answer but carries on with reading and explaining the text. As she reads the text and explains the meaning, the students follow in their books. She stands in front of the class all this time. Another student (S4) from the front row is nominated to continue with the reading of the passage. The students sit very quietly as the teacher explains the text. She asks questions again which students in the front row answer. Sometimes only Humera volunteers to answer. She asks a girl who had not volunteered. She answers incorrectly and as a result has to keep standing. The teacher gives the correct answer. She continues with asking questions:

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[4]The teacher mainly used English as the language of classroom communication. However, the students were allowed to use Urdu if they liked.

T: One day what happened? Only some students mumble the answer. S5 is told to sit down.

T: Who wants to read?
Several students bid for a turn by raising their hands. The teacher selects one of the volunteers non-verbally who stands up to read. (Although S6 is just two rows in front of me I can't hear her. I wonder if the other students can hear her.) All students seem to be following the text in their books. The teacher asks some questions which the same students answer. The teacher does not repeat the answers for the class nor comments on them in any way. [It is difficult to know whether the answer has been accepted as correct or not.] The teacher continues to stand in front of the classroom. The reading of the lesson has been completed.

The teacher moves on to the comprehension questions given at the end of the passage and asks: 'Who can answer the first question'? She reads out the question: 'Why did Akhtar not answer'? One student bids to answer.
The teacher confirms from the class, 'All of you have understood the lesson'?
SS: Yes, Miss.
T: Or you want me to explain in Urdu?
SS answering in chorus: No, Miss.
One student tries to answer the question in reasonably good English. [She seems to be the brightest girl in class and is the only one who volunteers to answer all the questions. She also looks very confident.] The teacher tells her, 'You have only told half the answer'. Another student from the front row offers to provide the complete answer and is selected by the teacher to do so. Students at the back are busy looking around. Some begin to talk softly. The girl reads out a part of the text as answer. (I can't hear her at the back.)
The teacher reads out the next question and nominates Shazia to answer it. She stands up and reads out the answer from the passage. A student from the front row stands up to answer the next question. The teacher doesn't signal whether the answer is correct or not. Presumably it is not as the teacher gives the correct answer herself. The same procedure continues for the next two questions.

The teacher announces to the class: 'Tomorrow we'll do words/ meanings and questions/answers and then exercises later.' She tells them to look up the meanings in the dictionary.

[Mostly two students in the front row volunteered to answer. The students at the back didn't seem to be with the teacher at all. As we left the class the teacher told me that she had asked the students to prepare the lesson earlier. 'That is why some of them were able to respond in English today'. She had told me in her pre-observation interview earlier that she explained the lesson first in English. However, she said that 'when the students sat totally blank', she was forced to explain the same in Urdu again so that ' the students know what is happening in the text'. I wonder why she didn't explain in Urdu today - could be the effect of my presence in the class.]

1-I-2/CO 2

Class: X

Date: 3.10.91

No. of students present: 35 out of 50 students.

(It is a continuation of the lesson from the previous day.)

9.15 The teacher writes words and their meanings in English on the blackboard. She announces to the class: 'We'll do questions and exercises first and then words/meanings'.

The teacher reads question number one aloud from the comprehension questions that follow the reading passage in the textbook. A student stands up to read a part of the reading passage as answer to the question but it is not correct. Another student answers. The teacher gives the correct answer orally to the class. The teacher reads out the next question and the students look into their textbooks for the answer. A student from the front row self selects to answer. As she hesitates the teacher prompts her and she is able to provide the correct answer. The teacher reads out Q.3 and the same student answers. The teacher confirms from the class:'Have you marked the answer?' (The students are marking the relevant portions of the text as answers to different questions as the teacher elicits them from the class.)

The same procedure continues for questions 4 and 5 also. The teacher confirms once again from the class:'Are you marking in the book?' Farah is nominated to answer Q. no. 6. She reads it out from the book. (I can't hear her very well. I wonder if the other students can do so.) The teacher explains the next question briefly: 'You have to say 'yes' or 'no' in this question.'
The same student answers. The teacher repeats the answer reading from her book. There is no eye contact with the students. A student is nominated as answerer from the third row: 'You tell us.'
She reads out the answer from the book. There is a quiet hum in the class. Everyone seems to be concentrating very hard. The teacher has a very soft voice. The same two students bid to answer and Sobia is selected to do so. The student next to me is pretending to read from a copy. She doesn't have her textbook.

As a student reads out the answer to the next question the teacher hesitates but Sobia confirms to the teacher: 'That's all.' For the next question Saima from the front row is selected to answer, out of the two students who had volunteered.

T: Now, after these questions/answers you have to do words/meanings and then exercise C (referring to the exercises in the textbook). You mark the answers in your book now and do it in your exercise books later.
(It is an exercise in matching words that are similar in meaning from a given list of words.)
The teacher calls out a word: 'Cross.'
Some students answer together: 'Angry'.
The students at the back do not even make an effort to answer but simply mark the answers in their books as the exercise is done orally. After completing the exercise orally the students are told to take out their copies. The teacher tells them not to talk. She walks around to check if everyone has taken out their copies. A few students ask some clarificatory questions from the teacher as she walks past them. She answers briefly.

The blackboard has several words and their meanings written on it, e.g:

word	meaning
cross	unhappy
repair	fix
favourite	best
human being	people

9.30 The teacher writes on the blackboard: 'H.W. Learn passage for dictation on page 39' and tells the class to learn it for home work. No questions are asked. The students seem to be familiar with this kind of activity.

(The cleaning lady comes in to clean the waste paper basket.)

The teacher walks around the class. The student are discussing with each other quietly as they work. The teacher tells a student: 'Bring your register tomorrow and copy it in your

register.' The students help each other to find answers from the book. One student asks the teacher something as she walks around the class. The teacher stands close to her and tells her quietly. There is a lot of busy activity in the classroom - turning of pages, drawing margins, borrowing and lending of pencils and rulers etc. When the teacher comes close to a group of students they stop their discussion immediately. As the teacher walks around she looks at some students' work and advises one student to write 'properly'. Though several students talk quietly amongst themselves, all of them seem to be working and interested in their work. As I look around I can't spot a single student sitting idle.

The student next to me is doing exercise C. She had matched the words and their synonyms in her book when the teacher did this exercise orally earlier in class. She is busy copying them down in her exercise book very neatly. There is constant consultation between students and the teacher does not discourage it. At the same time the teacher seems very willing to answer individual questions as she walks around the classroom.

9.40 As the teacher goes to stand in front of the class looking at her book, the bell rings.

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Appendix 6 C (1-6): Doing grammar (teaching/learning a grammatical item/structure)

Classroom observation notes of 6 lessons in varying size classes
of six teachers at different sites

Appendix 6.C.1

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

2-I-1/CO 7[1]

Class: VI B

Date: 23.10.91

No. of students present: Missing data

(This is a mixed class comprising almost an equal number of boys and girls.)

11.45 As I enter the class the students are still standing after greeting the teacher. I'm offered a number of seats in different parts of the classroom. A prefect comes in to warn the students about leaving their class at the end of the period [it is the last period] in a line, otherwise they will be reported to the principal. Some students try to attract the attention of the prefect by calling her. There is a lot of noise as the students settle down pulling chairs, shuffling books and papers, etc. They are not sitting in neat rows but are spread out in a random fashion. [The room has movable chairs.]

The teacher tells them to open their books on grammar of unit 5. She nominates a student to read aloud the exercise from the book. It begins by giving rules for using different punctuation marks. The student next to me is still looking for the right page in his textbook. The teacher explains the rules. At the same time she also checks some students in between: 'You! sit straight'.
A geometry box [pencil box] falls down with a sharp noise. The teacher continues with the explanation. Some students appear to be listening.

[I find it difficult to follow the explanation in the abstract. The teacher makes no use of the blackboard].

The teacher's attention is constantly directed to students who appear to move even very slightly, 'You, Kamran. Sit straight. Then you'll cry and it won't hurt me at all'.
A student stands up to read further.
T (addressing a student): What's in your mouth?

She explains the meaning of 'abbreviations' and writes 'U.S.A' on the blackboard and tell the class if they write 'USA' (without the punctuation marks) in the exams they won't get any marks for it. She gives further examples from the book The students only answer the questions of the teacher.

She tells the class, 'You have to learn these rules and it is proper. There are some American spellings but we want to learn real spellings first. When language becomes disturbed and other people coin words, not the linguists, not ancient authors who wrote the correct, perfect language.'

There is an interruption as one student holds out a stick to show it to the teacher and lodge his complaint against another student. Immediately there is a ripple of noise at the other end of the class. (I can see one student doing exercise 5A which is on the following page in the textbook.)

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[1]English is used almost entirely as the language of communication in this classroom.

The teacher is annoyed and gives another short lecture to the class reminding them of their exams and the necessity, thereof, of paying attention to the work being done in class. Some students smile at their friends across the room. They even try to communicate with them by using gestures, but only when they feel 'safe' that the teacher is not looking at them. As soon as the teacher looks in their direction they put their heads down. There is a lot of shuffling around and most of the students do not seem to be paying attention. The students begin to send signals to each other as soon as the teacher turns her back towards them.

Someone is at the door. (She bolts the door from inside before beginning the class.) The teacher ignores and carries on with her lengthy explanation of a grammar point in the lesson. She nominates a student to answer who stands up to do so. [I wonder if any of the students can follow the rules in the abstract.] Most of the children are looking around, shuffling their feet. A student makes the sound of a knock at the door by knocking on his chair. The teacher elicits the spelling of 'quotation' and Kamran spells it correctly.

12.00 There is a sound of the bleating of sheep from one end of the class followed by a lot of confusion in which the students blame each other for the offence. However, it is also accompanied with a lot of laughing and deliberate coughing in different parts of the room. The students look back at me, now and again, presumably to see my reaction to this fiasco which, it seems, is being created deliberately by the students to annoy the teacher. A student stands up to continue with the reading of the exercises in the textbook. Shaheen (the best girl in the class, according to the teacher) follows in her book as the student reads the text. Then she listens carefully to the teacher. The teacher spots a student talking and shouts: 'Hey, you. Don't talk'. She tells them how marks will be awarded in the exam (one mark for one line,etc.) Shaheen appears to be listening very carefully.

The teacher shouts at a student: 'Attention in your book, and keep your face straight. Don't get shocked when you fail because the marks are given for all this, so bear in mind what I teach you now in your grammar, what I give you in your text.'
As the teacher explains , Shaheen sits very straight on her chair listening to the teacher.

Bushra [another bright student] is asked to continue reading. A student is busy writing something else. As the teacher explains Shaheen looks in her book, then at the teacher. She is all attention.
T: Karim, attention in your book.
The student next to me finally finds out where she is reading from.

The teacher tells the students to take out their exercise books and do the exercise. There are a number of queries by students from different corners of the room, for example, 'Do we have to do all the sentences'? There is also a shuffling of books and papers and a general kind of noise in the classroom as the students get ready to write. The teacher reprimands a student very severely when she finds out that he has lost his textbook.

One student asks the teacher's permission to go out for drinking water. Several students protest telling the teacher that he had also gone out just before this class. (When the students go out of the class during class hours for drinking water, etc.they have to wear a badge indicating that they have the teacher's permission to do so.)

Shaheen has already started working while most of the students haven't even taken out their exercise books. The teacher is busy disciplining some students. A pencil box falls down with a loud crash. A student wants permission to come into the class. A pen is passed to another student. A student wants ink for his pen. The teacher sends him out of the class. (Another student was also sent out earlier as punishment.) Another geometry box falls down. The teacher ignores.

12.10 A student in the front row wants the teacher's attention. The teacher does not notice. He hasn't started working as yet In fact he sits with his hands folded. He tries to get her attention again but the teacher does not notice it this time also. He takes out his exercise book and geometry box.   The class has become quieter.

There is a knock at the door. All the students look at the door and the teacher reprimands them for not paying attention to their work. The student who wanted the teacher's attention earlier is still shuffling with his geometry box. He begins to write with a small pencil but starts writing with his pen as the teacher goes closer to him.
Some students begin to pack their bags. (This is the last period.) The teacher threatens them: 'One day I'll take out everything from your bags, mix them up and then you'll have to sort out your things after the bell rings.'

A student talks to another student in front of him but as he sees the teacher walking towards him, he immediately bends down over his work. The student sitting next to me is playing with his exercise book pretending to work. The teacher tells Karim that he must bring his book tomorrow. He doesn't have it with him today. Some students begin to talk quietly and exchange things as the teacher walks to the other side of the classroom. There is silence for a while as the students seem to have settled down to work. A student , from one end of the room, asks something from the teacher, who is at the other end of the classroom, in a very loud voice. Several students answer his query from different parts of the room. The teacher clarifies the point for everyone.

The silence is broken once again with students offering their own interpretations of the instructions to do the exercise. A student complains to the teacher. The teacher tells me, 'If they don't have the book, it's another problem for me'. The teacher stands surveying the class, looking very alert. Some movement begins again on one side of the classroom as a student asks for a clarification from the teacher. The teacher tells him, 'I never answer unnecessary questions.'

12.20 The bell rings. Some students tell the teacher: 'It's the Primary [school] bell.'

<u>Appendix 6.C.2</u>

<u>Teacher's perception of class size: Large</u>

6-I-1/CO 1

Class: IX B

Date: 4.1.92

No. of students present: 46 out of 74 students

(It is the third day after the reopening of the school after winter vacations.)

As I enter the classroom with the teacher, the students stand up. The teacher tries to find a place for me to sit. It is quite dark as all the windows are closed due to the cold. I ask a student to move up so that I can sit in the back row. [The teacher is very cooperative and does not seem to mind my presence at all.]

9.05 She begins the lesson by reminding the students that they were doing grammar last month, before the half yearly exams. She tells them to take out their grammar books and 'copies'. Most of the students don't have their exercise books. The teacher reprimands them for doing very badly in the exams. She calls a few students by name and asks them how they did their papers. Then she asks a student how he did his paper. He tells her that he did not sit for the exam as he was ill. In reply to her query he informs her that he had submitted his application to the class teacher. (This was later confirmed by the teacher from their class teacher during tea break.) The teacher tells them that only three students have passed.
T: 'Out of how many students?'
Some students reply, '74'.
The attendance is not written on the blackboard for today though columns for writing the attendance are neatly drawn on the blackboard.

(There are 21 dual desks in the room but at least 3 of them are broken. The desks are arranged in four columns with five rows each. I can count 46 boys in the room. The walls are bare except for a timetable that hangs desolately on the front wall next to the blackboard. The room is identical in architecture to all the classrooms in Government schools I have visited. It has one door directly opposite to which is placed the teacher's desk. There are two windows on one side of the room and one window on the opposite side. The room is rectangular in shape with a big blackboard on the wall in the front of the room.)

The teacher tells the students to take out their exercise books and give her the definition of 'verb'. Though it sounds like a general solicit, when no one volunteers to answer, the teacher nominates a student. He reads the definition incorrectly from his exercise book. S2 from one corner of the room self selects to answer. The teacher nominate S3 to read from his 'copy'. S4 volunteers and is selected to read the same definition. The teacher identifies three students whose answers to the tenses question in the recent half yearly exams were either wholly or partially correct. The teacher asks, 'How many forms of verb are there?'

(The teacher uses Urdu throughout but uses some phrases in English now and again, e.g., forms of verb, tenses.)

The student answers correctly. The teacher praises him, 'Very good.' S6 is nominated non-verbally by the teacher and he gives a partial answer to the question, 'When are these

forms of verb used?' S7 and S8 (i.e., Ali in the back row - he is the same student who had told the teacher earlier that he had not sat for the exam) are called upon individually by the teacher, by name; they also give incomplete answers. Then the teacher calls on Hamid to answer. It seems that she expects him to answer correctly as she tells the other students to listen to him carefully. The question is: 'Where do we use the second form?'
Hamid: In past tense.
T: And third form?
(The three students who were not able to answer earlier or answered incorrectly are standing.)
There is a lot of noise from outside and the teacher goes out to check. The students sit quietly while the teacher is out. Some students steal a glance at me.

[The teacher told me later that the students thought that I was there for inspection and were, therefore, more well behaved that day; she said they had also put in more effort to participate in the class than is usual for them to do so. She confessed that she wanted them to continue thinking so; in fact she said that this was why she had not introduced me to the students. The class teacher told us later that she had also warned the class that a visitor would be coming to their class to see how they were learning English.]

The teacher comes back and checks from the students: 'How many tenses have I taught you?'
She nominates Hamid to answer telling him to speak loudly as there is a lot of noise in the class next door because there is no teacher there. She asks Ali to repeat the information. Ali informs her that he does not have his 'copy' with him as his friend had borrowed it from him before the exams. The teacher reprimands him for lending his copy to other boys without her permission. S10 volunteers and is selected to give the list of tenses that have been taught in the class uptil now. As he provides the list the teacher writes 'present indefinite tense' on the blackboard and elicits an example sentence from the class. Some students raise their hands. One student self selects and provides an example. The teacher writes it on the blackboard:

> I write a letter.

She asks the students to identify the form of verb used in the sentence. When no one replies she reformulates the task: 'Find out the first form of the verb in the sentence.' She urges the students to hurry up and be more active. Some students look into their exercise books. The student sitting next to me has his exercise book open in front of him; when I ask him if he has found the required information, he tells me he does not have his 'fair copy' with him. He asks his friend in the next row to show me his 'fair copy' which he borrows from another student and shoves under my nose quite belligerently. I return it to him with thanks after glancing at it very briefly. (There are a lot of things written in Urdu in his exercise book.)

The teacher warns the class that she is revising tenses for the last time today as they need to know them for 'active/passive' which they will be doing next. She asks the students: 'What form of verb is used in present continuous tense?' S11 is nominated to answer but he is unable to answer. He keeps standing. Several students raise their hands. A students offers: 'We add 'ing' to the first form of the verb'. The teacher repeats the answer for the whole class. Another students offers: 'We use helping verbs am, is, are'. The teacher wants to know: 'When do we use them? With 'I'?'
A few students: 'Am'.
The teacher continues to ask which helping verbs are used with other pronouns. S12 gives an example which the teacher writes on the blackboard. She nominates Hamid and asks, ' Hamid, how do we identify present continuous tense in Urdu?'
Hamid: ـ رہی ہے ـ رہا ہے   [Raha he , Rahi he .]
T: What form of the verb do we use in present perfect?
S13: Third form of the verb.
T: Which helping verb do we use?

S14: Have.
She writes 'have' and 'has' on the blackboard. She tells Kashif to sit down.

She reprimands a student in the front row for yawning and asks him to read out the rules from his 'copy'. The teacher has already given them all the rules. He reads the rule for using the present continuous tense in Urdu. The student who is standing in the centre back row is told to repeat the same which he does very haltingly.

The teacher conducts the session at a very brisk pace. She addresses the same student again: 'And what will we use with he/she?'
A few students answer together and are reprimanded for speaking out of turn. She tells him to sit down. Predicting the teacher's next move S15 self selects to read out the definition of the past indefinite tense. She nominates Hamid to give an example: 'Yes, Hamid'.
Hamid: I wrote a letter.
She tells him, 'This is the example I gave.' She encourages him to think of another example.
Hamid: He went to school.
T: Very good.
She writes the example sentence on the blackboard. She nominates a student but in the meantime S16 self selects to answer.
T: What form of the verb is used here?
Some students: Second form.
She underlines 'went' on the blackboard.

She walks halfway between the aisles to look at the students' exercise books. A student is reprimanded for not writing (rules) in his 'copy'. After a quick reprimand to him and a comment on his laziness she moves on to look at other students' work.

The lesson continues at the same brisk pace. S17 offers definition of past continuous tense. Ali is still standing and the teacher asks him, after reprimanding him again for not having his copy, if he can remember anything. At the same time she urges other students to look for the relevant rules in their 'copies' and to read them out.
S 18: 'We use 'had' in this.' He also gives an example of the past perfect tense which the teacher writes on the blackboard:

I have eaten an apple.

Nominating a student by name, the teacher asks him: 'What is the third form of verb in this sentence?'
Some students: Eaten.
T: What's the helping verb?
Several students identify it in the sentence together. The teacher erases the sentences written earlier on the blackboard.

9.25 After revising the tenses (which she had done with them earlier), the teacher now moves on to the future indefinite tense . There is a lot of shuffling of papers as the students take out their exercise books and pens, etc. while getting ready to write.

She checks from the copy of a bright student in the front row whether she has given them the rules for this tense or not. The student next to me is trying out his pen and getting ready to copy. Uptil now he had been sitting totally passive without making any effort to answer the teacher's questions.

The teacher holds up the exercise book of Hamid (a bright student) to show to the class and reminds them of some work she had given them on 30/10/91. She tells the students to open their 'copies' on that page and walks around the class quickly to check if everyone has found the right page.

She writes the definition of the the Future indefinite tense on the blackboard and the students immediately begin to copy it down in their exercise books. She reads out the definition from the blackboard and then writes some examples (a paradigm) on the blackboard with Urdu translations. The students copy it down with the minimum of hassle. No questions are asked or clarifications sought by the students.

9.30 The bell rings. The teacher reads out examples from the blackboard pointing the attention of the students to the use of 'will' and 'shall' with different pronouns. She borrows a grammar book (Scientific English Grammar) from a student, looks at it briefly and points to exercise A, p. 80. She reminds the students that they have done this exercise before; next she sets a task for homework: 'Change sentences 1-5 (from the same exercise) to the future indefinite tense'. She warns the students that she will not listen to any excuses for not doing their work. She also tells them that she will give out their exam papers tomorrow.

Appendix 6.C.3

Teacher's perception of class size: Very large

5-I-4/ CO 3

Class: VII B

Date: 28.11.91

No. of students present: 63 out of of 88 students.

9.55 As I enter the classroom, the class seems to have started a few minutes ago. The teacher writes on the blackboard:

> Interrogative
> I am ill today.

The students in the next class, which is held in the corridor outside, are making a lot of noise. There seems to be no teacher there. The school band is also practicing in the ground outside. (The band master comes once a week for practice sessions.) I am sharing the desk with two other girls. There is not enough work space for all of us.

The teacher writes some more statement sentences on the blackboard. The students next to me begin to copy them down almost mechanically. A student asks her neighbour: 'What is written after I-L-L?' It seems she is unable to read even individual words. The students in front of me are writing very slowly. By now they have just copied the instructions from the blackboard. They waste a lot of time looking around while the teacher is busy writing on the blackboard. Some students stand up to see the blackboard clearly.

The teacher walks around the class to check their work. When she sees me sitting so uncomfortably she sends one of the students at my desk to another place to make more room for me. (I really feel grateful to her.) She reprimands some students for talking. A few students ask her to read out a sentence on the blackboard which she does for them. All the students are busy working (copying the sentences from the blackboard).

The teacher realises that the students are unable to do the given task, i.e., to change the sentences into their interrogative form. She goes to the blackboard and explains the procedure by doing the first sentence as an example for them on the blackboard. She points the attention of the students particularly to the rule of changing the position of the subject and the verb in the sentence. She tells them that the rest of the sentences can be done in the same way, i.e., by applying the same rule.

10.05 The teacher tells all the girls to sit down. She reads out a sentence from the blackboard and translates it into Urdu and writes the translation on the blackboard. A student in the front, who seems to have finished her work, takes it to the teacher, who is in the front of the class, for correction. The teacher sits down at her desk to check her work. The student next to me copies the example given by the teacher on the blackboard. The teacher assigns the next task: 'Change the same set of sentences into their negative form'.
Three students go to the teacher to ask her something (or probably to show her their work).

A couple of students around me have a brief discussion on how to do the task. I ask the student next to me if she has done the second sentence (the first one was done by the teacher on the blackboard). She gets confused and immediately takes out her 'fair copy'

to copy down the sentences from the blackboard into her 'fair copy'. It seems like busy work to avoid getting the attention [and the wrath!] of the teacher. I advise her to do the work in her 'rough copy' first. She changes sentence two to its negative form, thus:
I am with playing a doll.
[The teacher had demonstrated the subject-verb inversion rule a little while ago on the blackboard.]
She asks her friend for help. She is unable to identify the helping verb in the sentence for me. I write down a list of some common helping verbs for her and tell her to use this list to identify them in the given sentences.

When the teacher sees me talking to the students, she comes to the back of the class (where I am sitting) to check the students' work [keep an eye on me!]. I encourage the student sitting next to me to check her spellings from the blackboard when I notice that she has left out the last letter of most of the words while copying them from the blackboard, e.g. 'brothe' instead of 'brother'.
A few students crowd around the teacher to get their work checked.

10.15 The bell rings for recess.

Appendix 6.C.4

Teacher's perception of class size: Very large

5-II-2/ CO 3

Class: X A

Date: 3.3.92

No. of students present: 63 out of 85 students

The teacher writes on the blackboard: Active and Passive voice. She begins to revise rules for transforming sentences from active to passive voice. S1 gives a rule (rule no.1). Then S2 gives the next rule (rule no.2). The teacher reminds the students of the sentences she had done with them earlier [the previous year?]. S3 volunteers and gives a sentence both in active and passive form.

The teacher asks the students how many rules she had given them earlier. Some students answer together: 'Eight'. She repeats the first rule: 'If the first form of the verb is used, change it to third form and add is/are/am before the verb'.

(Seven desks at the back are lying vacant while mostly three girls are sharing a desk in the front rows.)

The teacher writes a sentence on the blackboard. All the students copy it down immediately in their exercise books. The teacher nominates a student to change the sentence into passive voice. She is unable to do the task. The teacher elicits the meaning of the sentence in Urdu and nominates Talat in the second row to give the Urdu translation. The teacher revises the rules with her but Talat is also unable to do the task. Then Sakina is nominated to do the same task. [Sakina seems to be a bright student as she gets a lot of turns and never disappoints the teacher.] When she also changes it incorrectly the teacher gives the passive form herself. Then Naila is nominated to repeat the sentence. She reads it out from her exercise book. The teacher nominates Shahnaz in the first row, then Zahida in the second row to repeat the same sentence. The students are repeating the sentence mechanically, it seems. As the teacher writes the answer (the passive form of the sentence) on the blackboard the students copy it down in their exercise books.

The teacher writes the next sentence on the blackboard and asks Kausar (another bright student, who is also the monitor) to translate the sentence into Urdu. [Sakina and Kausar were amongst the first group of students who were selected by the teacher for learners' interview.] The teacher identifies the form of the verb in the sentence and elicits the rule for transforming the sentence into passive voice. Kulsum in the first row is nominated to answer. As she answers (correctly) the teacher writes the passive sentence on the blackboard and tells all the students to copy it down which they do with great alacrity.

8.25 The teacher writes the third sentence on the blackboard. Two students from the front row raise their hands volunteering to change the sentence into passive voice. Sakina is nominated to do the task. (This is her third turn.) The teacher nominates Raheela in the second last row. She reads out the sentence from her exercise book. A girl from the back row is nominated. She answers incorrectly. A girl from the front row answers immediately (even before the girl in the back row has had time to self-correct). Another student in the front row is told by the teacher to repeat the sentence. All students look very attentive and focus their attention on the blackboard.
The teacher asks the class: 'Do you all understand?'

A few students from the front of the class reply: 'Yes, Miss'.
[It seems to be enough cue for the teacher to move on.]

The teacher writes the next sentence on the blackboard. Sakina is nominated as the answerer (her fourth turn). Then Kauser and Tabassum from the front row repeat the sentence one after another. Saira in the fourth row is nominated to repeat the same sentence. Three more students repeat the same sentence, one after another, in quick succession. Finally after Sajda in the second row repeats the same sentence the teacher writes it on the blackboard. [Both Saira and Sajda were amongst the second group of students interviewed from this class.] She asks Naila (in the third row) what she has understood, i.e., to repeat the rule that was used in changing the last sentence into passive voice. Kauser is nominated again and she gives the rule orally. Tabassum is told to repeat the same rule. Then Naila repeats the rule once again.

A student in the third row asks a question. The teacher explains that the verb in the sentence is not in the second form because it is a negative sentence, 'She did not write a letter'.

The teacher moves on to the next sentence. As she writes it on the blackboard, four students volunteer to change it into passive voice, by raising their hands. As a student gives its passive form the teacher invites Shaista in the second row to say whether it is correct or not. Then she asks the class, 'Why do we use 'him'?'
Some students answer together: 'For he'.
The teacher repeats the rule: 'She changes into 'her' . . .'
The students get busy in copying the sentence from the blackboard.

8.37 The bell rings. The teacher announces that she will now give them some sentences to do for home work. As she writes the sentences on the blackboard, the students begin to copy them down.

(A teacher comes into the class to find out if any of the girls had left her plate in the bus after the picnic, a couple of days ago.)

The teacher continues with her writing of the sentences in active voice on the blackboard for homework. She writes eight sentences which the students copy down in their exercise books.

[Throughout the lesson when a student at the back was nominated to answer, even before the student got an opportunity to think about the answer or complete her answer the teacher moved on to another student in the front of the class.]

Appendix 6.C.5

Teacher's perception of class size: Neither small nor large

3-I-3/ CO 3[2]

Class: VII C

Date: 31.10.91

No. of students present: 24 out of 28 students

5.00 p.m. The teacher writes on the blackboard the topic for the day: PRONOUNS. The students are taking out their books. The monitors are returning the exercise books to the students after they have been checked by the teacher. The teacher announces the topic for the day and tells them to open their books on page 56.
She writes on the blackboard:

> Personal - Reflexive

She elicits from the students the definition of pronouns. Several students bid to answer. The teacher first elicits a number of pronouns from the students and then tells them to find more pronouns in the reading text which they have just finished reading. (Pronouns are included in the grammar portion of the exercises that follow the reading passage in this unit in their textbook.)

As the teacher elicits the pronouns from the students, which they have marked in their books by now, she makes a list on the blackboard, e.g.

> He   His   Himself
> They   Herself
> I   Myself
> Him
> Her etc.

Sometimes she asks the students to read out the line which contains a particular pronoun in the reading passage. All the students seem to be trying to find more examples of pronouns from their book except one girl at the back who is busy doing some other work (copying something from another girl's exercise book). The teacher asks if there are any reflexive pronouns in the list. As she elicits more examples, the students shout them out together. The teacher keeps adding them to the list on the blackboard.
She writes on the blackboard:

> them-self-selves

Then she elicits further words of the same kind from the students. The students repeat different words in chorus. The teacher reads out the first sentence from the practice exercise in the textbook. The students provide the answer orally. She continues to do the exercise in the same way. Initially a number of students bid for a turn and the teacher selects the answerers from the students who raise their hands; however, soon several students begin to answer together.

The teacher moves on to the next exercise in the textbook. The task is to identify pronouns in the given sentences. The teacher writes on the blackboard:

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[2]English is used as the language of communication in this classroom.

The principal/He

She explains briefly the use of the pronoun instead of the noun in the example. The two prefects change the first two sentences. The third student reads out the next sentence incorrectly; many students prompt her the correct answer. The teacher confirms the answer by repeating it for the whole class. S4 and S5 do the next sentence incorrectly. S6 answers correctly. Each student when she answers, stands up to read a sentence and then identifies the pronoun in the sentence. Sometimes the teacher gives cues to help the students to locate the correct answer. Otherwise she repeats the correct answer which the other students write/mark in their books immediately. All the students are very active either making an effort to answer or listening carefully for the right answer in order to write it in their books. They try to write the answer quickly when a student answers correctly. One girl has had five turns. The teacher sometimes prompts the answer by giving cues while at other times many students shout out the correct answer together. The rest of the exercise is done orally in the same manner. The teacher often praises the students when they answer correctly. She also repeats a sentence (answer) if any of the students request her to do so.

The next exercise requires the students to replace a noun in a given sentence with the correct pronoun, e.g.,
They bought something for their son. (him)
A student uses 'her' for 'cat' in a sentence and several students shout out together:'No Miss, it'.
The teacher confirms that the use of 'her' is correct.

5.15 The same procedure continues for the next exercise. The teacher reads out a sentence and several students volunteer, by raising their hands, to give the correct pronoun to fill in the blanks. The teacher selects one student from those who volunteer. If the selected student gives the correct answer (the complete sentence with the correct pronoun) the teacher repeats it for the whole class. The students who do not bid for a turn wait for the teacher to repeat the answer to write it in their books. If a student makes an error the teacher asks another student and sometimes a number of students shout out the answer together. For each turn, 4-5 students raise their hands. If a student can't answer correctly she keeps standing till she can do another sentence correctly.

The teacher confirms from the class if they all understand. She tells the students to read out the list of pronouns from the blackboard. She seems satisfied that the students will be able to manage the rest of the exercises without her help and assigns them for home work: 'For home work do exercise 4B. Also continue from 18-30 (in this exercise).'

She tells the students to take out their diaries which they do with the minimum of hassle. The students write down their homework in their diaries while the teacher watches over them from the front of the class. A student goes to the teacher with a query. After writing their diary, the girls begin to pack their bags (this is the last period) and two 'checkers' (class monitors) go around the class checking their diaries and signing them. There is a lot of movement in the class but there is no noise as the students talk very quietly to each other.

Appendix 6.C.6

Teacher's perception of class size: Neither small nor large

6-I-2/ CO 4

Class: X

Date: 7.1.92

No. of students present: 33 out of 47 students

8.35 The teacher announces to the class that she will be doing tenses today. When the teacher asks the class:'Are you ready?' a student says 'No' in a low voice. The teacher hears him and immediately sends a student to bring the 'stick'. The teacher warns the students at the same time. Several students look around grinning in amusement as the teacher writes a sentence on the blackboard. A student comes in. A student in the front row raises his hand along with two other students, one of whom is sitting in the back row.

The teacher asks a student referring to the sentence on the blackboard: 'What is the tense?' As he hesitates another student prompts him who is told to keep quiet by the teacher. The teacher asks Farhan in the front row. She nominates a student and walks over to stand close to him. Other students look around anxiously. Farhan answers correctly. The teacher confirms the answer and asks the next question: 'What form of helping verb is used in the present perfect continuous tense'? Farhan answers correctly once again and the teacher praises him: 'I'm proud of you'.

The teacher addresses the next question to a student who has brown hair: 'You, Bhure Khan' (the boy with brown hair), obviously not expecting him to know the answer. She spots a student who it seems was absent for the last few days and asks him where he had been. The teacher encourages Amir in the front row to try and answer the next question. Another student from the front row answers correctly. Shahid comes back with the stick. A student raises his hand. The teacher once again nominates Farhan to do the task, i.e., to translate a sentence, written by the teacher on the blackboard, into English. She prompts him by giving him the English equivalent of a word she thinks might be the source of his difficulty in translating the sentence. Farhan tries to do the task but is unsuccessful. The teacher encourages him: 'You have done it before.'

The teacher writes the expression 'Look for' on the blackboard which she had earlier thought was the source of the problem in translating the sentence. Farhan tries once again. The teacher prompts him and encourages him to self-correct. She nominates another student from the front row. When even he is unable to answer the teacher says in exasperation: 'So even you have given up.' Farhan tries once again and with the help of the teacher, he is able to do it correctly this time. The teacher identifies for the class the verb, object and adverb in the Urdu sentence which she had written earlier on the blackboard. Then she writes the English translation of the sentence on the blackboard.

The teacher now writes a variation of the same sentence in Urdu and explains the tense used. One student in the back row is listening very attentively. When the teacher asks a question he murmurs the answer softly to himself. The student next to me has his textbook open in front of him. He starts copying the sentences from the blackboard. The students seem to be making an effort to translate the sentence on the blackboard as the teacher waits for them to do so. As they are unable to do it the teacher feels exasperated and reminds them [tells me!] that she has taught them all this before. She expresses

annoyance at their inability to do the task despite the fact that they have been taught all this earlier. A few students rehearse the sentences in low tones. They all look very attentive.

T: You should take the English exam after ten years. Why are you sitting in this class? I've told you before and still you can't do it.
The students listen to her very quietly and look embarrassed. The teacher continues with the reprimand: 'Very shameful on your part and it's also very shameful on my part (looking at me) because you reflect me.' Then she nominates Shahid who answers correctly. The teacher sounds a bit relieved: 'He has understood something at least'. She tells him to sit down and writes the English translation of the sentence on the blackboard. The students get busy in copying from the blackboard. As the teacher turns her back to write on the blackboard, some students steal a quick glance at me [presumably to see my reaction to the teacher's outburst of anger a short while ago].

8.50 The teacher writes another sentence on the blackboard in Urdu while the students watch anxiously. She underlines two words in the sentence and writes their English equivalents below them. Then she models the pronunciation of the word 'campaign' for the whole class and tells them that 'g' is silent here. She asks Farhan: 'Farhan, what tense is it?' Farhan identifies the tense correctly.
T: Which helping verb is used in the present perfect tense?
A student is nominated as the answerer and he answers correctly. Another student volunteers to answer the next question and is selected to do so. His answer is partially correct. Farhan confirms from the teacher: 'Is 'g' silent in this (referring to the word 'campaign')?'

Three students who were standing as a result of their inability to answer some questions earlier in the lesson, are told to sit down. The teacher nominates Asim to translate the next sentence. As he doesn't respond (can't answer) Farhan volunteers and is selected.
T: (addressing Farhan) Amir has got a bit confused. Let him think (in the meantime).
Farhan answers correctly.

The students are busy copying the sentences from the blackboard. There is an air of busy work in the class. The student next to me talks briefly to his neighbour. Farhan asks another clarificatory question from the teacher. The teacher answers elaborating further on the grammatical derivations of the word, e.g. adulterate is a verb, etc.

The teacher identifies the subject, verb and object in the sentence on the blackboard and tells the students that now the sentence can be changed into 'passive voice'. The student next to me cleans the ink on his hand noisily with a piece of paper. Several students look back at him with amused grins. The teacher writes the sentence in the passive form on the blackboard. The student next to me has, uptil now, copied one sentence only, and that also incorrectly. The teacher asks a student if he can identify tenses now and the student replies in the negative. The teacher reminds the class: 'You have the rules to identify them in your copies'.
A student wants to know: 'Sir, what you gave us earlier?'
T: (in a sarcastic tone) Yes, those which I gave you before Pakistan was made.
The students laugh quietly at which the teacher gets very annoyed. She tells them that there is no use of giving them anything. She tells them: 'To teach and make you understand is my job. To learn is your responsibility. If you are accustomed to being treated strictly, to make you learn - it doesn't suit you at this stage.'

8.55 The teacher continues to lecture the students on the need for them to develop their sense of responsibility; she comments that neither the students nor their families still seem to be serious about their studies, 'And then you trouble us by repeating your exams for years'.

The students listen very quietly as the teacher continues to reprimand them for their ignorance and lack of knowledge. As the teacher goes to clean the blackboard, several students begin to talk quietly. Some are smiling while others look embarrassed.

The teacher proceeds with the lesson and writes another sentence on the blackboard. She continues with the same procedure as earlier, i.e., she writes a sentence in Urdu on the blackboard and then asks questions about that sentence, which only Farhan and sometimes another student answer. (The student next to me has copied down all the sentences from the blackboard in Urdu but seems unable or uninterested in copying down their English translation.)

T: Farhan, what is it in English? (referring to the sentence on the blackboard)

As Farhan tries to answer, the teacher encourages him. He confers with his neighbour and answers correctly. The teacher writes it on the blackboard. She stands in front of Farhan and holds a one-to-one exchange with him.

T: Farhan, can we change it into passive voice?

As Farhan gives the passive form of the sentence (which the teacher writes on the blackboard), the bell rings. All the students look relieved.

T: (addressing the class) Will you prepare tenses for tomorrow?

A few students reply in the affirmative.

T: What impression will Miss (referring to me) have of you?

As we come out of class there is sudden noise and some wolf whistles and cat calls from behind us. The teacher goes back to the class angrily with the stick. I wait for a while but when I hear that some students are being caned, I decide to go to the next class.

Appendix 6D (1-6): Doing grammar (writing essays, letters, etc.)

Classroom observation notes of 7 lessons in varying size classes
of six teachers at different sites

<u>Appendix 6.D.1</u>

<u>Teacher's perception of class size: Large</u>

4-I-2/CO 8

Class: XC

Date: 7.11.91

No. of students present: 25 out of 44 students

As we enter the class the students are copying a diagram from the blackboard from their previous lesson. A few students come in. The teacher tells the students to take out their 'class work copies'. She reminds them that they have completed the lesson on the village fair. She explains the task for today. Most of the students are still busy settling down and don't seem to be listening to the teacher. The students look around, shuffling and turning pages in their exercise books. The teacher tells them to do the assigned work in their 'rough copies' now and then to copy it later in their 'fair copies'.

She writes the task on the blackboard:

> Your cousin lives in America. He has never seen a village fair. Write a letter to him giving him some details about a village fair.

(They have just finished reading 'A Village Fair', a reading text in their prescribed textbook.)

The teacher walks around the classroom as the students settle down to copy the question quietly from the blackboard. The teacher assures them that once they have written this letter, they'll be able to write short notes on this topic, i.e. a village fair, for their exams also. She then elicits from the students different ways in which they can begin the letter. She tells them: 'Next you will open the book and copy down sentences about different activities. Take five minutes. You can discuss with your partner and write the beginning of the letter.'

(The desk I am sitting at is very uncomfortable.)

The students look bewildered. Some students look into their books. The teacher tells them they don't need the book now. She walks around the classroom encouraging them to write 'just 2-3 sentences'. Several students seem to be in deep thought. A student talks to a student in the classroom, from outside, through the open door. The teacher goes out to reprimand him. She urges them to hurry up.

The students in the back row have not written anything uptil now. However, as soon as the teacher writes the address etc. on the blackboard they begin to copy it down. The teacher reprimands a student for not having written anything. She asks different students to read out for the class what they have written. She encourages them to read it out loudly. She tells the students they do not need a formal kind of opening such as, 'Thank you for your kind letter'. When she comments on what they have written, she encourages them to look at the situation as a real situation . For example, she asks one student how he can have exams and, at the same time, go to see the village fair.

The teacher elicits further ideas for the opening sentence of the letter. She goes to check a student's copy who she finds out has not written anything. She discusses the meaning of several of the opening sentences offered by the students. Then she walks back to the blackboard and asks another student to read out his opening sentence in a loud voice. No

one seems to be listening. Another student reads his first sentence. (Once again the other students in the class do not seem to be paying attention to what their class mates are reading.) The teacher elaborates on his answer; then she explains alternative ways of beginning the letter on the blackboard. I don't think anyone is really paying attention though some of the students look at the teacher as she explains.

She tells the students to write it again, 'at least the first para'. There is complete silence in the classroom. The students sit with their heads bent over their exercise books. They all seem to be working. In the meantime, she writes the following ideas for beginning the letter on the blackboard:

> Reasons for not writing
> Telling him new things

She explains that these could be two different ways of beginning the letter. The students look very unsure. [It seems that the teacher's trust in their ability to write something on their own does not match the low level of confidence they have in their own abilities and/or in their proficiency in the language.]

A student in the back row (sitting next to me) goes to sit on a vacant seat in the front row. The teacher goes around explaining/ reassuring the students, and encouraging them to focus on the meaning of what they are writing.

[The teacher told me during the discussion we had on the lesson afterwards that as the students were unable to write a complete letter, she encouraged them to write the opening sentences in class (while telling them to copy the information from the book for the rest of the letter). She said she had two aims for today's lesson:
1 To prepare the students for two kinds of exam questions - a short note on 'a village fair' and a composition on the same topic.
2 To teach them letter writing (beginning and closing, etc.)

She also told me that she had planned today's work with the following ideas in mind: 'The students will copy the letter from grammar books in any case but at least now, i.e., after this initial work in class, there will be meaningful copying.' She was also happy that at least some students had made an effort to write in class. Regarding the teaching of writing she said that students make a lot of spelling mistakes. Furthermore, 'If 50 copies have these errors and there is only one teacher to check them, it is a problem. Also teachers are used to the students producing written work in correct form only in their fair copies. Therefore teachers don't accept individual work with a lot of errors. It also increases the work of the teacher so most of the teachers prefer to dictate the essays and letters.']

Appendix 6.D.2

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

2-II-3/CO 1[1]

Class: XC

Date: 11.2.92

No. of students present: 38 out of 49 students

(This is a mixed class comprising approximately an equal number of boys and girls.)

9.22 The teacher tells the students to organise themselves into six groups of their choice. The students seem to be familiar with this pattern of classroom organisation and settle down without any great hassle, though there is a lot of pulling of chairs and noise during the settling down phase.

The students in each group are given a 'copy' of a student from XB (the other section of their class). The teacher distributes the exercise books opened on the page she wants them to look at, i.e.,where they have written a letter of application to the Headmistress of their school asking for permission to go home early. There are seven groups of students instead of six so the teacher goes to the staff room to bring another exercise book. The students are told to read the letters in groups and underline the errors in pencil. As the students begin to do the task, the teacher points their attention to the format of the letter of application and how it is different from personal letters.

9.27 T: All right, all eyes on the Board.
The teacher divides the blackboard into two halves to compare the differences between the formats of a personal letter and a letter of application. (However, later she concentrates on the format of the letter of application only.) She begins the sample letter on the blackboard by writing her own address; as she does so, she elicits information about punctuation etc. from the students. The teacher continues to elicit the format of the letter from the students, following the same procedure. The students seem to be attentive and taking an interest in the activity.

The teacher focuses on punctuation and spellings and tells the class to repeat after her the spelling of 'secondary' two times. The students seem to be in a jovial mood and do it in chorus with great enthusiasm. The teacher gives other details about the format of an application and most of the students look at the blackboard as she does so. In between she continues to ask questions such as: 'Why leave a line after writing the address?', 'Why do we put a full stop here?' etc. The students are encouraged to think about what they are doing. The teacher tells them after she finishes working at each part of the format of the letter on the blackboard, to look at the letter given to them and mark the errors, if any. Some students indulge in playful behaviour as they answer the questions of the teacher.

[The students are required to write a letter in the Board exams. If the format of the letter is correct they are sure to get pass marks in this question.]

Next she discusses the content of the letter. The students shout out the answers together. She encourages the students to self-correct and also to correct each others' mistakes. The teacher has to speak very loudly (which seems to involve a lot of effort on her part, as she

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[1]English is used as the language of communication in this classroom.

has a soft voice) to get herself heard, particularly when all the students begin to answer together. The two groups at the back of the class comprise boys only; they have been engaged in playful banter (passing remarks at each other) throughout the lesson in low tones. The teacher sometimes calls out the names of a few students in a warning tone to get them to pay attention to the lesson. The students continue to shout out the answers together as the teacher elicits further information about the format of the letter, etc.

9.44 After going through the format of a letter of application on the blackboard with the whole class and telling the students to mark the errors in the exercise books given to them earlier (by comparing it to the model), the teacher asks them to return the exercise books. After collecting these she tells the students to take out their own 'copies' and dictates the task to them: 'Write a letter of application to the Headmistress for not coming to school yesterday'.

The teacher walks around the classroom as the students begin to write the letter individually. There is an air of joviality in the classroom but soon all the students settle down to work. The teacher separates the boys in one group. As she goes around the class, she separates more students from their groups and talks quietly to some individual students. A student, in the group next to me, points out to her friend an error in the format of her letter. All the students settle down to work individually (though they are still sitting in groups).

The teacher stands at the back of the class monitoring their work. She spots a student talking and asks her if she is discussing what to write [legitimate talk]. She sometimes calls a student's name in a warning tone. She reminds the class that a 'comma' is not used in 'Yours' in 'Yours obediently' at the end of the letter. She reprimands a student severely for being absent for a long time.

The teacher continues to monitor the work of the students by walking around the classroom. She separates another girl from her group. Most of the students seem to be working seriously. She also separates the girls in the group next to me. One girl protests: 'Miss we are discussing' [this seems to be a sanctioned form of learner interaction in this class]. The teacher tells her that they could only discuss before beginning to write the letter and not while they are writing. The teacher walks around the class monitoring their work and separating more students from their groups by rearranging (pulling out) their chairs and making them sit facing the blackboard. Sometimes when she notices an error of a student she explains it to the whole class.

The teacher reprimands a student for disturbing his neighbours. (He had been reprimanded earlier also for being absent for a long time.) A student walks over to the teacher to show her his work. She talks to him quietly asking a few clarificatory questions [I think] as she goes through his work. Another student has also completed his work and waits for the teacher to correct his work. A student from the front of the class goes to the teacher (who is standing at the back of the classroom) to ask her something. She calls out a student's name who is in the front of the class and is presently busy talking and laughing in a loud voice. She tells him to turn around and face the wall.

9.55 The bell rings for recess. Some students stop working immediately and begin to move their chairs back to their places.
T: Did I ask you to get up?
She allows a student who has finished his work to go out. She asks the students how many of them have finished. As they identify themselves by raising their hands she tells them they can also leave for recess. The other students are still working and seem to increase their speed as they realise that they will not be allowed to leave the class till they have completed their work.

5-II-1/CO 5

Class: VI

Date: 4.3.92

No. of students present: 61 out of 75 students

The students have moved into a room which is smaller than their previous classroom (where this class was held during my first visit to the school) after completing their turn of sitting in the corridor for one month. (The different sections of class VI take turns to sit in the corridor for 1-2 months each.)

As we go to the class the teacher decides to perch herself on a students' desk in the middle of the room to be under the fan. (The teacher and I had been playing badminton before this class.) She is sitting in the middle of the room, close to where I am sitting today; the classroom is so crowded that there is no space for me to go to the back of the class.

Several students crowd around the teacher with their exercise books, each of them trying to get their work checked first. About 20 students are standing all around her while other students are busy talking or doing other work. The students' work (which the teacher is checking) comprises an essay on 'My pen'.

I take this opportunity to talk to some students who are standing close to me. These students tell me that they have copied the essay from the blackboard; and that their teacher had written it on the blackboard in an earlier period today. [I didn't know she had had a class with them earlier today also. Also, I am a bit confused because Tahira, one of the star students in the class, had shown the same essay to me yesterday in her exercise book.] When I ask Tahira how she had written the essay before the teacher had given it to them in class, she tells me that she had copied it from a book; then 'Miss wrote the same for the rest of the class on the blackboard'.

The girls show me colourful drawings of various kinds of pens in their exercise books. [This seems to be the only bit of creativity that was involved in writing this essay.]

After about 10 minutes the teacher tells the girls to give her their exercise books and to go back to their seats. A student at the back suggests that they should 'do reading' of the next 'lesson' in the textbook. The teacher tells Tahira (who is also the class monitor), 'Just make them read' (zara inko reading karvaa do). But the student who had made this suggestion volunteers and is selected by the teacher to lead the class in the choral reading of the text. [This girl has obviously prepared the lesson at home.] She comes to the front of the class. She begins to read the text aloud [very often not in meaningful phrases] and all the students repeat after her, mechanically, in chorus.

Another student from the front row volunteers to lead the class in reading the same lesson again. (All this while the teacher is busy checking their exercise books.) As she 'reads' well the teacher tells her to repeat the lesson once again. All the students repeat after her in chorus as before. Then the teacher asks the students if anyone can 'read' the same text with translation this time. The student who had led the class in reading the first time volunteers to do so. (She has already written the translation in her diary at home, probably in anticipation of today's lesson. Now she reads it from her diary.) As her

translation is not very accurate, the teacher interrupts her now and again to give the correct translation.

Next, Tahira is nominated by the teacher to lead the class in choral reading and translation of the text. Tahira translates the first two lines and then continues with the reading of the text only. When the teacher asks her why she is not translating she confesses that she doesn't know the rest of it. Another student offers to read the text again with translation and is selected to do so. After the class has done the choral reading of the lesson with translation twice (sometimes translating word by word), the teacher tells the students to read it once on their own. They read it loudly all together.

A student asks the teacher if they should 'do writing' of the lesson [copy the text in their exercise books]. She tells them to write [copy] it in their writing copies along with translation for homework.

[Midhat's lessons are livelier than all the other classes I've observed in this school uptil now. The learners participate very actively and the teacher seems to take personal interest in the students. She accepts their suggestions and seems to be very sensitive to their needs. She scolds them occasionally but in a humorous manner and generally seems to enjoy working with them. The atmosphere in her class is friendly but work-oriented at the same time. Despite the fact that it is their first year of learning English, most of the learners have a beautiful handwriting and can write (copy) very neatly in their exercise books. There seems to be a joy in copying also. Occasionally they also get an opportunity to show some individual creativity, e.g., in drawing of pens today (after copying the essay on 'My pen' from the blackboard). The enthusiasm of the learners in this class is contagious and in sharp contrast to the attitude of the learners in senior classes. I wonder if these students will be able to retain their enthusiasm and particularly their joy in learning even in senior classes. Presently they seem to be bubbling with energy and enthusiasm. It is a treat, indeed, to watch teaching and learning *in this large class!*]

Appendix 6.D.4

Teacher's perception of class size: Very large

1-I-1/CO 5

Class: VIII

Date: 3.10.91

No. of students present: 50 out of 65 students

The teacher writes the topic of the day on the blackboard as:

Application for sick leave to the Headmistress, Moonlight Govt. School.

The teacher announces [tells me!], 'This is the first time we are doing it in class VIII'. Then she confirms from the class, 'Have we done it before?'
SS: No, Miss.
The teacher tells the students to begin writing the application 'on their own'. She warns them that it should be written neatly and with correct spellings. The students are advised to do it in their 'rough copies' first. They are told further, 'Don't ask each other or copy from each other. If you have a problem, ask me'.

Several students begin to write immediately. [It is obvious that they have done this work before, perhaps in class VII.] The teacher sits at her desk in the front of the class while the students get busy in writing the application. She reprimands some students for talking. A student comes into the class in search of another student. The teacher is annoyed at the slightest hint of noise in the classroom.

The teacher tells the class, 'First, you all write it. Then three or four girls will read out their work.'

When a student signals that she has finished, she is assigned another task: 'Write another application for an urgent piece of work?'

The teacher tells the students to let her know when they have finished writing the application: 'Then I'll discuss with you and correct the spellings. You'll do it yourself first, then we'll write it on the blackboard.'

Some students discuss with each other when the teacher is not looking at them. The girl sitting next to me begins writing the application very well but gets 'stuck' very soon. [She has probably forgotten the application from the previous year.] She gets busy in sharpening her pencil; the teacher shouts at her for using such delaying tactics.

The teacher continues to sit at her desk all this while watching everyone from her vantage position in the front of the classroom. She asks Hina to show her her work. Hina takes her exercise book to the teacher's desk and waits there while the teacher checks her work. Hina goes back to her seat and begins to make the necessary corrections. There is a lot of work related activity such as, sharpening of pencils, periods of deep concentration and

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[2]Both the applications, i.e., application for sick leave and for permission to leave the school early for an urgent piece of work, are found in the grammar book entitled 'Pak Grammar and Composition for Secondary Schools' used by almost all the teachers in government schools. I learnt later that the same applications were given to students in other schools also.

writing followed by vigorous erasing of the material written down, and quiet discussion between neighbours. All the students seem to be making an effort to do the task.

T: (addressing the class) Do you remember the spelling of 'respectfully'? Anila (the girl next to me) is once again reprimanded and the teacher threatens to come and look at her copy and find out what she is up to.

The teacher asks the class: 'Have you written both the applications'?
[I don't think she had told anyone except Hina to do so.]
One students answers in a low tone, 'No, Miss'.
T: In board exams you'll have to write 2-3 applications. It's all   part of your grammar and you need to know them. I'll give you another two minutes to complete it.

She calls Hina to her desk to check her work again. She asks Razia (another class monitor who also sits in the front row) if she has completed her work. Then she announces to the class: 'First Hina will read out her application.' Hina stands in front of the class (facing the class) and reads her application in a loud, clear voice. Next, the teacher calls on Razia to read her application, 'And Hina will tell you your mistakes'. Hina corrects Razia, in between, as she reads out her application. (Razia's application is identical to Hina's.)

T: Has everyone copied the heading?
She asks Hina and Razia which one of them will write the first application on the blackboard. They decide amongst themselves that Razia will write the first application and Hina will write the second one after that. The teacher tells the other students to check their work by comparing it to the model application on the blackboard. She also tells them to mark their spelling mistakes by underlining them and then to write the correct word. She warns them: 'Otherwise if there are spelling mistakes, I'll beat you.'

As Razia writes the first application on the blackboard, the teacher corrects her mistakes. She also invites other students in the class to point out 'Razia's mistakes'. Then she tells Hina: 'I'll give you two other applications. *No, I won't give them to you. You'll have to write them yourself.* I'll just guide you because if you write yourself you won't forget' (my emphasis).

Anila begins to copy the application from the blackboard. Several other students are doing the same. Some students in the back row stand up to see the blackboard more clearly. The teacher looks at the blackboard very intently as Razia writes the application on the blackboard. Then she asks the class: 'Is 'obediently' spelt correctly?'
Several SS: Yes, Miss.
T: Check spelling mistakes in your own work.
She points to the word 'respectfully' on the blackboard and the students read out the spelling in chorus. They are told to repeat it three times. The same procedure is repeated for a number of other words, such as, 'attend', 'kindly' and 'grant'.

Appendix 6.D.5

Teacher's perception of class size: Neither small nor large

3-I-2/CO 3[3]

Class: VI B

Date: 31.10.91

No. of students present: 39 out of 43 students

4.20 The teacher writes on the blackboard: 'My Classroom'. The students are invited to decide the number of sentences they would like to have in the essay. Some students say 10, others 15. There is a general vote in which everyone participates with a show of hands.

One student offers a sentence, 'It's my classroom'. The teacher writes it on the blackboard. Other students protest and offer instead, 'It's *our* classroom'. About five students volunteer to offer the next sentence. The teacher selects one of them and writes the sentence on the blackboard which the students copy down in their exercise books. S3 offers the third sentence which the teacher also writes on the blackboard. The students shout out their disagreement about the number of windows in their classroom in the previous sentence; some of them call the teacher's attention to the number of windows they actually have in the room. A student comes into the classroom to call another student.

S4 offers the next sentence: 'It has 43 chairs'.
Several students offer: 43 children
T: Chairs, tables and students.
The same 3-4 students raise their hands now. Others have got busy in copying down the sentences from the blackboard. The same procedure continues. All the students are very active and they look around at the objects in the room when a sentence is offered.

Some students remind the teacher that they have already got 10 sentences (the number agreed on unanimously earlier) on the blackboard. Other students want to offer more sentences and ask the teacher to carry on with the same procedure. If a student has a sentence to offer he usually stands up with his hand raised to get the attention of the teacher in order to be selected for the next turn .

(There are two big soft boards on the back wall of the classroom.)

The students talk excitedly to each other. The teacher tells the students who have their hands raised (9 students) to come to one side of the classroom. She tells them not to give any more sentences. Some students take out their fair copies and begin to copy the essay in their fair copies. A few students offer to give more sentences. The teacher asks a student in the back row but he tries to evade her eye; instead another student offers a sentence. The teacher and the students check together whether this sentence has already been written on the blackboard or not.

The students are told to count the sentences on the blackboard. They all count them together loudly. The teacher tells the students to select some sentences and write a paragraph. The students want to know if they should write it in their fair copies.

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[3]Both English and Urdu are used for the purpose of communication in this classroom.

[I wonder why the teacher does not link this lesson up with the use of conjunctions which was the topic for the grammar lesson yesterday.]

The teacher tells the students the format for the composition by drawing a diagram on the blackboard. She tells them again that they have to form a paragraph using these sentences.

4.40 Several students begin to write in their exercise books. The teacher 'catches' one student doing something else and slaps him lightly. Everyone seems to be working now.

The teacher tells the students apparently [but I think it is really addressed to me], how in the first semester they did not know how to make sentences; however, now they can do them very well now. (This is the second semester. The school has three semesters and there is a progress test after each semester.) Two students say quietly [almost indignantly, I think], 'It was very easy. You just had to look around the classroom and give the sentences.' Some students ask the teacher what the size (physical size) of their classroom is. She gives them an approximate measure.

The teacher walks around the classroom while the students are busy working. She announces to the class that they will later do the 'formation of the paragraph' on the blackboard, 'to see where the different sentences fit number-wise'. A number of students say they have already done it.

The teacher asks the class if everyone has finished copying the sentences from the blackboard. Many students answer, 'No, Miss'. However, she erases all the sentences from the blackboard. Next she writes one of the sentences again as number 1. Then she writes numbers (1-15) on the blackboard as follows:

1 This is my classroom.	6	11
2	7	12
3	8	13
4	9	14
5	10	15

The student next to me (as presumably most of the other students) have already copied down all the sentences that the teacher had written on the blackboard earlier.

4.50 The bell rings.

One student wants to know, 'Miss, can we make our own sentences?'
The teacher elicits sentences according to the order in which they were written earlier on the blackboard; she writes them down again reordering them by writing them in front of different numbers which she has already written on the blackboard. She tells the students that she is numbering the sentences now but that they don't have to number them when writing the paragraph. The student next to me copies down the sentences along with the numbers. The teacher doesn't offer or elicit any reasons from the students for reordering the sentences in this way.

3-I-2/ CO 6

Class: VI B

Date: 5.11.91

No. of students present: 39 out of 43 students
(This lesson is a continuation of the 'composition' lesson from the previous week).

4.20 The teacher asks the students about their paragraphs on 'My Classroom'. Some students say they have written it in their rough copies. Others have written it in their fair copies. She asks a student in the front row (who seems to be a bright student) to give her his exercise book. As the teacher reads the paragraph in his exercise book (which they were writing together in the class last week), other students wait in silence. She tells the students to listen carefully as she reads out the paragraph. The task is to see if the order of the sentences is correct in the paragraph.

All the students have their own paragraphs (from the previous week) in front of them; they look at their exercise books while the teacher reads out the paragraph (which has been reorganised) from the exercise book of the bright student. The teacher explains the layout of the paragraph in Urdu. The students copy it down as she refers to it on the blackboard.

The student next to me has not done his work. He looks at the blackboard and copies down what the teacher is writing on the blackboard. [The teacher seems to be copying the paragraph from the exercise book of the bright student making slight changes here and there.] She tells the students to copy it down in their fair copies.

Most of the students get busy in copying from the blackboard. They all seem to be doing it very diligently. Some students are still turning pages or looking into their bags; they generally seem to be getting ready to do the task, i.e., copy from the blackboard. The teacher tells the students that they don't need to number the sentences. The students work quietly. They seem to be quite familiar with this kind of activity. The class is working very quietly. At least three students are still not writing but the teacher doesn't notice as she is busy writing [copying] on the blackboard with her back towards the class. Some students want to know if they should do this work in their rough or fair copies. Several students raise their hands in response to a question by the teacher.

One student reminds the teacher that today they were supposed to have done poetry. (This division of 'topics', e.g., reading, grammar, poetry etc., according to the days of the week was given to the students last week by the teacher. In fact when some students reminded her that they did not have poems in their textbook, she had told them that they would get the poems from other books.). She tells them, 'I told you last Thursday we won't have poetry from now on. She adds in a half joking manner [which I think is really used to veil the threat behind it], 'I'll see you in March (March is the time of final exams), when I'll have a record of everything you do.'

A couple of students have their General Science books open in front of them (which is in the next period). The student from whose exercise book the teacher is 'copying' on the blackboard is not writing, but he sits quietly.

As the teacher finishes writing on the blackboard, some studentstell her that they have finished their work. The teacher asks for a red pen and goes around the class checking their work; the students who have done their work either sit around waiting for the teacher to check their work or begin to do other work quietly. The class is very well disciplined. The students seem to be tuned very well to the teacher's style and to observing the rules of classroom behaviour.

The student next to me is doing some other work [his previous home work I think]. There is a low hum and an air of busy activity in the classroom. Most of the students have completed their work and now get busy in doing other work or wait quietly for the teacher to come to them to check their work. The teacher walks around the classroom checking the work of the students. Some students are now copying the same paragraph in their fair copies.

[The classroom rule in operation at the moment seems to be: As you wait (patiently!) for your turn you can do other work, but if you don't want to do anything else just sit quietly.]

About three students visit their friends to discuss something very quietly. Several students begin to look around and talk quietly to their neighbours or they shuffle with their bags. The teacher checks the work of the student next to me but she doesn't comment on the half completed exercise in his copy (which he is working on at the moment). As more students complete their work, they begin to talk; but they all talk in hushed tones.

The teacher asks the class how many students are working in their rough copies. Several students raise their hands (about half the class). She warns them that if they hand in their work for checking in the next class, she'll write 'late work' on their exercise books. Four students visit their friends in different parts of the room. The teacher ignores them. She is busy checking the work of those students who have completed it. Several students begin to pack their bags. (This is the second last period.) Three students go to the door and talk to a student who it seems wants to come in.

Several students leave their seats now and crowd around the teacher. (They are obviously tired of waiting for the teacher to come to them.) A student takes his book to the teacher for some clarification. The teacher goes to her desk. Another student takes his work to the teacher to get it checked. The students who had been sitting quietly uptil now become noisier and some of them start talking to their friends across the room. As the bell rings there is a lot of hustle and bustle in the classroom.

The teacher assigns the homework (which all students in this school are expected to do everyday), 'Complete grammar copies and read text.'

<u>Appendix 6.D.6</u>

<u>Teacher's perception of class size: Neither small nor large</u>

6-II-2/ CO 1

Class: X

Date: 22.2.92

No. of students presents: 35 out of 47 students

As we enter the class the teacher tells the students, 'Miss Fauzia will be coming to your class again for a few days'. She comments on a student who she spots in the class today and who has apparently come to school after a long time.

8.37 The teacher talks individually to Farhan (the star student in this class) asking him what essays they have done uptil now. Then she goes to the blackboard to write the topic for today. The students are still settling down taking out their exercise books, etc. The teacher begins to write an essay on the blackboard entitled 'An interesting hockey match'. She doesn't use the help of any notes but seems to know the essay very well. (She also teaches English to the students of classes IX and X at a coaching centre in the evening.) The students begin to copy it down immediately in their exercise books. There is complete silence in the classroom as all the students settle down to work (copying from the blackboard).

There is an air of serious work in the classroom. The teacher writes on the blackboard with her back towards the class. However, there seems to be no need to discipline the students or reprimand them for talking today as all of them are engaged in copying diligently from the blackboard. The student in front of me is not writing but sits quietly. (The teacher has very neat and legible hand writing.) There is a hum of busy activity in the classroom. This seems like real work. The student next to me is copying very intently as are all the other students in the class. I cannot spot a single student who is not engaged in writing [copying from the blackboard].

8.45 As the blackboard is filled up the teacher checks from some students in the front row if they have copied the first few lines. As she erases a part of the blackboard there is no protest from anyone. Everyone seems to have copied it down by now.

There is enough space in the classroom for the number of students present. Only two desks are being shared by three students each. There are two students at all the other desks and all of them seem to have adequate space for writing comfortably.

The teacher writes the meaning of a word in Urdu. Then she continues to write the essay on the blackboard. There is no indiscipline or even a hint of misbehaviour in the class today. The teacher has not said a word since she began writing at the beginning of the class; probably she does not need to say anything as all the students seem to be familiar with the task and are copying very diligently. There is an atmosphere of real work being done in the classroom. If a student can't read a word on the blackboard he asks a neighbour very quietly. No one asks the teacher. The teacher underlines an idiom she has used in the essay and writes its meaning on the blackboard.

She erases the next few lines on the blackboard. There is a slight increase in the 'hum' in the classroom but all classroom talk seems to be related to the work they are doing. The students seem to be very familiar with this kind of activity. The teacher talks to Farhan quietly . She asks another student, 'How many pages is it?. Some students offer in low

tones: 'Miss, six pages', 'three pages' etc. The teacher talks to Farhan and his neighbour in the front row very quietly.

8.55 The teacher addresses Aslam (who is sitting in front of me) and then comes to talk to him individually inquiring the reasons for his long absence from school. Several students laugh as the teacher talks to him and particularly when he says that he wasn't well. All the students are listening attentively to this exchange. Aslam looks very embarrassed. The teacher talks to another student who it seems is also irregular. A student asks the teacher about a word on the blackboard. She spells it out for him. Farhan asks the teacher something. She stands close to him and explains it to him individually.

The teacher walks over to me and asks if there is a word 'cherishgood'. I suggest that it could be two words 'cherish' and 'good'. She calls Farhan to show me the sentence in which it occurs. I explain the meaning to him. After this the teacher has an individual conference with Farhan once again. In the meantime other students have begun to talk to each other and the noise level increases in the classroom.

The teacher signals to me that the class has ended.

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Appendix 7A

Classroom observation notes of two lessons in a class perceived by the teacher (2.3) as
'large'

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

2-II-3/ CO 2

Class: XC

Number of students present: 45 out of a total of 49 students

Date: 12.2.92

Topic of the day: A poem entitled 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' from the prescribed textbook

(This is a mixed class comprising almost an equal number of boys and girls.)

9.25 The students are sitting in a semi circle in two rows. [The teacher told me later that she had started using this pattern of classroom organisation for teaching poems to keep the learners involved. Further in this way they are all in the front of the class (closer to the teacher); hence it is easy for her to 'keep an eye' on them.]

The teacher tells the students to read the first 3 stanzas of the poem. As the students read silently she writes some words on the blackboard. She waits for everyone to finish reading page 66. Then she nominates Nazia to read the whole page aloud. As Nazia reads the poem, the students follow it in their own books. The teacher nominates Adnan to read it again. She urges him to read in a louder voice after confirming from other students whether they can hear him or not.

T: Who has written the poem?
Several students answer together. She tells them to repeat this information three times in chorus. Then she asks the students to spell the last name of the poet a number of times which they all do together in chorus once again. They repeat the same procedure for the other names of the poet also. Then she asks individual students to spell it. [The students can be asked the name of the poet in the exams.]

The teacher revises similar information about some other poems done earlier, for example, 'Who has written 'The voice of God'?
Then she tells the students to read the introduction to the poem. She asks the students, 'Where is Kentucky'? When they can't answer she gives a clue, 'Which famous boxer lives in that area'?

Some students begin to act silly and the teacher has to call them back to discipline. She does so by calling out the names of a few students in a warning tone. The teacher gives examples of a rocking chair. A student says, 'Rock 'n Roll' when told to give the meaning of 'rock'. The teacher reminds them of another poem about a mother's hand. [I am sitting on the first chair in the semicircle close to the door. This had been left vacant for me. The students can see me as well as I can see all of them today.]

9.32 The teacher elicits the meaning of a word written on the blackboard. The students give the meaning both in Urdu and in English. She refers them to another poem where a similar word was used. The students look very alert as they answer the teacher's questions. The teacher tries to set up the 'one-at-a-time' rule for turn taking. She is annoyed at a student who is disturbing others and changes his place. Then she tells another boy, who was talking to him earlier, to give the meaning of a word.
T: You know why rainbow is there after rain?
A student gives a scientific explanation in Urdu which the teacher repeats for the whole class in English.

9.38 The teacher reads the first stanza of the poem aloud. She asks short questions focussing on the content of the poem. She also points their attention to grammatical

clues, such as, 'What is 'it' here?' She explains the meaning of the stanza but at the same time she continues to elicit information from the students encouraging them to answer short questions on the poem. For example, 'Rich man's mother or poor man's mother'? Some students: Everyone's.

As she spots a student who is not paying attention to the lesson, she calls her name and addresses her for a while when she explains the meaning of the poem. The teacher asks the students probing questions in between encouraging them to think about the meaning of the poem. The students answer the questions mostly in Urdu which she repeats for the whole class in English.

(There is a lot of noise from the ground outside.)

The teacher tells the students to re-read the introduction and the first stanza of the poem to see 'if you follow it'. Then she tells Sobia to read the first stanza and encourages other students to look for the central idea of this stanza. The students seem to be reading as the teacher watches them. A student asks her something. She answers, talking quietly to that student.

T (addressing the whole class): If you have finished you can raise your hand.
Saima is nominated to give the central idea of the first stanza. The teacher confirms from a student in another part of the room if he can hear Saima. She walks over to stand close to Saima and encourages her to answer. She tells the teacher she can't do so. Hasan volunteers and is selected to answer the same. After he answers, the teacher repeats the answer for the whole class while adding some more information to it.

9.46 The teacher tells the students to read the second stanza. While they read she writes the meanings of some words on the blackboard. A student has got a 'key' and he reads out the central idea of the poem from the 'key'. All the students seem to be making an effort to read. A student calls the teacher to ask the meaning of a word. Another student next to him also asks the meaning of a word.

The teacher explains the meaning of 'fountain' to the whole class focussing particularly on how it functions (so that they can relate to its metaphorical use in the poem) by drawing a diagram on the blackboard. As she explains the meanings of difficult words in the poem, she sometimes switches over to Urdu. She asks the class the difference between a pond and a lake, a stream and a river, etc. but does not pursue it. She continues to elicit the meanings of the words on the blackboard.

The teacher reads aloud the second stanza and the students follow it in their books. She explains the meaning of the stanza in English referring back to the diagram on the blackboard. She calls the name of Mustafa in a warning tone. She goes to a student who is slouching in his chair and tells him, 'Mother will tell you to sit straight'. He immediately sits up and the students around him exchange smiles with each other. When the teacher feels that she is losing the attention of some students she asks them a question, such as, 'Do you all agree?', 'Yes or No?' All students answer together loudly, 'Yes, Miss'.

There is a knock at the door. Some students draw her attention to it and she goes to the door and tellsoff the students at the door.
The bell rings.

Date: 13.2.92
(Cotinuation of the lesson from the previous day)

As we enter the class the students are already sitting in a semi-circle. The teacher is pleasantly surprised to see this and comments to me later about it.

9.22 She asks the students to give the central idea of the first stanza of the poem. She moves a student to another place; one students passes him his textbook. Sobia is nominated to give the central idea but she is unable to do so. The teacher directs the same question at the whole class. She looks around the class briefly and nominates Riffat as the answerer. A student volunteers and gives the central idea in Urdu. The teacher accepts this and does not tell her to answer in English. She warns the other students that she is going to ask anyone of them to repeat so they should listen carefully. She nominates Ali Asghar to repeat the answer. A student begins to cough violently. The teacher sends him out. As the teacher walks around the class asking questions, the students answer very hesitantly.

T: Stanza one. Anyone else?
She nominates Nazia. The teacher urges her to speak loudly. The student who had gone out earlier comes back to the class. Nargis volunteers to answer the next question and is selected to do so. She reads the answer from her exercise book. Some students correct her pronunciation of a word. The teacher nominates another student who also reads the answer from her exercise book. No one takes down any notes during the lesson (except copying down the meanings of difficult words from the blackboard). [They will probably get the central idea of the poem for the exams from 'keys' which are widely available in the market.]

The teacher stands at the back of the class and repeats the central idea of the poem in a loud voice. All students have their books open in front of them. The teacher tells them to read stanza 3. Then she nominates a student to read it out aloud. Other student read along quietly. Three students volunteer to continue with the reading of the poem. One of them is selected and he reads haltingly. Other students follow in their books. Nighat volunteers and is selected to read aloud. Some students correct her pronunciation by modelling the correct pronunciation of the word for her.

The teacher reads out the stanza eliciting the meanings from the students while she reads. The students give the meanings in Urdu. The teacher refers to a word and reminds them that they have met it in another poem earlier. The teacher has written four 'difficult' words on the blackboard. She asks the class if there is any other difficult word in the poem. She elicits the meaning of the poem and many students answer together. The teacher tries to set up, in vain, the 'one-at-a-time' rule for turn taking. Several students continue to offer the answers together.

The lesson moves on at a brisk pace. The teacher nominates a student in the second row of the semi-circle. She continues with giving a brief explanation of each stanza in the poem and occasionally elicits the meanings of some words from the students. The students seem interested in participating and offer the answers. The teacher also seems to be able to hold their attention. She calls on a student when she notices that he is not paying attention.

9.35 The teacher tells the students to read stanza 3 again. Everyone seems to be reading. The teacher gives a brief explanation of this stanza. Then she tells the students to move on to the last stanza. Shazia is nominated to read it out aloud. Another student is nominated to read the same and while she is reading the teacher writes down a list of 'difficult' words on the blackboard. A third student is nominated to read it again. The teacher keeps walking around the class as one more student reads the same stanza.

(There is a lot of noise from outside.)

Several students exchange glances as a shy looking girl is nominated to read. Though generally the students seem to like this activity some of them have started getting distracted now. The teacher stands at the back of the class and explains the meaning of this stanza. She points their attention to a word met earlier and asks the class, 'In which

lesson?' Some students answer correctly. She explains the meaning as she reads the last stanza. Then she asks the class to give the central idea of the stanza. As students read it silently (some are looking around) the teacher writes a list of numbers on the blackboard as follows:

1

2

3

4

She summarises the central idea of all the four stanzas in the poem on the blackboard. Then she elicits the central idea of the whole poem from the students. She begins to write a sentence on the blackboard: Mother . . .

Some students are looking into their exercise books. The teacher tells them to discuss the central idea of the poem briefly with each other. The girl sitting next to me discusses it with me. The teacher asks Ahsan to give the central idea of the poem. Then another student reads it out from his exercise book. [It seems she had already written it at home.] The teacher asks her if she had already written it. Another student also reads out the same from his exercise book. A third student is nominated but he does not say anything. The student who is nominated next also reads it from her exercise book. Another student volunteers; she also seems to be reading it out from her book. The teacher asks her if she had written it earlier and is only reading it out now. [It seems that most of the students have written the central idea of the poem at home, perhaps copying it from various sources, in anticipation of today's class and also as useful material to learn for their exams.]

9.48 The teacher tells the students to take out their exercise books and write the central idea of the poem. She reminds them that it should be short and precise. Some students want to know if they should write the poem or the central idea. The students get down to work with great alacrity. There is a lot of busy activity in the classroom. The teacher goes around the class checking different students' work. Some students still want to know if they have to write the poem also and the teacher tells them to write it for home work. She goes around checking the students' work. The students stand up to show her their work and seem very keen for her to check their work. A student goes out of the class briefly. All the students begin to work quietly. The student next to me seems to be writing the central idea of the poem himself. The teacher keeps a vigilant eye on the students and immediately checks any student who she sees is not working. The teacher tells a student to move up his chair (out of the semi-circle) to the centre of the class. Some students have completed their work and now stand up to show it to the teacher.

9.55 The bell rings. The students are still working (instead of being in a hurry to leave for recess) and seem to want to complete the task.

Appendix 7B

Classroom observation notes of one lesson in a class perceived by the teacher (2.3) as
'neither small nor large'

<u>Teacher's perception of class size: Neither small nor large</u>

2-I-3/ CO 6

Class: XB

Date: 21.10.91

No. of students present: 26 out of 27 students

Topic of the day: A poem entitled 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' from the prescribed textbook

T: One of you read out what you have written about your mother's hand
(the previous week's work on the poem entitled 'Beautiful hands').
A student stands up and reads out a paragraph that she has written.
The teacher asks the students if they can give the central idea of the poem. One student stands up to do so.
T: What was the homework?
SS: Questions/answers on the poem.

The teacher writes the first two lines of the poem 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' on the blackboard and asks the students what they understand by these two lines.
T: Rocks means?
A number of students answer together: 'To swing.'
T: Cradle?
SS: Baby's cot
T: What do you call it in Urdu?
Several students give the meaning in Urdu.
A students stands up to explain the two lines of the poem written on the blackboard. The teacher prompts her by asking short questions in between. Another student volunteers to answer the question. She answers incorrectly but the teacher accepts the answer.
T: Anything else?

The teacher divides the class into groups and gives them a task: 'Discuss a stanza each.'
The students move their chairs to form into groups. It is a big room with movable chairs and the students get into groups without much hassle. There are four groups (6 students in three groups and 8 students in the fourth group) and each group discusses one stanza from the poem. The students seem to be reading quickly. The teacher goes to each group and tells them to underline the difficult words. As the students discuss in groups the teacher writes the following word list on the blackboard:

> blessings
> strength
> grace
> palace
> cottage
> hovel
> castle

11.15 The teacher reads the first stanza aloud and says, 'Let's go through the meanings of words'.
T: Blessings?
Some students answer trying to guess the meaning of the word. The teacher encourages them to think. She prompts them to identify the type of text: 'Is it a prayer or a song?' One student gives the central idea of the poem. (The teacher never discourages any student.) She goes through the meanings of all the words on the blackboard with the whole class. She asks the students the difference between a 'palace' and a 'castle' and tells them to do it for homework, '[Write] other words with the same meaning. Do it as

we did for 'stream', 'brook' etc. [she pointed out later that she did vocabulary extension exercises with this class only and not with her other class, i.e. XC]. She explains that a 'cottage' is a type of hut. She encourages the students to try and guess the meanings of the words.

T: Why should god's blessings be on women?

A student answers. The teacher encourages other students to think about it. The students try to answer in English. They are encouraged to do so even if they cannot always answer in 'correct' English.

The teacher summarizes the meaning of the poem for the whole class. A student says something quietly. The teacher encourages her to answer. Sometimes the teacher repeats the students' answers correcting them or adding other information as she does so. As they come across the word 'rainbow' in the text the teacher asks:

T: Why do we have 7 colours?

Some students try to explain the reason. The teacher keeps asking short probing questions in order to make the students think (cf. discussion of the lesson on 20.10.91). She explains the main idea of the poem by using the analogy of making a structure in a mould.

T: Anyone else?

She asks me if I want to add something to the explanation of the poem.

11.30 (Stanza 2)

T: Ambreen just give us the gist of the stanza.

As the nominated student can't do so the teacher gives the gist herself.

T: When/how will mother's help mould a child?

[There is constant interaction between the teacher and the students. The teacher seems to have a close rapport with the class. She constantly breaks up the tasks into smaller, more manageable, units. If they come across a word which also has occurred in a previous lesson she refers them to that lesson and encourages them to think about the meaning.]

T: How many senses do we have?

SS: Five

T: What are they?

The students list them together in chorus.

The teacher reminds the students: 'I told you a story in connection with it'. The students recall the story about the importance of the role of the mother in building the character of a child. The teacher explains the meaning of the stanza.

(There is a lot of noise in the ground outside.)

T: Stanza 3

The teacher asks a student in each group to give their interpretation of the stanza. Then she explains it herself.

A students comes in with the message that 10 girls are wanted for their medical check-up. The teacher continues with the lesson after this brief interruption, 'What is the work of women here?'

A number of students answer in chorus.

T: What's a mother's job?'

S: To guide the child towards goodness.

T: How have people won rewards?

The students listen attentively as the teacher explains. No one takes down any notes.

T: Anyone else who can explain better or add something which I have left out?

T: 4th stanza.

A student summarises the gist of the stanza. The teacher prompts the students to give short answers which she elaborate on while explaining the stanza herself. She refers to the play 'Tempest' and asks how many students have read it. Five students raise their hands.

T: Any other play by Shakespeare?

11.45 The bell rings.

Appendix 9 A

Classroom observation notes of 'doing a lesson' (four class hours)
in Nighat's class at site 4

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

4-II-2/ CO 2

Class: IX

Date: 26.1.92

No. of students present in class: 46 out of 50 students

Topic of the day: 'Nursing', a reading text from the prescribed textbook.

(There are two periods in a row from 11.20 - 12.15)

The teacher begins a new lesson without completing the previous lesson. [The teacher told me later that she did this in order to teach one complete 'lesson' during my visit to the school; so that I could get a clearer idea of her class.]

The teacher begins the lesson by eliciting the names of professions from the students. Several students offer the answer, both individually and all together.

11.25 There are three students sitting at most of the desks. The classroom looks very full. As they are big boys they seem to be sitting quite uncomfortably together.

The teacher makes a short list on the blackboard of the professions 'that serve human beings'. She tells the students to open their books on the relevant page (which they have to find themselves by looking at the table of contents). She tells the students to read the first paragraph silently. In the meantime she writes some questions on the blackboard. The student next to me reads 'silently' (but is audible). A student is standing and is told to settle down by the teacher. A student raises his hand. The teacher walks over to him and talks to him briefly. She sees three students sharing a textbook. She takes a book from another student, telling his neighbour to share the book with him, and gives his book to these students.

(The door of the classroom is broken and there is constant noise from outside.)

The teacher elicits answers from the students. Then she sets another task: Read a part of the text quickly to find out the definition of nursing. While the students are reading the teacher writes a few more questions on the blackboard. Two students raise their hands volunteering to answer the questions. The student who is selected reads out a portion of the text as the answer.
T: Anyone else?
A student self selects to give the answer. The teacher refers the class to the first line in the text and reads out some words inviting the students to identify what kinds of words they are (grammatical class of the words). Some students offer, 'adjectives'. The teacher explains: 'When you use a definite article before them - 'the young' means young people.' She reminds the students that they have met similar kinds of words before also. She writes a word on the blackboard and asks them to look for it in the text. Then she tells them to read the line in which the word occurs and see if they can guess the meaning. The teacher gives a further example of the word by using it in a sentence.

(It's very windy outside. Some students tell the teacher, 'Miss, it is raining outside'. The students break into excited talk about the weather. The teacher ignores and continues with the lesson.)

The next task is set: 'Now, read the next paragraph. What personalities are mentioned?' The student next to me is busy writing something. I think he is copying the questions from the blackboard. The teacher walks over to a student and asks him if he understands

the task. (She goes out briefly to talk to someone at the door.) Three students raise their hands. A student asks the teacher for the meaning of a word. The student next to me (at the back of the class) raises his hand. As one student begins to answer by giving the list of names several other students join in and give the list of personalities together with him. T: Are they common people?

She tells the students to read the text again and find out what Islam says about the profession of Nursing. She instructs them to move their fingers on the lines as they read. [She said later that it gives her an idea about who is reading and who is not.] She talks briefly to a teacher outside. Meanwhile the students are busy reading the text.

11.43 The teacher asks a question to introduce the main idea of the next paragraph in the text: 'How did the holy prophet behave with the sick people?' A student reads out the answer from the book. The teacher keeps prompting the students and another student adds more information to the answer given earlier. The student next to me repeats the answer softly with the teacher.
The teacher gives the next question. A student is nominated to answer and once again he reads out the answer from the book.

A student comes in to talk to one student. Apparently he just wanted to borrow a pencil from him. The students laugh at this and the teacher sends him out reprimanding him for disturbing the class.

The teacher nominates a student to repeat the answer. Another student is nominated; he stands up without offering the answer. While another student hesitates, a student self selects and reads out the answer. The teacher tells him it is not the answer to her question. [The students seem to be making an effort but an air of monotony can now be felt in the class.] Most of the students begin to look distracted.

The low hum outside increases to a loud noise as the bell rings for the period to end.

11.50 [The lesson continues as the teacher has two periods in a row with this class today.]
T: Ninth class. Why are you wasting so much time?
She seems to be getting annoyed at their lack of response. Some students have started doing other things instead of paying attention to the lesson. It seems that they are losing concentration which is demanded by the tasks they are given. Another student answers incorrectly and the teacher reprimands him for not listening to the question. The student next to me reads out the correct answer.

[Though it is the sixth question the activity seems to have been dragging on for a very long time.]

Some students are still with the teacher. She nominates a student in the front row instructing him to listen to her first before answering the question. She addresses him repeating the question. He answers correctly and sits down. (There is a lot of noise from the adjoining classrooms.) The teacher continues with the same procedure asking more questions on the same paragraph on page 80. It is a long paragraph packed with factual information. A student offers the answer: 'Hazrat Fatima Jinnah.'
The teacher wants to know, 'OK, who was Hazrat Fatima?'
Several students offer different answers. The teachers refers them back to the original question.

She tells them to read the next paragraph (it is a short paragraph). Once again some students read it 'audibly', though in a very soft voice. The teacher begins to ask questions on this paragraph.

She tells the students to take out their exercise books. The students break into immediate chatter. She writes 'H.W' on the blackboard and tells them to note down the homework. (It is the set of questions that were done orally in class today.) The students begin to copy them down immediately. There is an air of busy activity as the students settle down to copying them from the blackboard. A student wants to know, 'Miss, what have you written after holy prophet?' The students exchange comments as they copy from the blackboard. The teacher explains the meaning of the questions and guides the students in answering them. She repeats the guidelines in more detail.

She waits for the students to finish copying the questions. Then she tells them to begin working on them now. A student wants to know, 'Miss, fair copy?' She tells the students to write the answers in 'class work copies'. She tells them to try and answer question number 3 now and complete the rest for homework. She walks around the class checking if everyone has started working or not. She instructs the students to use simple language in answering the questions and 'not just copy from the book'. She reprimands a student for not bringing his book.

12.05 The teacher goes around helping the students, monitoring their work and making sure that all of them have access to a textbook. A student asks his friend something related to the task who refers him to the teacher. One student has finished his work and stands up to show it to the teacher.

Three students who are sitting on a broken desk stand up to fix their seat. When they are unable to fix it they remain standing and bend over their desk to write.

The teacher goes around stopping occasionally to talk to individual students. There is enough space between the three columns of desks for the teacher to walk around comfortably. The teacher asks the class if they have finished. She nominates a student to read out 'whatever you've written'. Other students listen quietly. The student who had finished earlier stands up with his hand raised volunteering to read his answer. As he gives the answer, the teacher talks to him individually. Other students begin to discuss quietly.

There is a bit of unrest in the classroom as some students stand up and begin to pack their packs. (This is the last period.) Two students (probably the monitors) leave the class with their bags. The teacher tells the class to be quiet. As she walks around a couple of students show her their work. She explains something to one student standing close to him. She looks at the work of another student and corrects his spellings.

Several students have started packing their bags now. The teacher addresses the class: 'Ninth class. Note one more thing. Tomorrow everyone should bring their books. Please do bring it.'
The three students are busy fixing their desk again. The noise increases as the students get ready to go home. The teacher tells them to continue writing till the bell rings. They all seem to be waiting impatiently for the bell to ring.

4-II-2/CO 4

Class: IX

Date: 27.1.92

No. of students present in class: 43 out of 50 students

Topic of the day: (It is a continuation of the previous lesson.)

(The lesson had started when I went in a few minutes late to the class.)

11.25 The teacher tells the students to read the third paragraph on page 81 to find out 'What's written about Florence Nightingale'. The students begin to read silently. She tells the students to move their fingers on the lines so that she knows where they are reading.

[11.27 - 11.35 and 11.37 - 11.43, map of classroom interaction]

11.43 The teacher tells the students to take out their class work copies to write down the questions. She writes the questions on the blackboard and tells the students to copy them down in their rough 'copies'. One student wants to know, 'Miss, shall we start copying?' Another student queries (referring to a question on the blackboard), 'Miss, what have you used 'she' for?' There is a low hum in the classroom as the students begin to copy the questions from the blackboard. A few students at the back stand up to see the blackboard more clearly.

The teacher writes four questions on the blackboard and then walks to the back of the class to check if everyone is copying or not. Then she goes back to the blackboard and reads out the questions. She erases questions one and two from the blackboard after confirming from the students, 'Have you copied uptil here?' At the same time she urges the students to hurry up and copy the other questions also. She announces, 'I'll give the rest orally as you are taking much time in copying.'

After confirming that all the students have finished copying the questions from the blackboard, she dictates the next question. The student next to me confirms from his friend, 'Is Miss giving her own questions?' He asks another student the meaning of a word, who advises him to write it down 'whatever it means'. As the teacher dictates the questions, the students write them down very quietly. The teacher writes some words on the blackboard which she thinks might be difficult for the students in the next question.

11.50 The bell rings. There is a lot of noise from outside. However, the teacher continues dictating more questions. She goes at a very brisk pace. She reassures the students: 'Ninth class, listen to me. When you will complete the answers to these questions, you can use them for short notes on Florence Nightingale (an exam question).'

4-II-2/ CO 7

Class: IX

Date: 3.2.92

No. of students present in class: 38 out of 50 students

Topic of the day: Doing exercises following the reading text entitled 'Nursing' from the prescribed textbook.

11.27 The students are still settling down. The teacher asks how many of them have completed their grammar work. A student brings in a chair for the teacher. She tells them to bring their exercise books after completing their work. She refers the class to an exercise on page 83. Then she cleans the blackboard and writes two sentences on the blackboard:

1 He has broken this glass.
2 Please don't touch this broken glass. It can hurt you.

She reads out the two sentences. All the students have their books open in front of them. One student offers: 'Present perfect.' She encourages the students to think about the difference in meaning in the two sentences. She prompts them: 'What are the main verbs in the two sentences?
S: 'Miss, 'touch'.'

The teacher reminds them by asking a question: 'What is a word called if it is used before a noun?'
The students seem to be listening to her with great attention. All eyes are focused on the blackboard. The teacher advises the students to read the example given in the textbook. She continues to encourage them to identify the main verbs and think about the difference in meaning in the two sentences. The students look into their books. She explains the difference in meaning herself while still encouraging them to find the main verbs in the two sentences.

[The students seem to be involved and taking an active interest in the lesson, though I feel that most of them do not know how to do the task.]

The teacher does not waste any more time but moves on to the next exercise which requires the students to fill in the blanks with the correct form of the word. The students give one-word answers. The teacher tells them to read out the complete sentences. It seems the students are having a problem in understanding what they are required to do in order to do this task successfully.

She encourages the students to use the next word 'complete' in two sentences - as a noun and as an adjective. Two students offer sentences using this word and the teacher repeats them for the whole class. Another student offers a sentence: 'I do not like to complete my work'. He tells the teacher he has used the word 'complete' as an adjective in this sentence. Another student offers a sentence and the teacher tells him it is still used as a verb. Two more student try to give the sentences using 'complete' as an adjective but are unable to do so. One student says quietly: 'Miss, we don't understand.'
The teacher gives further cues. Then she writes a sentence on the blackboard. One student rehearses the sentence quietly. Another student gives a sentence and the teacher goes to look at it in his book. A student does the next sentence (this is his third try) as the teacher goes closer to him.

The teacher moves on to the next exercise which requires the students to fill in the blanks once again. However, this time they are similes, for example:
As black as ____
All students participate in this activity with great enthusiasm. When an answer is incorrect the teacher gives them cues. The students make the necessary corrections. They laugh in between when some comparisons are offered by other students.

The teacher explains the next task (exercise): 'Next exercise is comprehension questions.' She reads all the questions but instructs the students to leave some of them out and instead do the ones she had given them earlier.

11.52 The bell rings. The teacher quickly does the next exercise orally. It seems she wants to complete the lesson today. As the teacher reads out the sentences the students fill in the blanks together. They seem to be doing it with great enthusiasm.

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Appendix 9 B

Classroom observation notes of 'doing a lesson' (two class hours)
in Bina's class at site 2

Teacher's perception of class size: Large

2-I-3/ CO 3.1

Class: X C

Date: 20.10.91

No. of students present: 38 out of 49 students

Topic of the day: 'The Customs of Various Regions of Pakistan', a reading text from the prescribed textbook

(This is a mixed class comprising almost an equal number of boys and girls.)
9.22 As the students settle down and take out their textbooks, the teacher writes the title of the 'lesson' on the blackboard.

The teachers tells the students sternly, 'Sit straight; fold your arms'. She also tells them not to answer a question till asked. The teacher asks a question. Several students answer together. She tells them to answer one at a time. She asks them the meaning of 'various' and one student is nominated to answer. The teacher holds up the map of Pakistan. Some students answer, 'Four provinces'. The teacher points to a region on the map and asks them to list the towns in that region.
T: 'What kind of area'?
Several students answer together. The teacher writes the names of the four provinces on the blackboard. She asks short questions about other provinces encouraging them to compare the physical features, etc. One student answers incorrectly. Another student from the front row offers the correct information.

T: 'Turn to page 115 and quickly read through to see what it covers'.
She walks around the classroom as the students read the text silently.

9.30 The student next to me has his book open in front of him and is reading intently with visible lip movements. He is also following the text with his finger in the book as he reads. His full attention seems to be focused on reading the text.
T: 'Heads up'.
He continues reading. As the teacher asks a question he looks up, then at his book. He scratches his face and makes an effort to answer while other students shout out the answer from different corners of the room. As the teacher points to a word on the blackboard he looks up, then puts his book face downwards on his desk and takes out his pencil. He opens his book presumably to write the meanings of difficult words. He has already written the meanings of three words in the title of the lesson in Urdu. He looks for the word, which the teacher has written on the blackboard, but can't find it in his book. He looks very intently at the blackboard as the teacher writes some questions on the blackboard. I wonder if he is following the teacher's instructions to look for the answer in a particular part of the text or not.

T: (in answer to a student's query) Read and look for the answer to 7 - page 115 only.

He begins to read following the text with his pencil - moving it from one word to another. Once again his lip movements can be seen as he reads.
As a student shows his answer to the teacher, he looks up. The teacher comes to him and asks if he has found the answer. He tells her, 'No, Miss'. As the teacher walks away from him he begins to read again. He asks the teacher something as she walks around the classroom. It seems he is unable to find the answer. He looks up at the blackboard, then looks around and starts turning the pages in his book. He looks at the teacher as she tells the students to put their heads up. The students begin to answer questions (yes/no

questions). He doesn't participate but nods his head when she elicits meanings of some words in Urdu.

9.40: A student from the back row stands up to answer the next question. The teacher discusses the use of the word 'brave' in his answer which is not in the text. As the teacher asks questions a number of students shout out the answers together. They are told to raise their hands if they know the answer and only two students do so. One of them is selected by the teacher to answer but he answers incorrectly. The teacher tells the students to think carefully and to read the text again. The students bend down their heads over their books. The teacher gives a clue, 'The answer is only indirectly given'. The teacher asks the meaning of 'customs' and explains it further. A student in the back row raises his hand and gives the meaning in Urdu. Some students look into their books; others look around. It seems they are waiting for the teacher to give them the answer.

(There is a lot of noise from the ground outside the classroom where the children are playing football.)

The teacher asks the same question again. Several students mumble the answer. One student answers in Urdu. Others nod in agreement. [The question could be answered using knowledge of the world only.] A student in the back row is writing a message to his friend. The teacher confirms the answer from the class, 'Yes or No'? The students reply together loudly, 'Yes, Miss'. The teacher explains the same answer. Some students seem to be listening while others look around.
T: All right?
Some students mumble, 'Yes, Miss'.

One student from the back row stands up to answer the next question. The teacher tells one student to change his place. The student is asked to repeat the answer loudly.
T: Any other custom?
The students are looking at the teacher but they do not seem to be very interested in the lesson any more. As a couple of students volunteer to answer, some students exchange smiles and talk quietly to each other. The teacher notices that one part of the class is not answering at all and urges them to do so. Some students in the back row mumble the answer to themselves. (The noise continues outside.) The student whose place was changed earlier stands up to answer the question.

The teacher elicits further information (not given in the text) from the students about Pakistan. There is a lot of talking (quietly) amongst the students and an atmosphere of busy activity in the classroom. The teacher holds up her hands and has to speak in a very loud voice to get herself heard above the noise. One student gives the answer. The teacher asks a student in another part of the class to repeat the same answer. Another student is nominated to repeat the same. As she is unable to do so she is reprimanded for being inattentive. The teacher tells her to speak in English. She tells the teacher she can't do so. The teacher makes a general solicit to the class: 'In which lesson we came across this word?'

(Sound of a pencil dropping.) [The students look attentive but I feel that they are really not interested in the lesson any more.]

Some girls are laughing quietly. The teacher elaborates on each answer as she explains it. She nominates Seema to answer, 'Stand up'. The teacher asks her to tell them a story about their (pathan) hospitality. As she hesitates the students point to Saira and tell the teacher that she is Afghan (they have similar customs). The girl is put on the spot. She answers briefly in Urdu. She looks embarrassed and points to another student as also being pathan.

Some of the students look at the teacher. It seems that when the teacher goes to stand close to a group they begin to pay attention. The two rows of students on the extreme left

of the classroom are very passive. Some students do not even have their books open in front of them. Others are writing the meanings of 'difficult' words. The teacher walks to the back of the classroom while she continues to elicit information from the students. The students discuss amongst themselves. One student in the front row stands up to answer; he answers incorrectly. Another student, also from the front row, offers the correct answer. The teacher walks back towards the blackboard.

There is a loud 'hum' in the classroom. The teacher has to shout to get herself heard above the noise.

The bell rings and the students stand up immediately. The teacher assigns homework, 'Learn the questions/answers. Don't write'.

Date: 21.10.91
(Continuation of the lesson from the previous day.)

9.25 (When I went to the class the students were already sitting in groups - four in each group).
As I enter the classroom, I am invited to sit on a chair in the middle of the room. The teacher changes the place of a number of students while some students laugh quietly and exchange smiles with each other.

The teacher writes the title of the lesson on the blackboard. She begins with revision of yesterday's work. The students seem to be attentive as the teacher repeats the answers from yesterday. The students have their books open in front of them. The teacher asks if they have found anything else (further information about the four provinces). The students look around sheepishly. Some look down and seem to be embarrassed.

The teacher has a lesson plan in front of her today. She draws a grid on the blackboard and tells the students to fill it in. There are nine groups in the class. (A number of students are absent today due to the World Cup cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies.)

I join one of the groups. As the students in my group begin to work one student takes over as the leader and directs the proceedings of the group. He discusses with his neighbour and provides the answers to the group. Though told by the teacher not to write anything, some students in the group make notes on small slips of paper. Seema tries to point out various things to other members of the group in between.

The teacher elicits the answers. Several students shout out the answers together. Often the teacher does not wait for the students' answers but gives them herself. Also when a student gives an answer she elaborates on it immediately.

The teacher writes two lists of words on the blackboard. She asks the students to predict which of these items would be in the text (prediction exercise). Then she asks them to read the text and mark those things in the list which are mentioned in the reading passage. The students read the text individually. Some students follow the text with a pencil and most of them read with visible lip movements.

9.55 The teacher elicits the answers from the students. She asks them the difference between a 'quilt' and a 'blanket'. After doing the 'questions/answers' on the province of N.W.F.P with the whole class (the first part of the reading passage), she tells the students to read further and try and note down the customs about their own province, i.e., Sindh.

(The class was not held on 22.10.91 as the teacher was busy elsewhere. In the next class (23.10.91),19 students were absent due to the cricket match between India and Pakistan. Therefore, the teacher decided not to continue with the lesson that day; instead she did translation practice with the class.)