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Information for contributors

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Manuscripts for articles should be no longer than 5,000 words, and follow the conventions of the articles in this issue as far as possible. Please include an abstract and a biographical note. Send 2 hard copies together with a diskette (preferably *Microsoft Word*) or attach the article as a *Word* document to an e-mail to the editors at the address below:

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Editorial

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, the home of *rEFLections*, is in the same situation as hundreds of other universities around the world – increasing student numbers are leading to calls for increases in class sizes. For a skills-oriented subject such as English language, there is a general perception that larger classes are detrimental to learning. Faced with pressures to teach English in large classes, we decided to initiate a series of research projects into the area. The result is this special issue of *rEFLections,* the first special issue we have published.

In this issue, the first paper by Richard Watson Todd reviews the literature on teaching large classes, focusing especially on problems and potential solutions. The second article, by Pattamawan Jimakorn and Wareesiri Singhasiri, then examines how university teachers in Thailand perceive large classes highlighting their concerns. The next article, again by Richard Watson Todd, investigates what actually happens in large classes and compares them to smaller classes, finding few differences. The last two articles examine attempts to initiate innovations to overcome some of the problems of large classes. The first of these, by Pornapit Darasawang and Wilaksana Srimavin, concerns reorganising the class format to allow for lectures and tutorials. The second, by Sonthida Keyuravong and Kasamaporn Maneekhao, looks at one promising technological approach to solving consultation problems in large classes.

By bringing these articles together into a single issue, we hope that this issue of *rEFLections* will shed light on an area of great concern for many English teachers.

Richard Watson Todd, Guest Editor

Contents

Why Investigate Large Classes?

Richard Watson Todd
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

Abstract
This paper presents an overview of the literature on large classes in English language teaching. It presents findings concerning the size of large classes, the importance of class size, the problems of large classes and solutions to these problems. The article also provides an introduction to the other papers in this issue by discussing the context of the research reported and the issues that prompted the interest in conducting research into large classes.

Large classes are the reality for most English language teachers. Throughout the world, and especially in developing countries, teachers are faced with classes larger than the size they believe facilitates effective teaching and learning. And in many situations, class size is growing. Pressure from increased student numbers and the need for educational institutions to be profitable has led to a doubling of class size in many schools and universities over the last few years, and the peak may not have been reached yet. For many teachers, large class size is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, challenge facing them in their work. Yet, the literature has all but ignored the issue of large classes. Aside from one research project in the nineteen eighties and occasional scattered articles, teaching large classes has not received the attention it deserves. Focusing in depth on one situation, a university in Thailand, the articles in this special issue of *rEFLections* attempt to redress the balance by finding out what teachers think about large classes, by examining what actually happens in large classes, and by investigating the effects of some efforts to ameliorate the problems of large classes.

How large is a large class?
How many students need to be in a class before it can be considered large? Is a group of 30 students a large class? How about 60 students? There are no easy answers to these questions, since perceptions of class size are subjective and also depend on a number of variables. A few patterns and key variables, however, emerge from the previous research into this area.

Firstly, teachers rely on the largest size of class that they regularly teach when making judgments concerning what makes a large class (Coleman, 1989c). In other words, if a teacher is used to teaching classes of 20 students, he or she will often say that 30 students is a large class; but for another teacher whose regular class size is 40, a large class might comprise 60 students. Despite these differences, teachers nearly always end up teaching classes larger than what they consider is ideal.

Secondly, what is being taught influences teachers' judgments of the size of large classes. At many universities for subjects other than English (and unfortunately all too often for English as well), classes for lectures may consist of several hundred students. Where the teaching involves the transfer of factual knowledge, such class sizes may not be problematic (Obanya et al., n. d.), but for the teaching of English, which requires the learning of complex skills, these massive lecture classes are likely

to cause a wide variety of problems. Similarly, within English language teaching, most teachers would view the minimum size of what would be considered a large class for teaching speaking to be smaller than for teaching reading (LoCastro, 1989). The content being taught, then, must also be considered when making judgments of the size of large classes.

There are many other variables which can also influence perceptions of the size of large classes. These include the age of the students, the level of their studies, their motivation, and the size of the room in which lessons are taught.

All of these variables make it impossible to definitively state how large a class must be to be considered large. Nevertheless, there is a surprising amount of agreement on the issue in the literature. Table 1 shows the numbers of students mentioned in articles about large classes for English language teaching. A quick glance shows that all the authors agree that large classes have at least 40 to 60 students. Although other teachers may have very different ideas, these figures give us an image to grasp on to when considering previous work on large classes.

Table 1   Some minimum sizes of large classes

Author	Minimum size of large class
Barker (1976)	55
Chimombo (1986)	50
Dixon (1986)	40
Finocchiaro (1989)	65
George (1991)	60
Hayes (1997)	50
Holliday (1996)	50
Hubbard et al. (1983)	45
Li (1998)	50
Long (1977)	60
Nolasco & Arthur (1986)	40
Safnil (1991)	60
Samuda & Bruton (1981)	40
Touba (1999)	60

Is class size important?
Since most teachers teach class sizes larger than they consider ideal, we might conclude that most teachers think that large class sizes have adverse effects on learning. There is, however, a lack of research evidence showing that large classes are prejudicial to learning (Allwright, 1989a, 1989b).

Part of the reason for this lack of research evidence is the difficulties in actually showing that large classes adversely affect learning. In conducting research into the effects of class size, there are simply too many additional influential variables that could affect results. For example, we might try to compare the learning of some students when they are grouped together in a large class compared to when they are split into smaller classes, but the language points they will be learning will necessarily be different in the two situations. Alternatively, we could compare the learning of two

different sized groups of students with the same teacher, but how can we control for the differences between the students?

In fact, within the research into large classes, at least two factors have been identified as more important than class size: the quality of teaching (Obanya et al., n. d.) and the kinds of activities used (Kumar, 1992). It would therefore seem that teachers perhaps should not be too worried about class size.

However, even if large classes are not directly prejudicial to learning, they throw up a whole host of problems and challenges for teachers that smaller classes do not. These problems are still a matter of concern.

The problems of large classes
The vast majority of the literature into large classes falls into two kinds. Firstly, many books and articles simply list potential problems with large classes; and secondly, there is a wide range of suggestions, especially teaching techniques, for how to deal with these problems. The problems of large classes typically mentioned in the literature are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2   The problems of large classes

Problem	Reference
Learning	
• Less effective learning	Coleman (1989d); Ur (1996)
Management/Activities	
• Discipline	Coleman (1989d); Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Hayes (1997); Li (1998); LoCastro (1989); Nolasco & Arthur (1986); Peachey (1989); Sabandar (1989); Ur (1996); Woodward (2001)
• Absentee students	George (1991)
• Organising activities	Harmer (1998); LoCastro (1989)
• Reliance on lectures and drills	Coleman (1989e); Hubbard et al. (1983)
• Avoidance of some activities	McLeod (1989); Peachey (1989)
Physical/Practical	
• Space	Coleman (1989d); Nolasco & Arthur (1986); Peachey (1989); Woodward (2001)
• Discomfort	Hayes (1997)
• Students can't see/hear	Long (1977)
• Noise	LoCastro (1989); Nolasco & Arthur (1986); Woodward (2001)
• Timing	Peachey (1989); Sabandar (1989)
• Time for student presentations	Watson Todd (1999)
• Provision of materials	Coleman (1989d); Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Nolasco & Arthur (1986); Peachey (1989)

Affective factors	
• Achieving rapport	Harmer (1998); Holliday (1996); Hubbard et al. (1983); LoCastro (1989); McLeod (1989)
• Impersonalisation	Carbone (1996d)
• No sense of community	Hubbard et al. (1983)
• Teacher discomfort	Coleman (1989d)
• Intimidating atmosphere	Harmer (1998)
• Learning names	Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Hubbard et al. (1983); LoCastro (1989)
Interaction	
• Few opportunities to speak	Coleman (1989d); Hubbard et al. (1983); Ur (1996)
• Giving attention to individuals	Coleman (1989d); Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Hayes (1997); Peachey (1989); Ur (1996); Watson Todd (1999)
• Focus on the action zone	Shamim (1996)
• Increased use of the mother tongue	Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Woodward (2001)
• Less interesting lessons	Ur (1996)
Feedback and evaluation	
• Monitoring	LoCastro (1989); Peachey (1989)
• Giving feedback	Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); George (1991); LoCastro (1989)
• Assessment	Coleman (1989d); Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Hayes (1997); Sabandar (1989)
• Marking load	LoCastro (1989); McLeod (1989); Peachey (1989); Ur (1996) Watson Todd (1999)
Miscellaneous	
• More mixed abilities	Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998)
• Getting feedback from students	Hayes (1997)

To some extent, the problems listed in Table 2 confirm the premise that large classes are not prejudicial to learning. While ten authors highlight the problems of discipline in large classes, only two claim that large classes lead to less effective learning. It could be argued that any detrimental effects of large classes on learning are not directly the result of class size; rather, they may be due to knock-on effects of the other problems. For example, if receiving corrective feedback is a crucial factor in learning (Han, 2002), then the difficulties of giving useful feedback in large classes could be one real cause of any adverse effects on learning of large classes.

Even if we place little emphasis on the direct learning effects of large classes, the problems listed in Table 2 are daunting. The sheer number of potential problems as well as the variety of problem types would challenge even the most experienced and competent teachers. It is therefore not surprising that large class sizes are a matter of so much concern for teachers.

Perhaps because the problems of large classes are so worrying, it is easy to overlook the fact that there may also be benefits accruing to large class size (Coleman, 1989c). These might include the facts that students can be safely anonymous in a large class, that students can make more friends, and that, from an administrative perspective, teaching is more efficient in large classes. It seems clear, however, that these potential benefits of large classes are vastly outweighed by the problems. We therefore need to look at the suggestions in the literature for solving the problems.

Solving the problems of large classes
Perhaps the majority of the literature on large classes concerns suggestions for how to solve the problems. A selection of these, matched with the problems they attempt to solve, is given in Table 3.

Table 3   Suggested solutions to the problems of large classes

Problem	Solution	Reference
Management/Activities		
• Discipline	Use routines	Finocchiaro (1989); Nolasco & Arthur (1988); Sarwar (1991); Woodward (2001)
	Use student leaders	Harmer (1998)
• Organising activities	How to run drills	Barker (1976)
	How to run role-plays	Byrne (1988); Haozhang (1997)
	How to use minimal pairs	Dobbyn (1976)
	How to use story-telling	Carbone (1996a)
	How to give lectures	Carbone (1996b); Coleman (1989e); Dion (1996); Felder (1997); McKinney (n. d. b); Obanya et al. (n. d.)
	How to run groupwork	Heath (1982); Hubbard et al. (1983); Nolasco & Arthur (1986); Samuda & Bruton (1981)
Physical/Practical		
• Space	Organise seating	Finocchiaro (1989)
Affective factors		
• Intimidating atmosphere	Play background music	Haozhang (1997)
• Learning names	Various techniques (e.g. name cards)	Carbone (1996d); Duppenthaler (1991); Nolasco & Arthur (1988); Nunan & Lamb (1996); Obanya et al. (n. d.); Sarwar (1991)

Interaction		
• Few opportunities to speak	Eliciting choral responses Use pairwork and groupwork	Finocchiaro (1989); Harmer (1998); Long (1977) Coleman (1989e); Dion (1996); Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Harmer (1998); Long (1977); McKinney (n. d. b); Obanya et al. (n. d.); Safnil (1991); Touba (1999); Woodward (2001)
Feedback and evaluation • Monitoring • Giving feedback • Assessment • Marking load	Use peer monitoring Student-student consultations Give feedback in plenary Use self-assessment Use peer assessment Use portfolios Limited editing Use computer marking Use student leaders	Duppenthaler (1991) Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Ur (1996) Chimombo (1986) Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998); Hargan (1994); Obanya et al. (n. d.) Dixon (1986); McKinney (n. d. a) Dixon (1986); Watson Todd (1999) McKinney (n. d. a) University of British Columbia (1992) Finocchiaro (1989); Harmer (1998)
Unspecified or global problems	Use project work Use e-mail, discussion boards and the Internet Team teaching Use assistant teachers Share resources between institutions	Obanya et al. (n. d.) Carbone (1996c); Desmet (1997); Gillespie (n. d.); McKinney (n. d. a); Plane (1996) Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) Safnil (1991) Obanya et al. (n. d.)

Despite the wealth of suggested solutions, a large number of the potential problems given in Table 2 remain unaddressed. The majority of the suggestions focus on problems of management, running activities and evaluation with the other types of problems largely unsolved. This may be because some problems, such as physical and practical problems, are intractable, but the paucity of suggestions specific to large classes for affective and interactional problems is worrying.

A second worrying aspect of the literature on solutions to the problems of large classes is that the suggestions are almost entirely presented simply as teaching tips. While the suggested solutions may be very useful for teachers faced with large classes, there is an almost complete lack of research into their effectiveness. They therefore remain tentative suggestions rather than being proven techniques. The lack of evaluation of these teaching tips is symptomatic of an overall dearth of research into large classes.

What to investigate in large classes

The main previous research into large classes is the *Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project* conducted in the nineteen eighties which produced twelve project reports. In setting up the goals of the research project, Coleman (1989b) posed a series of questions to guide research into large classes:

- What are teachers' concerns?
- How large is 'large' (from both teacher and student perspectives)?
- How widespread are large classes?
- Why do large classes exist?
- What are students' concerns?
- How can data be collected in large classes?
- What actually happens in large classes?
- How do teachers modify their behaviour in large classes?
- How do learners cope with large classes?
- What learning takes place in large classes?
- Do students learn the same things in large and small classes?
- Do they learn in the same ways?
- How can the problems of large classes be solved?

Unfortunately, the majority of these useful questions remained unanswered in the project. Most of the project reports concerned questionnaire surveys of teachers' beliefs on large classes, which, while useful, were firstly limited, and secondly criticised in terms of the questionnaire design, subject selection and data analysis (Oladejo, 1992). Overall then, the project was somewhat disappointing.

Since the *Lancaster-Leeds Project*, serious research into large classes for English language teaching has been minimal. Indeed, only three research reports stand out. Kumar (1992) examined the effects of class size on interaction; Holliday (1996) compared the contrasting approaches of native speaker and Egyptian teachers in large university classes; and Hayes (1997) reported data from a project to help teachers in rural primary schools in Thailand cope with large classes.

The upshot of this lack of research is that, of Coleman's questions listed above, only the first two have been satisfactorily answered. While this collection of articles does not attempt to provide answers to all the other questions, we do hope that it may give at least partial answers to some.

The thirteen questions above fall into three main categories. The first five questions concern either basic data about large classes or participants' beliefs about teaching and learning in large classes. Such information can be gathered through surveys, of which the second article in this collection is an instance. The next seven questions all involve analysing what actually happens in large classes and require descriptive investigations of classroom teaching. The third article examining the discourse of large and small classes provides some evidence for these concerns. The final question also focuses on what happens in the classroom, but, instead of being descriptive, evaluations of attempted solutions require interventions in the teaching/learning process. The final two articles in this issue examine two attempted solutions.

All of the papers in this collection concern large classes, but they also form a coherent collection in another way. The papers all examine the situation of large classes at universities in Thailand, and especially King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) where all of the authors work. Although such a specific focus means that the generalisability of the findings reported is unclear, it does allow the findings of the different chapters to be compared producing a richer picture of large classes in one situation than a collection of papers from many different situations would produce. To gain the greatest benefits from a collection of papers concerning the same situation, we need to know more about the situation.

Thai universities and KMUTT
Thailand is a country of approximately 60 million people which has undergone very rapid economic development in the last quarter century. In common with other countries in a similar position, educational development has lagged behind. Much of the education system still follows very traditional patterns with rote learning the norm in many English classrooms, and what teachers consider large classes are common at all levels of education (Watson Todd, 2003; Wiriyachitra, 2002). Most classes within the public education system have at least 30 students with perhaps the majority having 50-60 in a class. While such class sizes have been the norm in secondary schools for some time, a rapid expansion in the provision of tertiary education has meant that there has been a particularly noticeable recent growth in class size at Thai universities.

There are 24 public universities and around 50 private universities in Thailand. For nearly all degree programmes the medium of education is Thai and students studying majors other than English are required to take English for three semesters. Most English courses involve 60 contact hours over 15 weeks, but there is a lot of variation between universities in teaching techniques and course objectives.

KMUTT is a public university which has recently gained autonomy in its decision making. Although there are no English major students at the university, there is a well-respected and active School of Liberal Arts which provides English language support courses for students from other faculties. A few years ago, the faculty implemented a new task-based curriculum for all language courses which now consist of a series of large-scale tasks, each taking several weeks to complete (see Watson Todd, 2001 for details). In the same period of time, there has been increasing pressure on class size. In 1999, average class size was 34, but by 2001, this had increased to an average of 40. This growth in class size has meant that some teachers are facing classes considerably larger than those they taught just two years before. At present, the faculty is managing to keep the pressures on class sizes under control, but there are serious threats that, in the near future, class sizes may start spiralling upwards. These facts, we believe, make KMUTT an ideal situation for conducting research into large classes.

Research into large classes as teacher development
Faced with such increases in class size and with the threat of further increases in the future, the staff at the School of Liberal Arts were deeply concerned about potential adverse impacts on teaching quality as well as detrimental effects on their professional lives. Rather than simply sit quietly and try to make the best of a bad situation, the staff decided to initiate a series of research studies into large classes, of which this collection is the outcome. There was, in fact, an implicit goal behind

conducting the research. Because of our concerns with the potential adverse consequences of teaching English in large classes, we hoped that our results would be able to persuade administrators at the university of the folly of continuing to increase class sizes for English. In this way, we wished our research to have wider social effects, and thus, although on the face of it the research consists of a survey and a discourse analysis among other research methodologies, all of the papers could also be considered action research.

Action research originated in the area of social psychology, where the key purpose of action research is to have a social effect on practice in the situation in which the research is conducted (Day, 1999). In other words, action research is research aiming to lead to change. Such change can involve several possible focuses, including changing theory, changing institutions and changing teachers (Edge, 2001). In hoping to influence the university concerning class sizes, this collection is aiming for institutional change. In addition, there is a second kind of change that is crucial to this research project, and that is to change the researchers.

One crucial feature of action research is the need for the researcher to engage in reflection as part of the research process. This feature means that action research is a key means of promoting teacher development (Burns, 1999; Wallace, 1998). Indeed, some action research may be conducted with teacher-researcher development as the prime goal of the research (Woods, 1996). While perhaps not the prime goal of this research project, teacher-researcher development was nevertheless given a heavy emphasis.

The teachers who conducted the research and are the authors of the articles in this collection are experienced, well-qualified and competent teachers. However, despite their academic backgrounds, they perhaps needed to do more research than they had previously conducted. One purpose of this research project into large classes, therefore, is to help the faculty staff to become more capable of doing quality research. It was hoped that having many teachers involved in different studies as part of one project would provide a motivation for the teachers to actually complete the process of conducting and writing up their research (a common reason for the lack of published research for many of the teachers). In addition, a system of research mentoring (see Maneekhao & Watson Todd, 2001) was set up to provide any support that the teachers felt they needed.

This collection provides concrete evidence of the success of the project in stimulating the teachers to conduct and publish research. Whether it also achieves the implicit goal of persuading the university to cap class sizes for English at a reasonable level remains to be seen. Many of the results in the papers were not what we expected. At this point, we would like to invite you to read the papers to consider what the challenges of teaching large classes are and whether classes of, say, 40 to 50 students really do have adverse effects on the teaching and learning process in English language classrooms.

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Teachers' Beliefs Concerning Large-Class English Teaching at the University Level

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' beliefs toward teaching English in large classes. The study made use of a questionnaire to survey 75 tertiary-level lecturers in Thailand. All participants had more than one year's teaching experience. The questionnaire comprised 3 parts with closed-ended and open-ended questions and rating scales. It was used to find out the teachers' beliefs concerning classroom management, teaching techniques and strategies, teaching procedures, evaluation and assessment, physical constraints, and affective relationships. The results show that tertiary-level teachers think that teaching English in large classes may possible but many constraints should be taken into consideration.

Large classes

Parents and educators almost universally identify small classes as a desirable attribute of successful school systems and class size reduction initiatives have been implemented widely (Averett & McLennan, 2006). However, we know that schools, institutes and universities cannot always follow the idea mentioned above. In Thailand, at present, every university has been compelled to cope with an increase in student number and reductions in funding from the government. For example, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi is one of the universities that is facing this situation. In the past few years, the number of students has increased 30% every year; nevertheless, the number of the teachers, particularly English teachers has increased only slightly. Due to the huge increases in students but the small number of teachers, the faculty has to hire more part-time teachers, and each year this causes accountability pressure in terms of payment for extra teachers and university facilities. As a result, the university initiated a policy to promote 'large classes' as it is believed to be a solution of the problems of increasing student numbers.

However, it is unclear whether the idea of using large classes can be implemented in teaching and learning English. There are several studies on this topic, particularly the Lancaster-Leeds Project (1989) which views 'large classes' as a challenging idea. There were about 13 reports from several countries such as Nigeria, Japan, Indonesia, South Africa which presented interesting findings on large classes. Another interesting project, the Teaching Large Classes AUTC Project (2001), was conducted by The University of Queensland, Australia. It reports on the large class teaching around Australia from several disciplines with suggestions on management, teaching techniques, materials, the use of technology and assessment.

Teaching in large classes has been promoted in several countries; often as a top-down policy from the executive administrators of the educational institution. The institutes may be concerned with the lack of teachers or the vast increase in the number of students. If the decision-making were passed down the hierarchy so that teachers could choose, would they be willing to teach in large classes?

Importance of teachers' beliefs

What do teachers think about large classes? It is important to listen to teacher's beliefs, but what are teacher's beliefs? Kagan (1992, p. 65 cited in Farrell, 1999, p. 2) defines "teachers' beliefs as 'tacit', often consciously held assumptions about students, classroom, and the academic materials to be taught". She also mentions that teachers' beliefs are stable and do not change which may be because they are 'personal constructs' as mentioned by Hampton (1994, cited in Richards et al., 2006). Beliefs may be formed since teachers are very young. The roots of teachers' beliefs may derive from observation of their school teachers, classroom experiences, interaction with colleagues and with their own students and so on. Pajares (1992 cited in Albion, 1999) found that there was a "strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices". Thus, teacher's beliefs can affect the teaching methodology, materials and activities they choose for the classroom.

Johnson (1994, cited in Farrell, 1999, p. 2) proposes that teachers' beliefs share three assumptions. Firstly, they influence teacher's perceptions and judgments. Secondly, they play a role in how teachers interpret and implement teaching knowledge in classroom practice. Thirdly, understanding teachers' beliefs is important as it may improve teaching practices and teacher education. This point is supported by Richards et al. (2001, p. 42), who state that "the study of teachers' beliefs forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualise their work. In order to understand how teachers approach their work it is necessary to understand the beliefs and principles they operate from."

Thus, before any schools or universities make decisions to implement the policy of teaching large classes, it is worthwhile to listen to what the teachers believe concerning this approach.

Previous research into teacher beliefs concerning large classes

Extensive research has been conducted on teaching large classes but not much has studied teachers' beliefs in this approach. However, there are a few studies under the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project which are worth discussing.

The first study was conducted by McLeod (1989). He collected data by questionnaire from 113 teachers in tertiary education from Japan, Nigeria and other African countries. The questions concerned problems teachers might encounter from teaching in large classes i.e. problems of individual learners, physical constraints, quality of marking and control, learning and teaching, and classroom interaction. The results reveal that 43.3% of the subjects thought they might have problems of effective teaching which concerns the process of teaching and learning. 33% of them revealed that it required effort to teach in large classes. Affective factor was another facet that the 23.7% of the subjects were concerned with.

Another study under the same project was undertaken by Coleman (1989). Similarly to McLoed, he found that English teachers in Nigeria who taught in classes of 100-200 students encountered a wide range of difficulties in teaching. These concerned relationships with students, control of the class and assessment. The subjects reported

positively that with the class size at an ideal level they could work more comfortably and easily. This indicates that teachers preferred to teach in a small class with an ideal size as they did not need to struggle and face the difficult circumstances of teaching in large classes.

Peachey (1989) also studied teachers' perceptions of ideal class size and the problems they might find when teaching in large classes. The study was undertaken in South Africa. Similarly to McLoed and Coleman, teachers found teaching in large classes problematic.

To summarise, it can be seen that teachers believe that teaching in large classes is considerably difficult for them in several aspects.

Purposes of study
This study aims to investigate teachers' beliefs in terms of perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards teaching English in large classes. The results obtained may provide the interesting ideas and useful information for any Thai universities which intend to implement this approach.

The Study
This section provides information on subjects, research instrument and data analysis.

Subjects
The subjects were 75 lecturers from major state universities in Thailand namely, Chiangmai University, Chulalongkorn University, Khon Kaen University, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Suranaree University and Ramkumhang University. They were all instructors of English language. They were made up of 17 males and 58 females. Their teaching experience ranged from one year to more than fifteen years, 18 participants with 1-5 years, 9 with 6-10 years, 6 with 11-15 years and 42 with 15 or more years. The majority, 59 participants held master's degrees, 9 held doctorates and 7 bachelor's degrees. Their maximum class size which they used to teach was 5,000 (some subjects taught in the open university) and the minimum was 5. The average class size was around 30-40.

Research Instrument
In order to access the opinions and perceptions of the teachers, it was decided to use a questionnaire. The questionnaire was piloted with the teaching staff of the Department of Language, School of Liberal Arts, KMUTT. The questionnaire was then amended. Around 100 copies of the revised questionnaire were distributed to English departments in the universities above. Seventy-five completed questionnaires were returned.

The questionnaire was developed from the previous research of Coleman (1989) McLeod (1989), Peachey (1989) and Locastro (1989). It is composed of three parts with open-ended questions, closed-ended questions and rating scales. Part I, closed-ended questions, asks for the participant's personal details, gender, teaching experience, education and where they currently worked. Part II, closed-ended questions, concerns the participant's knowledge of their university's policy on class size.

Facts and Opinions on Large Classes was in Part III from where we drew most of the results. It is also divided into four sections as follows. The first section was closed-ended questions. The second and the third were rating scales and the last was closed-ended questions. These four sections concerned:

        1. general and physical conditions of their current classrooms
        2. teaching and learning conditions in large classes
        3. degrees of difficulty of teaching in large classes
        4. opinions towards teaching in large classes and ideal classes

Data Analysis
Participants' responses were analysed descriptively by calculating percentages and average scores, in order to determine what trends in the data suggested about the teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards learning and teaching in large classes.

Results and Discussion
Facts and opinions concerning large classes
Results obtained from Part II show clearly that the majority of teachers were not aware of any policy in their institutions on teaching large classes (Question 1: 70.67%). The remaining 22% reported that their universities have the policy of class size from 50 as the minimum and 1,000 as the maximum. The number reported varied greatly depending on the university policy and types of universities.

The majority of the participants (62.5%) found teaching in large classes possible with different conditions and teaching approaches. However, they also mentioned that the larger the class is, the less effective. In addition, the larger the class is, the more extra work for teachers. The teacher participants thought that when the classroom is large, teaching and learning inevitably becomes more difficult, thus less effective. The reasons provided were grouped as presented below.

- *Not appropriate for teaching productive skills*
According to the participants, large classes were found to be more appropriate with a teacher-centred mode of teaching, reading-based contexts and grammar-translation methods as opposed to communicative approaches. To illustrate, they considered that a large class makes it substantially more challenging for students to develop language skills, especially productive skills.

- *Non-contributors*
When it comes to group work, there are always students that are 'hidden labour' and do not wish to participate with the rest.

- *Technological aids*
The participants thought that in a large class, teaching aids are a must in order to assist both learning and teaching. Visual and audio aids can vary from an overhead projector, a video, microphones to closed-circuit televisions.

- *Teaching management*
The class may be divided into smaller groups and tutorial sessions may need to be provided, which, however, will add to other teaching responsibilities (see Darasawang and Srimavin, this issue, for a discussion of this approach). Some participants

suggested co-teaching and team teaching as well as co-operative learning, for example, group work. A combination of these approaches can give a large class the same quality of teaching and learning that a normal-sized classroom has.

- *Not enough attention and feedback*

The teachers believe that students do not receive the same level of attention in a large class; there is a little chance to interact with the teacher and it takes a great deal of time to give feedback to students equally. In addition, many students are often found left behind in a large class. A teacher would not be able to notice if a student or two lose interest and keep quiet throughout the lesson because the classroom is too crowded.

The reasons reported by the teachers can be summarised them as in Figure 1.

Figure 1   The comparison of teaching small class and large class
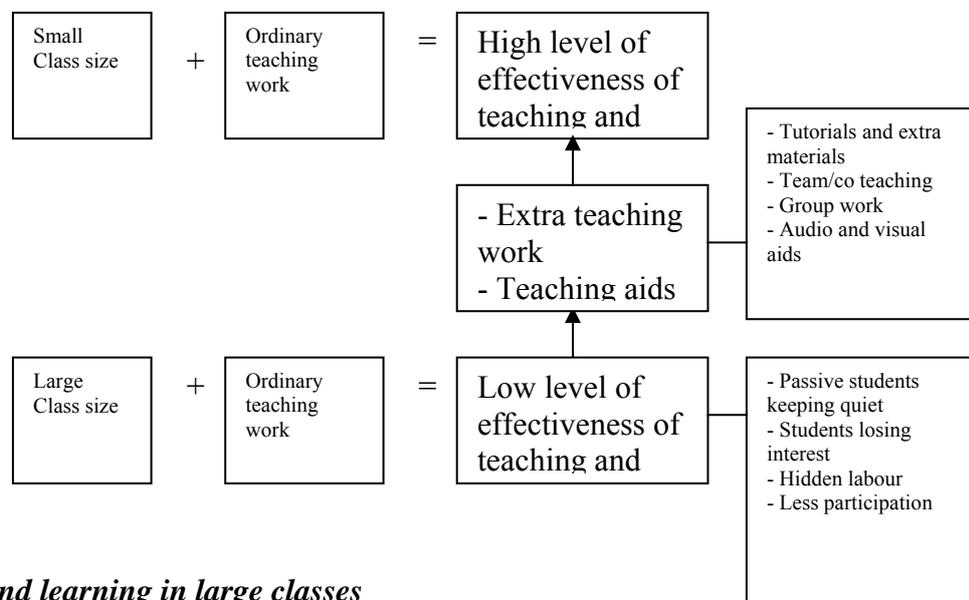
| Small Class size | + | Ordinary teaching work | = | High level of effectiveness of teaching and |

- Tutorials and extra materials
- Team/co teaching
- Group work
- Audio and visual aids

- Extra teaching work
- Teaching aids

| Large Class size | + | Ordinary teaching work | = | Low level of effectiveness of teaching and |

- Passive students keeping quiet
- Students losing interest
- Hidden labour
- Less participation

Teaching and learning in large classes

This section reports on the responses of the teachers towards teaching and learning in large classes. The data was re-categorised into two groups, institution's advantages and items relating to teaching and learning. The questions used a 5-point rating scale where 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

According to Table 1, the teachers thought that the institution benefits more from having large classes than other agents (teachers and students), particularly in terms of the budget spent for facilities. The teachers did not agree that, with teaching in large classes, their teaching or working load would be less than usual as can be seen from item 1.

Table 1   The teachers' opinions towards teaching and learning in large classes

	Mean
Responses to institution's advantages:	
1. Teachers save time and energy when teaching in large classes as they do not need to repeat the same lessons many times.	2.70
2. The university saves the budget as it does not need to pay for facilities like electricity bills or extra teachers.	3.55
3. The university does not need many teachers.	2.93
Responses to teaching and learning:	
4. Teaching in large classes is suitable for teaching productive skills – speaking and writing.	1.46
5. Teaching in large classes is suitable for teaching receptive skills – reading and listening.	2.72
6. Students still have chance to practice or work in group if they have to learn in a large class.	3.07
7. Teaching in large classes promotes lecture-based approach rather than interactive approach.	4.15
8. Assessment will focus on tests and examination rather than homework or continuous assessment e.g. tasks, assignments, group projects.	3.77

Most teachers saw teaching in large classes as promoting a lecture-based approach, where receptive skills are the main focus. On the other hand, large classes were likely to be less beneficial for productive skills. In addition, the teachers agreed that the possible methods for assessment in large classes were tests and examination. Homework and continuous assessment might not be appropriate choices as teachers have to work harder on checking and marking.

Difficulties of teaching in large classes
This section reports on the responses of the teachers to how difficult they thought the teaching responsibilities in a large class. The questions used a 5 point rating scale where 5 = very difficult and 1 = very easy. The results are shown in Table 2.

From Table 2, basically, the participants thought that teaching in a large class tended to be difficult as the mean score of every item is more than 3. The five items with the highest mean scores concern monitoring, teacher/student relationships, learning development and the physical environment. The least difficult items concern using teaching aids, setting up goals, preparing handouts, reviewing lessons, and timing lessons.

Table 2   Responses to degrees of difficulty of teaching in large classes

What a teacher has to do	Mean
I. Physical environment	
1. Being able to see the whole class	4.43
2. Using the right level of voice	3.67
3. Using audio-visual aids	3.13
II. Teaching preparation	
4. Setting up goals for the lesson	3.16
5. Determining models and strategies of teaching	3.82
6. Selecting instructional techniques of teaching	3.83
7. Preparing handouts and other materials	3.25
III. Teaching management	
8. Timing the lesson	3.41
9. Having students work in group in class	3.73
10. Giving equal share of class activities	4.39
11. Providing appropriate pace of lessons	3.89
12. Managing discipline	3.97
IV. Teaching procedures	
13. Previewing lessons	3.44
14. Reviewing lessons	3.40
15. Giving and checking homework and assignments	4.40
V. Monitoring	
16. Being able to give support and advice to individual students at the same time	4.68 4.45
17. Monitoring work and giving feedback	
VI. Assessment	
18. Determining methods of evaluating student outcomes	3.83
19. Marking exams	3.89
VII. Learning development	
20. Developing receptive skills, i.e. listening and reading	3.66
21. Developing productive skills, i.e. writing and speaking	4.43
VIII. Teacher/student relationship	
22. Creating a good relationship between the teacher and students	4.11
23. Knowing students individually	4.51

Conclusion

In conclusion, Thai teachers thought that teaching in large classes was difficult in several aspects such as the relationships of teachers and students, monitoring and giving feedback and assessment. However, teachers also suggested ways to deal with large classes. For example, teaching management should be well-planned and well-organised. Moreover, teaching in large classes may be suitable for teaching receptive skills such as reading and listening even though it is in appropriate for productive skills like speaking or writing which require more attention and interaction from teachers. If the school or universities cannot avoid teaching in large classes, they need to provide sessions where students can practice in small groups and consult with their teachers. With references to the results of this study, it is quite essential for the executive administrators to understand teachers' attitudes and their beliefs as well as the nature of language learning and teaching. Also, teachers themselves may need to be trained in how to teach and manage in large classes.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Research Topic: Teachers' Beliefs Concerning Large-Class English Teaching at the University Level

Part I: Personal Details
1. Gender :   ☐ 1. male   ☐ 2. female
2. Teaching experience:
          ☐ 1.Up to 1 yr.   ☐ 2. 1-5 years   ☐ 3. 6-10 years ☐ 4. 11-15 years ☐ 5. More than 15 years
3. Education:
          ☐ 1. Bachelor's Degree
          ☐ 2. Master's Degree
          ☐ 3. Doctoral Degree
4. University: _____

Part II: University Policy
1. Do you know whether your institution have an official policy on large classes?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

2. What is that policy regarding MAXIMUM class size? (Please give number)_____
3. What is that policy regarding MINIIMUM class size? (Please give number)_____
4. If there is a policy, who (inside the institution or outside it) determined this policy?
_____

Part III: Facts and Opinions on Large Classes
1. What is your usual class size? _____
2. What is your ideal class size? _____
3. What is the largest number of students you have had in a class? _____
4. At what number do you consider a class large? _____
5. At what number do the problems of uncomfortably large class begin? _____
6. In a large class, do you normally teach alone or do you co-teach? _____
7. Do you think it is possible to teach English in large classes?
        ☐ Yes   ☐ No
 And why? Please give reasons for the answer above:
_____
_____
_____

8. Read the statements about teaching and learning in a large class and then put a tick
 (3) in the box according to the rating scales below.

Strong agree	=	5
Agree	=	4
Uncertain	=	3
Disagree	=	2
strong disagree	=	1

No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1.	Teachers save time and energy when teaching in a large class as they do not need to repeat the same lessons many times.					
2.	The university saves the budget as it does not need to pay for facilities like electricity bills or extra teachers.					
3.	The university does not need many teachers.					
4.	Teaching in large classes is suitable for teaching productive skills – speaking and writing.					
5.	Teaching in large class is suitable for teaching receptive skills – reading and listening.					
6.	Students still have chance to practise or work in groups if they have to learn in a large class.					
7.	Teaching in large classes promotes lecture-based approach rather than interactive approach.					
8.	Assessment will focus on tests and examination rather than homework or continuous assessment e.g. tasks, assignments, group projects.					

9. How do you find these categories if you have to teach in large classes? Please give a rating for each item according to the criteria below.

Very difficult	=	5
Difficult	=	4
Neither difficult or easy	=	3
Easy	=	2
Very easy	=	1

No.	What a teacher has to do	5	4	3	2	1
1.	Timing the lessons					
2.	Setting up goals of the lesson					
3.	Determining models and strategies of teaching					
4.	Selecting instructional techniques of teaching					
5.	Previewing lessons					
6.	Reviewing lessons					
7.	Preparing handouts and other materials.					
8.	Determining methods of evaluating student outcome					
9.	Being able to see the whole class					
10.	Using the right level of voice					
11.	Having students work in groups in class					
12.	Being able to give support and advice to individual students at the same time					
13.	Giving equal share of class activities					
14.	Providing appropriate pace of lessons					
15.	Giving and checking homework or assignments					
16.	Marking exams					
17.	Creating a good relationship between the teacher and the students.					
18.	Knowing the students individually					
19.	Developing productive skills, i.e. writing and reading					
20.	Developing productive skills, i.e. writing and speaking					
21.	Monitoring work and giving feedback					
22.	Managing discipline					
23.	Using audio-visual aids					

10. Please answer these questions.

10.1 Do you think teaching in large classes is difficult for you?

☐ Yes. Please give more opinions in 8.2 and 8.3

☐ No.

10.2 Large class make it difficult for me to do what I would like to do because:

_____

_____

_____

10.3 With an ideal number of students in my class, I could:

_____
_____
_____

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The classroom language of larger and smaller classes

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Abstract
This paper compares the discourse of two parallel classes, one large and one small by investigating talking time, use of L1, use of student names, questioning, feedback, directives and discipline. The findings show that the two classes differ in terms of the use of student names and the strength and impersonality of directives. For the other issues which primarily concern teacher-student interaction, there are no clear differences between large and small classes.

Two questions set, but largely unanswered, by Coleman (1989a) in the *Lancaster-Leeds Learning in Large Classes Research Project* are What actually happens in large classes? and How do teachers modify their behaviour in large classes? These questions imply that there are differences in how teachers and learners participate and interact in large and small classes. In this article, I will focus on two lessons and search for differences in the language used between a larger class and a smaller class.

In focusing on a more specific level than interaction analysis, I will be concerned with the analysis of classroom discourse. In this chapter, then, I intend to conduct what might loosely be called a discourse analysis. Rather than applying any specific approach to discourse analysis, however, I will follow Schiffrin's (1994) argument that any effective discourse analysis needs to be multidisciplinary in its approach. Since we are focusing on classroom discourse, in addition to the linguistic underpinnings traditionally associated with discourse analysis, I will also use pedagogical and educational concepts and analyses in this paper. In doing this, I hope that I will be able to show whether the classroom discourse in the two lessons analysed is markedly different in any way.

If teachers' beliefs that smaller classes are more effective for learning (see the previous article) are valid, identifying those aspects of classroom discourse where there are differences between large and small classes will allow us to identify aspects of classrooms that may have an influence on learning. This would then allow us as teachers to evaluate these aspects and see whether it is possible to use the language patterns associated with smaller classes in larger classes and thus ameliorate some of the effects of larger class sizes.

Aspects of classroom discourse

In taking a broad view of discourse, to conduct a valuable analysis, we will have to identify certain aspects of the discourse to investigate. Since this paper compares the discourse of larger and smaller classes, the aspects we decide to investigate should be those aspects which are most likely to be affected by class size. I will therefore be somewhat biased in my choice of aspects of discourse to investigate. This bias is intended to highlight those aspects of discourse which are most likely to have an effect on learning and which should therefore be addressed when teaching large classes.

There are seven aspects of the discourse that I intend to focus on as follows:

1. Teacher and student talking time

In classrooms one of either the teacher or the students is responsible for any stretch of classroom talk. The relative balance between these two potential speakers can be seen by comparing teacher talking time and student talking time. In the literature, a high proportion of teacher talk is often seen as problematic (Gower et al., 1995; Scrivener, 1994; but cf. Lewis, 1993) since when the teacher is talking, students' opportunities to practise are reduced (Hubbard et al., 1983). The problems of a high teacher talking time are even more apparent in large classes where encouraging teacher-student interaction is often seen as a problem (e.g. Coleman, 1989b, 1989c; but cf. Kumar, 1992). Moreover, a high teacher talking time can be taken as evidence of a power imbalance between the teacher and the students (Phillips, 1997; Watson Todd, 1996), whereby the more a teacher hogs the available talking time, the more she is exhibiting her power. This last point is important, since from a naive viewpoint we could expect that more students in the classroom would lead to a higher student talking time. However, the need for the teacher to exhibit her power with larger groups probably overrides the effects of more potential student talkers in the classroom. We might therefore expect that teacher talking time would increase in a large class.

Hypothesis 1: Teacher talking time is higher in a larger class than in a smaller class.

2. Use of the L1

Teaching in large classes may force teachers to use the students' first language (L1) more than they might otherwise do (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Woodward, 2001). While the L1 may be used to serve certain pedagogical purposes, it is widely agreed that the majority of language use in the classroom should be conducted in the target language (see Auerbach, 1993; Watson Todd, 1997 for summaries of the arguments). In large classes, teachers may feel that the problems of ensuring comprehensible communication with all students necessitate greater use of the L1. We may therefore expect that the classroom discourse of large classes may contain a greater proportion of L1 use than that of small classes.

Hypothesis 2: L1 is used more in a larger class than in a smaller class.

3. Use of student names

Using the students' names can help to build positive relationships between the teacher and the students, a key factor in classroom learning (Allen, 1999; Epanchin et al., 1994). In larger classes, however, the sheer memory load of learning all of the students' names may make this impossible (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hubbard et al., 1983; LoCastro, 1989). While teachers may wish to address the students individually by name, in large classes we may expect that the teacher's use of students' names is less than in small classes.

Hypothesis 3: The teacher refers to the students by name less frequently in a larger class than in a smaller class.

4. Questioning and initiations

A frequent pattern of classroom communication is the IRF format first identified by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), where the teacher initiates by asking a question, a

student responds and the teacher gives feedback on the response. A quick glance through the classroom discourse examined in this study confirms that such IRF patterns are common in both lessons. Before we look at the characteristics of IRF communication, however, we need to consider whether the teacher is the only person who can initiate in the classroom. Although teachers exhibit their greater power by being responsible for almost all initiations in most classrooms (see e.g. Sinclair & Brazil, 1982), it is possible for students to also initiate (see Garton, 2002). Given the greater chance of a student losing face (an important issue in Thai culture) in a large class, we may expect the students to make fewer initiations in large classes than in small classes.

Hypothesis 4: Student initiations are less frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Focusing on the teacher initiations, when asking a question a teacher has a range of choices available, some of which could be influenced by the size of the class. One issue is the amount of open-endedness in the communication. Teachers in large classes can feel forced to use more teacher-centred and closed-ended approaches to teaching (Hubbard et al., 1983), and for questioning this might be reflected in a higher proportion of closed-ended questions as opposed to open-ended questions (see Moore, 1989; Tsui, 1995; Watson Todd, 1997; Wu, 1993) in large classes.

Hypothesis 5: Closed-ended teacher questions are proportionately more frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Another potential effect of being forced to use a more teacher-centred and closed-ended approach involves display and referential questions. A display question is one to which the teacher already knows the answer, and a referential question is one where the teacher does not know the answer (Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Tsui, 1995; Watson Todd, 1997; Wu, 1993). As with closed-ended questions, we might expect a teacher in a large class to resort more frequently to using display questions.

Hypothesis 6: Display teacher questions are proportionately more frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.

A further issue concerning question types is the level of cognitive demand of the question. It has been argued that large classes are appropriate for learning factual knowledge but not for higher-order thinking skills (e.g. Obanya et al., n.d.). It might be expected, therefore, that higher-order questions occur less frequently in large classes.

Hypothesis 7: Lower-order teacher questions are proportionately more frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.

There are two further issues about questioning that may be important. Firstly, the number of teacher questions which receive a response may be influenced by the size of the class. In a larger class, students may have more difficulties in hearing questions, the teacher may have more problems in hearing student replies, and students may feel shyer in answering questions. We might therefore expect that a lower proportion of teacher questions receive replies in large classes.

Hypothesis 8: Proportionately fewer questions receive a student response in a larger class than in a smaller class.

A final issue regarding teacher questioning is the extent to which questions may need to be modified before a response is received (see Cole & Chan, 1987; Watson Todd, 1997). In a larger class with more students and background noise, we might expect that the teacher would need to repeat or rephrase questions more often than in a smaller class.

Hypothesis 9: Proportionately more questions are repeated and/or rephrased in a larger class than in a smaller class.

5. Teacher feedback on student responses
The teacher feedback moves in IRF discourse are a key factor in determining the effectiveness and function of stretches of such discourse (Cullen, 2002; Nassaji & Wells, 2000). Such feedback moves may involve simple echoing of the student response (Cullen, 1998; Freiberg & Driscoll, 2000), judgments or evaluations on the student response (Sinclair & Brazil, 1982), restatements of the student response (Bowen & Marks, 1994), or requests for further clarification (Nassaji & Wells, 2000). Of these judgmental feedback moves most explicitly signal the teacher's power, while requests for clarification are generally the most learner-centred. Given the pressures on teachers in large classes, we might expect that IRF sequences in the classroom discourse of large classes would contain more judgmental moves and fewer requests for clarification.

Hypothesis 10: There are proportionately more judgments and fewer requests for clarification as feedback moves in IRF sequences in a larger class than in a smaller class.

6. Surface forms of directives
A further way in which teacher power can be manifested, albeit largely unconsciously, is through the strength of the directives used when the teacher gives instructions to the students (Watson Todd, 1996). Examining the directives that teachers use in classrooms, Holmes (1983) categorises the directives according to their surface form into imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives. These categories can be further subdivided so that, for example, imperatives may comprise base-form imperatives, base-form imperatives plus 'please', present participle imperatives, verb ellipsis, and let + first person pronoun imperatives. Some of these forms are pragmatically less polite and indicate a perceived greater distance between the speaker and the audience. Perhaps the strongest form is the base-form imperative, while modal interrogatives indicate a perceived closeness between the speaker and the audience. Given the potential need for greater demonstrations of teacher power with large classes, we might expect that the teacher's directives with large classes would be manifested through stronger surface forms.

Hypothesis 11: The teacher's directives in a larger class use stronger surface forms than those used in a smaller class.

7. The language of classroom management and discipline

Classroom management and discipline issues are perhaps the most widely perceived problems with teaching large classes (e.g. Coleman, 1989b; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; Nolasco & Arthur, 1986; Sabandar, 1989; Ur, 1996; Woodward, 2001). To investigate how management and discipline issues are manifested in classroom discourse, there are two aspects we can examine. Firstly, the more discipline problems there are, generally the more explicit teacher utterances focusing on discipline there will be. With discipline problems more likely to occur in large classes, we may therefore expect a greater frequency of teacher utterances dealing with discipline in large classes.

Hypothesis 12: There are more teacher utterances explicitly dealing with discipline problems in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Secondly, the way in which such utterances are manifested may differ between large and small classes. In large classes, these utterances may be more impersonal and address the whole class rather than individual students. Also, as with the surface forms of directives, the utterances may be expressed in stronger language in large classes. A further aspect of this last point is that utterances which aim to simultaneously build rapport and treat discipline problems, such as I-messages (see Guillaume, 2000), are less likely to occur in large classes.

Hypothesis 13: Teacher utterances dealing with discipline problems are more impersonal in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Hypothesis 14: The teacher's utterances dealing with discipline in a larger class use stronger surface forms than those used in a smaller class.

By attempting to test the validity of these 14 hypotheses, I hope that I will be able to identify any aspects of classroom discourse that differ between larger and smaller classes. This may allow me to identify the aspects of classroom discourse that teachers of large classes may wish to focus on in their teaching to make the classroom language of a larger class more similar to that of a smaller class.

The data

The data analysed in this study come from an English language support course for undergraduates of science and engineering, where an experienced teacher was teaching the same lessons to two groups of students. One of the groups consisted of 23 students and is termed the smaller class in this study, and the other consisted of 41 students and is termed the larger class. A pair of lessons was chosen, one for each class on the same topic. Both lessons consisted of introducing the ideas of conducting a survey to students, raising their awareness of key issues in conducting surveys, asking students to decide on survey topics in groups, and asking a representative from each group to present their ideas for a survey to the whole class. The participation structures in the lessons were a mixture of teacher mini-lectures, teacher-fronted interaction, student groupwork, and student presentations.

Both lessons were video recorded using two cameras, one focusing on the teacher and one on the students. The teacher was given a microphone and another microphone was placed facing the students. Despite these preparations, it was not possible to record students' interactions in groupwork and there were also problems in hearing both the students and the teacher during student presentations. Because of these problems, the following analysis focuses on those parts of the lesson where the interaction is between the teacher and the whole class. This restriction should not seriously affect the study as such plenary interactions are those points where we might expect the greatest differences in classroom discourse between large and small classes.

Findings

Hypothesis 1: Teacher talking time is higher in a larger class than in a smaller class.
There are three main ways in which the teacher talking time and student talking time can be compared: by counting the amount of time each spends as a speaker, by counting the number of turns each takes, or by counting the number of words each contributes to the interaction. The first of these approaches is problematic from a practical perspective. Timing teacher and student turns is laborious and complicated, and dealing with pauses and silence in the interaction is difficult. The second approach, while the most straightforward practically, does not shed much light on the interaction. In full-class interaction, we may expect a pattern of alternating turns, even though the length of each turn may vary greatly. Simply counting turns, therefore, does not tell us about the proportions of the available class time used by each speaker. I will therefore use the third approach and count the number of words each of the speakers produces. In addition, I will also count the number of turns so that the average length of each turn in terms of number of words can be calculated. The findings regarding these for the two lessons are shown in Table 1.

Table 1   Teacher and student talking time

	Smaller class	Larger class
Number of teacher turns (including non-verbal)	144	133
Number of teacher turns (verbal only)	142	119
Number of student turns (including non-verbal)	122	87
Number of student turns (verbal only)	79	63
Total number of words spoken by teacher	4913	4316
Total number of words spoken by students (not including presentations or groupwork)	161	140
Number of words/verbal turn for teacher	34.6	36.3
Number of words/verbal turn for student	2.0	2.2

From Table 1, we can see that, although there are large differences between the amount of talk of the teacher and the students, the differences between the smaller class and the larger class are minor. For all measurements of talking time, the data for the two lessons is comparable. We can therefore conclude that there are no real differences in teacher talking time between the smaller class and the larger class.

Hypothesis 2: L1 is used more in a larger class than in a smaller class.
While identifying L1 use in classroom discourse is straightforward, where the L1 is Thai as in this case, analysis of amount of L1 use is less clear. Written Thai contains no breaks between words and what constitutes a single word is often unclear, even in spoken Thai. We cannot therefore simply count the number of words spoken in Thai. Furthermore, we need to distinguish between use of L1 for proper nouns and other uses of L1. To analyse L1 use, therefore, I will count the number of turns which contain some L1 use, excluding proper nouns, and I will also try to assign functions to each instance of L1 use. Doing this, we find the patterns of L1 use given in Table 2.

Table 2   Use of L1

	Smaller class	Larger class
Number of turns involving L1 use	5	11
Utterances by teacher involving L1 use	2	3
Utterances by students involving L1 use	3	8
Functions of L1 use		
Student asking a question (student initiation)	-	2
Student responding to teacher question	3	3
Teacher echoing student L1 response	2	2
Teacher making a joke	-	1
Students informally chatting to teacher	-	3

Although more than twice as many instances of L1 use were found in the larger class than in the smaller class, the overall numbers are so small that no conclusions can be drawn from this finding. We cannot therefore conclude that L1 was used more in the larger class than in the smaller class.

Hypothesis 3: The teacher refers to the students by name less frequently in a larger class than in a smaller class.
Counting the teacher's use of student names is straightforward and unproblematic. In addition to basic frequency information, I will also examine the number of different students to whom the teacher refers by name. The findings concerning this are shown in Table 3.

Table 3   Teacher's use of students' names

	Smaller class	Larger class
Number of times teacher uses a student name	52	5
Number of individual students referred to by name by teacher	11	4

From Table 3, the frequency of the teacher's use of students' names differs very noticeably in the two lessons, both in terms of the frequency of use and in terms of the number of students the teacher refers to. For the two lessons examined, therefore, there is a difference in the teacher's use of students' names in the smaller class and the larger class, confirming Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4: Student initiations are less frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Student initiations can be identified using the criteria set out by Garton (2002). A student initiation is any student turn on the main floor of the interaction where the turn is not given in response to any eliciting behaviour of the teacher. Following these criteria, we can identify student initiations in the two lessons and assign functions to them. These are shown in Table 4.

Table 4   Student initiations

	Smaller class	Larger class
Number of S initiations	2	14
Functions of student initiations		
Student corrects teacher regarding previously elicited information	2	-
Student asks a question for clarification of the previous teacher turn	-	4
Student asks a question for information	-	3
Student repeats a teacher statement	-	2
Student makes a joke	-	1
Student chats to the teacher	-	4

Although the last category of students chatting to the teacher could be excluded as this only happens as the lesson is winding down, there is still a marked difference in both the number of student initiations and the functions these initiations serve between the two lessons. However, this difference is the opposite of that expected with students making more initiations in the larger class than in the smaller class.

Hypothesis 5: Closed-ended teacher questions are proportionately more frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.

For hypotheses 5, 6, 7 and 8, we need to identify instances of teacher questions. In doing this, the focus is on the function of teacher utterances rather than the surface form. Although most questions in the data are in the form of interrogatives, there are some instances of unfinished sentences (see Gower et al., 1995) which function as questions. We also need to consider how to deal with a series of questions, each of which is asking for the same information. In this study, such repetitions or rephrasings of questions are considered as single questions where they are adjacent in the discourse and not separated by a long pause.

Having identified all the instances of teacher questions, we next need to categorise them into closed-ended or open-ended questions. Closed-ended or convergent questions "limit student responses to only one correct answer", whereas open-ended or divergent questions "allow for many possible correct student responses" (Moore, 1989: 172-173). An example of a closed-ended question from the data in this study is: 'Who is the President of KMUTT?', and an example of an open-ended question is: 'How many people would you like them to fill in your questionnaire?' Instances of each type of question were counted and the findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5   Closed-ended and open-ended questions

	Smaller class		Larger class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Open-ended questions	45	46.9	32	45.7
Closed-ended questions	51	53.1	38	54.3

Although fewer questions were asked by the teacher in the larger class, the proportion of closed-ended to open-ended questions in the two lessons were very similar, and thus for this situation we can conclude that class size is not a factor in determining the proportions of closed-ended and open-ended questions.

Hypothesis 6: Display teacher questions are proportionately more frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.
Referential questions are knowledge-seeking where the asker does not know the answer. On the other hand, with display questions, the asker already knows the answer and is testing knowledge (Watson Todd, 1997). An example of a display question from the data is 'What do we call it? Start with *in* ... right. *In* ... what?', and of a referential question is 'Which team would like to start?' Display questions generally match closed-ended questions, and referential questions generally match open-ended questions. However, open-ended display questions and closed-ended referential questions may occur with enough frequency to make a separate analysis of these worthwhile. The numbers and proportions of teacher display and referential questions are shown in Table 6.

Table 6   Display and referential questions

	Smaller class		Larger class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Display questions	47	49.0	39	55.7
Referential questions	49	51.0	31	44.3

Although there is a slightly higher proportion of display questions in the larger class, the differences between the smaller class and the larger class are not enough for us to conclude that class size is a factor influencing the teacher's choice between using display and referential questions.

Hypothesis 7: Lower-order teacher questions are proportionately more frequent in a larger class than in a smaller class.
One of the most influential pedagogical categorisations is Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, which attempts to categorise educational goals in terms of the cognitive level of the goal (see Orlich et al., 1998; Sparks-Langer et al., 2000). Although the taxonomy contains six levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation), it can be simplified into two categories of lower-order thinking (the knowledge level) and higher-order thinking (the other five levels. This classification can be applied to individual teacher questions as well as to educational objectives allowing us to categorise the teacher questions. An example of a lower-order question from the data is 'What is number three?', whereas 'Why do we survey this topic?' is a higher-order question. The results from the two lessons regarding the cognitive levels of questions are shown in Table 7.

Table 7   Lower-order and higher-order questions

	Smaller class		Larger class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Lower-order questions	78	81.2	57	81.4
Higher-order questions	18	18.8	13	18.6

It is noticeable that lower-order questions greatly outnumber higher-order questions in both lessons. The proportions of the two question types, however, are very similar, suggesting that there is no difference in the cognitive levels of questions asked in the smaller class and the larger class.

Hypothesis 8: Proportionately fewer questions receive a student response in a larger class than in a smaller class.
For all teacher questions, whether they elicit a student response or not can be identified. In doing this, we need to consider non-verbal student responses (such as nodding) as well as verbal responses. The frequencies of questions receiving a response are given in Table 8.

Table 8   Teacher questions receiving a student response

	Smaller class	Larger class
Number of T questions	96	70
Number of T questions getting a response	76	52
% of T questions getting a response	79.2	74.3

As with the other findings concerning teacher questioning, there appears to be little difference between the two lessons, indicating that, in this study, whether or not a question receives a response is not affected by class size.

Hypothesis 9: Proportionately more questions are repeated and/or rephrased in a larger class than in a smaller class.
For the previous four hypotheses, I have been examining teacher initiating moves rather than the more syntactic question. Thus, even where a question receives a response, it may have been repeated or rephrased two or three times before the response was forthcoming. These repetitions and rephrasings still request the same information from the students as the original phrasing of the question. Counting these, we find the results shown in Table 9.

Table 9   Repetitions and rephrasings of teacher questions

	Smaller class		Larger class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Questions which are repeated	13	13.5	8	11.4
Questions which are rephrased	14	14.6	14	20.0

Although a slightly higher proportion of teacher questions are rephrased in the larger class in the data in this study, this does not appear to be a major issue as the differences between the two lessons are small.

Hypothesis 10: There are proportionately more judgments and fewer requests for clarification as feedback moves in IRF sequences in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Following a teacher question and a student response, in classroom discourse it is common for the teacher to give feedback on the response. This feedback may simply echo the student response, may make a judgment on its appropriateness, may rephrase the response, or may involve asking for more details. Furthermore, the first three of these options may either accept (or be neutral) or reject the student's response. Categorising and counting the frequency of each of these possible types of feedback gives the results shown in Table 10.

Table 10   Types of feedback

	Smaller class		Larger class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Number of teacher feedback moves	95		73	
Accepting echo of S response	27	28.4	22	30.1
Rejecting echo of S response	2	2.1	2	2.7
Accepting judgment on S response	28	29.5	26	35.6
Rejecting judgment on S response	1	1.1	-	-
Accepting restatement of S response	26	27.4	17	23.3
Rejecting restatement of S response	5	5.3	1	1.4
Asking for more details of response	3	3.2	5	6.8
Other e.g. focus on loudness of response	3	3.2	-	-

As with the results concerning teacher questioning, although there are minor differences in the feedback between the smaller class and the larger class, none of the differences are marked enough for us to conclude that class size has noticeable effects on the types of teacher feedback moves.

Hypothesis 11: The teacher's directives in a larger class use stronger surface forms than those used in a smaller class.

There is a general match between the surface form of a directive and the strength associated with it. For example, a base-form imperative is nearly always stronger than a modal interrogative directive. Using this as the starting point, the directives of instructions in the data were categorised using Holmes' (1983) classification. Where appropriate, new categories were created to deal with forms of directives not covered in Holmes' analysis. Table 11 shows the absolute and relative frequencies of each of the types of directive arranged from strongest to weakest.

Table 11   Teacher directives

	Smaller class		Larger class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Number of teacher directives	63		65	
Negative imperative e.g. 'Don't forget'	4	6.3	8	12.3
Imperative e.g. 'Think about this'	20	31.7	30	46.2
Gerund e.g. 'Tomorrow, collecting data'	-	-	1	1.5
Please + imperative e.g. 'Please look at your friend's face'	3	4.8	10	15.4
Verb ellipsis e.g. 'Now last team'	5	7.9	5	7.7
Let's phrase e.g. 'Let's think'	7	11.1	2	3.1
You-declarative e.g. 'You have to come up in class'	15	23.8	4	6.2
Other declarative e.g. 'The thing you have to do is to think about the topic'	1	1.6	-	-
I-declarative e.g. 'I give you one minute'	6	9.5	4	6.2
Modal interrogative e.g. 'Would you please move closer?'	3	4.8	-	-

In Table 11, there is a noticeable difference in the strengths of the directives used in the two lessons. The four strongest categories of directives are all more frequent in the larger class, with the five weaker categories all being more frequent in the smaller class. There does, therefore, appear to be a relationship between the strength of directives used and the class size in the data in this study.

Hypothesis 12: There are more teacher utterances explicitly dealing with discipline problems in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Hypothesis 13: Teacher utterances dealing with discipline problems are more impersonal in a larger class than in a smaller class.

Hypothesis 14: The teacher's utterances dealing with discipline in a larger class use stronger surface forms than those used in a smaller class.
The data in Table 11 concerns those directives which were given by the teacher for direct learning purposes, i.e. the behaviour being directed by the teacher for effective performance on largely preplanned activities. In contrast, the teacher also gives directives in response to student behaviour which aim to change that behaviour so that the learning environment is more conducive to learning. These latter directives concern discipline. For these directives, we can examine their overall frequency, look at the language used to refer to students, and investigate the surface forms of the directives used. Table 12 shows the data from the two lessons concerning these three aspects of discipline-oriented directives.

Table 12   Discipline-oriented directives

	Smaller class		Larger class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Number of discipline-oriented directives	32		33	
Use of impersonal 'Class'	6	18.8	15	45.5
Use of student names for discipline purposes	7	21.9	1	3.0
Negative imperative e.g. 'Don't miss something'	1	3.1	-	-
Imperative e.g. 'Listen carefully'	10	31.2	11	33.3
Noun phrase e.g. 'Attention please'	-	-	4	12.1
Adverb e.g. 'Louder'	4	12.5	-	-
Adverb + please e.g. 'Louder please'	2	6.2	-	-
You-declarative e.g. 'You should speak louder'	1	3.1	-	-
I-declarative e.g. 'I can't hear your voice'	1	3.1	-	-
Would-you-request e.g. 'Would you please listen?'	-	-	2	6.1

Unlike the directives used for instructions, the strength of directives used for discipline does not appear to be related to class size. Similarly, the frequency of the teacher addressing discipline problems is almost the same in the smaller class and the larger class. However, in line with the data concerning the teacher's use of students' names, in the larger class the impersonal 'Class' is used more frequently.

Discussion

The generalisability of a study like this based on only two lessons is dubious. However, given that there have been no previous published comparisons of the discourse of large and small classes, I hope that the findings may give teachers some idea of those aspects of classroom language which are worth paying particular attention to when teaching large classes. These aspects are most likely to be the ones for which the findings show a difference between the larger and the smaller class in support of a hypothesis. The findings above fall into three categories concerning whether they support the 14 hypotheses or not as shown in Table 13, and only three of the hypotheses (3, 11 and 13) show a difference between the two lessons in a way which may concern teachers of large classes.

Before we focus on the three points which may be of most concern to teachers of large classes, let us first consider the other eleven hypotheses. To some extent, these findings are surprising in that, when setting up the hypotheses, I had an expectation that the findings would provide support. We therefore need to consider why the findings did not support most of the hypotheses.

Classrooms are very complex environments with a multitude of factors having the potential to influence classroom events and learning. In this study, attempts have been made to control some of the more important of these factors by investigating two lessons taught by the same teacher and involving the same content. However, there is

Table 13   Summary of findings

Findings supporting a hypothesis (and thus of concern to teachers of large classes)	Use of student names (hypothesis 3) Strength of directives in instructions (hypothesis 11) Level of impersonality in disciplinary directives (hypothesis 13)
Findings not supporting a hypothesis	Amount of teacher talking time (hypothesis 1) Use of L1 (hypothesis 2) Use of closed-ended questions (hypothesis 5) Use of display questions (hypothesis 6) Use of lower-order questions (hypothesis 7) Number of questions receiving a student response (hypothesis 8) Number of questions repeated or rephrased (hypothesis 9) Types of teacher feedback (hypothesis 10) Frequency of disciplinary directives (hypothesis 12) Strength of disciplinary directives (hypothesis 14)
Findings standing in contrast to a hypothesis	Number of student initiations (hypothesis 4)

still a myriad of potentially important factors which have not been controlled. In setting up the hypotheses, we are assuming that class size is more important than these other factors (controlled or uncontrolled). For those hypotheses where the findings do not support the hypotheses, it would seem that there are other factors involved which take precedence over class size in the aspects of classroom discourse examined.

Interestingly, most of those aspects for which the findings do not support the hypotheses concern teacher-student interaction. Although some studies have suggested that interaction may be a key problem with classes (Coleman, 1989b, 1989c; Ur, 1996), this does not appear to be the case in this study. Instead, it is likely that other factors are more important than class size in determining interaction patterns and opportunities for students to speak. One factor which may be more influential than class size is the types of activity used in the classroom (Kumar, 1992). If this is the case, then in this study where the two lessons examined involved very similar activities, we should perhaps not be surprised that there is little difference in the classroom interaction between the larger class and the smaller class. If it is the case that activities are more influential than class size, then teachers of large classes would need to try to ensure that a larger class size does not adversely affect their choice of activities to include in a lesson.

Learning student names and strength of directives
Looking at those aspects where the findings support the hypotheses and which may be of concern to teachers of large classes, the basis for hypotheses 3 and 13 probably concerns the same problem of remembering student names in a larger class. While this may seem to be a minor practical issue that does not directly affect teaching and learning, students' concerns about impersonalisation in larger classes may need to be addressed (Carbone, 1996) and there is some evidence that a teacher's correct use of names is correlated with a lack of discipline problems (Nolasco & Arthur, 1988). It

may therefore actually be more important for teachers of large classes to remember and use students' names than for teachers of small classes.

The learning of students' names can present a challenge to teachers of large classes, particularly if they are teaching several large classes concurrently. To help with this problem, there are some suggestions for how to learn student names in the literature (Duppenthaler, 1991; Gower et al., 1995; Hubbard et al., 1983; Nolasco & Arthur, 1988) which may be of use:

- Spend part of the first two or three lessons getting students to introduce themselves.
- If the students do not know each other, play some name-learning games in the first couple of lessons.
- Use the students' names consciously in the first few lessons.
- Ask students to sit in the same seat every lesson.
- Make a seating plan with the students' names on it.
- Ask students to make name cards that they can put on their desks.
- Ask students to make group posters introducing themselves to put on the back wall of the classroom.
- Make a student picture roll card file with photos and names of each student and on which you can keep a mini-record of their problems, interests, progress and so on.
- Try to associate the students' names with some personal characteristic.
- When checking the register, look at who answers each name.
- When handing back homework, call out the students' names.
- Check the students' names to yourself when they are engaged in pairwork or groupwork.
- Copy out the list of the students' names.
- If you cannot remember a student's name, be open and ask.

The issue of the strength of directives used in giving instructions could also be considered a practical issue. The way in which classroom management issues are treated depends largely on the teacher's perceived need to retain control. In large classes, there may be a greater perceived threat to teacher control and therefore the teacher uses stronger language forms. There are no easy ways to resolve potential problems concerning the strength of directives. While a teacher of large classes may wish to reduce strength of the language she uses, she is probably also very concerned about potential discipline problems arising from doing this. The strength of directives used in instructions therefore may be an area that teachers of large classes should simply be aware of when teaching as an area of potential concern.

Conclusion
Although there are problems with the generalisability of this study, the findings suggest that there are actually few differences concerning classroom discourse between large and small classes. On the one hand, this is a comforting result since teachers of large classes may not need to worry much about their classroom language; on the other, the findings are not very helpful since any perceived differences between large and small classes cannot be explained in terms of classroom language but may be due to some other, as yet unidentified, factor. Nevertheless, the findings concerning the importance of learning students' names may be helpful and be put into practice readily. Although this may appear little to get out of a study like this, I still

believe that conducting this research was worthwhile, if only to show how many surprises research into large classes can throw up.

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Using a Lecture and Tutorial Approach in Teaching Large Classes

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Abstract
This study was conducted to investigate how English language teaching using a lecture and tutorial system worked with a large class. The study involved 65 students taking their last English foundation course at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. Two researchers taking turns delivered the lessons in a large class as a lecture session and conducted a tutorial session with 15-16 students. The results from the questionnaire showed that the students preferred the tutorial mode to the lecture mode. However, they still rated learning in a conventional class highly. The students' perceptions contradicted the perceptions of the teacher/researcher who was satisfied with the teaching and regarded the teaching in lectures as successful. Therefore, we cannot reach any conclusions concerning appropriate modes of teaching English in large classes.

In any English class, the teacher has to make sure that the learners have the time to practise the language points learned as learning English is regarded as learning a skill. Therefore, generally the English class consists of an input, a practice by means of drilling or doing exercises, a production of the language taught and feedback from the teacher. Interaction happens throughout the process of teaching and learning and it is regarded as an important aspect because an English class is a place where the learners can produce the language and check the hypotheses they have formed about the language. In order to cover those activities, teaching English is normally conducted in a smaller class compared with other subjects; the number of students in the English class in Thailand is between 30 and 45 in the English foundation courses in government universities.

However, recently there has been a problem of an increasing number of students while the number of teachers has remained the same. Therefore, we had to find solutions to this problem. Inspired by the teaching used in other subjects in higher education, we tried using a teaching mode which was conducted with a large number of students; namely, a lecture. However, as mentioned above interaction is important; and using only lecture mode in a large class might not make the English language learning successful as it is difficult to give feedback to individual students and also to offer tasks which cater for interaction. Therefore, a tutorial, which is also used in higher education was integrated into this study in order to give the students the chance to interact with their friends and the teacher. This system would give a balance between studying English in a large class with less interaction and studying in a smaller class in the tutorial session. This classroom system thus tried to provide an English learning environment which was as similar as possible to the English conventional class, but which at the same time could cope with the increased number of students.

This study was therefore conducted to investigate how English language teaching using a lecture and tutorial system worked with a large class. It was conducted at King

Mongkut's University of Technology, a government university in Thailand. The class consisted of 63 Engineering students studying an English foundation course.

Teaching English in a conventional class

Conventionally, teaching English is conducted in a class size which is manageable because teaching English has a few important components, among which are interaction and giving feedback. These two components are important because acquiring a language needs interaction between learners and teachers and interaction among learners so that the language points learned will be practised and the success of communication helps learners measure their language competency. Therefore, one of the teacher's responsibilities is organizing and controlling classroom interaction (Watson Todd, 1997). This can be done by the teacher interacting with the learners or the teacher controlling interaction through organizing groupwork and pairwork (McCarthy, 1997). Therefore, a higher number of students studying in a conventional classroom mode seems likely to cause management problems in that interaction and feedback are difficult to provide.

Lectures

A lecture mode is the most common teaching mode in higher education because it provides human contact and it has a few advantages (Wallace, 1991; Jordan, 1997). It can be said that the main advantage of this mode of teaching is administration because it is cheap in terms of human resources; one lecture can deliver the same message to a large audience. It is also easy to arrange as long as the educational institution has space available. A lecture mode may be used with an English class if the focus is on delivering the content such as in a literature or a linguistics class. However, it is not likely to be suitable if the focus of the class is on communication where interaction to enhance language competence is promoted. In addition, a lecture mode is difficult for the teacher to provide feedback to the learners, s/he may be able to give feedback to the whole group but not individually. If the lecture mode is to be offered in an English class where communication is emphasised, it can be used when the teacher explains a certain concept such as introducing new language, context, aids or content, objectives goals or rationale, clarifying and dealing with students' problems (Watson Todd, 1997). The activities after this short lecture will cater for interaction through communication.

Tutorials

Tutorials are regarded as a group mode teaching. The main function of the tutorial is to provide discussion in a group. The discussion may be conducted in different ways. For example, if the tutorial is conducted as a seminar, the papers are presented by one or more participants as input for discussion. The topics to be discussed in the tutorial can also come from the teacher, a previous lecture, or an essay written by the students. The tutorial can also be conducted as a workshop, which is a practical session where learners learn to solve problems (Wallace, 1991). Tutorials are ideal for English language learning especially when conducted in a small group because the students have the chance to interact with their friends and the teacher through discussion. This is even more suitable for the students who do not like to speak up in class as they are too self-conscious of how they speak English. The feedback can also be done easily and individually in the tutorial because the teacher can focus on individual students. However, the major disadvantage of this mode is manpower. Because the ratio of the

teacher per students is lower than in a normal English class, if the tutorial mode is adopted, more English teachers are needed.

To solve the problem of dealing with a higher number of students, we tried to combine teaching modes to allow us to cope with more students, while at the same time still providing both interaction and feedback. Therefore, a combination of a lecture which can cater for more students at one time and a tutorial which can provide interaction and feedback were chosen as a teaching mode in this study to find out if they are effective modes for English language teaching. The research question therefore is 'How effective is using a lecture and tutorial approach in teaching English?'

Context of the study
The study was implemented in the class LNG 103: Communicative Writing. It was the third course of the subjects who are studying at KMUTT. Therefore, they already had experience studying English in a conventional class; i.e. studying with 35-40 students with one teacher in charge of the class. The subjects were from Mechanical Engineering, Production Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Electronics Engineering Departments. The course employs a task-based approach where students have to perform different kinds of tasks which they can choose based on their interest. The tasks in this course are mainly written ones; e.g. writing an email, posting their opinions in the Bulletin Board in the website prepared by the Department of Languages, writing a postcard, writing a letter of complaint, and writing a report on a survey and an experiment. Some tasks were conducted individually such as the email task, writing the postcard and a letter of complaint, whereas others, such as the reports on the survey and the experiment, were conducted in groups.

Since the course had to follow the syllabus designed for conventional classrooms, the researchers were able to rearrange the class as long as it did not affect the requirements of the course which in turn affected the scores of the students. The class was rearranged by two lecturers taking turns teaching a large class which was regarded as a lecture session. In the lecture class, the lecturers chose the part of the content which aimed at delivering a message to the students, such as explaining strategies, the task, new grammar points necessary for the tasks and feedback of common errors coming from the whole class. However, because learning English is activity-based and the course is designed as a task-based approach, the lecture session was composed of input, or a short lecture to introduce a new concept, followed by exercises conducted in pairs or in groups of five to check if the subjects understood the input. Also using the lecture mode were the presentations of the experimental task which was the final and the most important task that needed evaluation from the whole group as a requirement of the course. While one researcher taught the class, the other acted as an observer recording what happened in class; she would not get involved in the teaching process.

To conduct a tutorial, the whole class was separated into four small groups, named A, B, C, and D. There were about 15-16 students in each group. One researcher was responsible for 2 groups. In this way, a smaller number of students would study in a tutorial session, which was arranged differently from the conventional classroom. The tutorials were conducted mainly to give feedback on the students' assignments individually, present the smaller tasks, and discuss the topics the students chose to do

in the survey task. Each group of 15-16 students met with the teacher/researcher in the tutorial session for one hour whereas the whole group of students or 40 students in the conventional classroom would meet for 2 hours. While one group met with the teacher/researcher, the other group was expected to do self-study or to complete their tasks. In other words, the arrangement of the tutorial was regarded as separating the conventional classroom into two smaller groups and dealing with one group at a time. In this way, the students did not have problems of not finishing their tasks when they came to the tutorial because the tasks were used as input for discussion. With this small number, all students had the opportunity to speak English or to interact with the teacher and friends. The contact hours in this new mode of learning are presented in the following table.

Table 1   Contact hours of students in new mode of learning compared with that in the conventional class

Type of class	Number of students	Time spent in each session	Time allocated for the whole semester
Conventional class	35-40	2 hours x 30 lessons	60
Lecture	63	2 hours x 16 lessons	32
Tutorial	15-16	1 hour x 14 lessons	14

Note: the students in the tutorial session officially had 14 hours for self-study and/or doing the tasks on their own.

Because learning English in a large class was new to the subjects, the first session was an introduction to how the class would be conducted. Then the students were assigned into small groups so that they knew which group they belonged to. In the introduction session, in addition to having the course outline, the students were given the timetable which specified when the lectures and the tutorials for each group were conducted.

The class met for 15 weeks or 30 sessions (2 sessions a week) for the whole semester, two hours a session or four hours per week. Normally, the first two hours of the week was allocated for lecture and the last two hours was for the tutorial. The students went through 15 hours of lecture and 14 tutorial sessions. The following table shows the comparison of conducting LNG 103 in three types of classes: conventional, lecture, and tutorial.

Table 2   A comparison of conducting LNG 103 in a conventional, lecture and tutorial classes

Type of class	Number of students	Input	Practice	Presentation of the task	Feedback
Conventional	35-40	Language points, strategies, how to conduct a survey, how to write an abstract.	Writing using the language points learned in the input.	The survey and experiment tasks were done in groups in front of the class. The audience was required to ask questions.	Common mistakes are presented to the whole class. Sometimes individual students receive written feedback.
Lecture	63	Language points, strategies, how to conduct a survey, how to write an abstract.	Writing using the language points learned in the input.	The survey and experiment tasks were done in groups in front of the class. The audience was required to ask questions.	Only the important mistakes from the whole class were raised.
Tutorial	15-16	Common mistakes from the assignments, questions from lectures.	Speaking through asking and answering questions.	Presenting the proposal of the survey task.	Mistakes from written assignments were discussed in detail with each student.

Research procedures

In order to find out if the combined lecture and tutorial mode was effective in teaching English or not, the researchers investigated how the students felt about being taught in this new mode of learning compared with their experience of learning English in a conventional classroom and looked at how the class was conducted. The two instruments used are as follows:

- A questionnaire asking the subjects' attitudes about these teaching modes. It was composed of 22 items where the subjects had to rate their opinion on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from completely agree to do not agree at all. There were three open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire asking the subjects to list the advantages of a lecture conducted in a large class, the advantages of a tutorial session and the advantages of the conventional class they had previously experienced. The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the semester after the subjects had enough experience studying in the lecture and tutorial mode.

- A diary by one teacher/researcher whose expertise is in teaching techniques. She recorded what happened in class. Because of her expertise, her record was also evaluative in that she focused on the objectives of the lesson, pace of teaching, reaction of the participants, success of the class considering students' involvement and the achievement of the objectives. The data from the diary were used to support the data from the questionnaire.

Findings

From the rating scale section, the subjects showed their opinions of the lecture and tutorial mode of teaching compared with the teaching mode in the conventional class as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3   Opinions on learning in a large class or in a lecture mode

Items	Mean	Interpretation
Learning English in a lecture mode in a large class is the same as learning English in LNG 101 and LNG 102	3.26	Not certain
You still have interaction with your teacher and your friends although you are learning English in a lecture mode in a large class.	3.00	Not certain
You are still able to do groupwork although you study in a lecture mode in a large class	2.80	Not certain
You can ask questions from the teacher in a lecture mode of learning	3.02	Not certain
The teacher can pay attention to every student although the teaching is conducted in a lecture mode in a large class	3.20	Not certain
Learning English in a lecture mode in a large class is meaty/contentful	3.07	Not certain
Learning English in a lecture mode in a large class enables you to use English a lot	3.39	Not certain
Learning English in a lecture mode in a large class enables you to show your opinions	3.07	Not certain

From the findings in Table 3, the students did not seem to make a clear distinction between studying in the lecture mode in a large class and their previous experience in studying English in a conventional class as most of them rated 'not certain' in almost all the categories. This showed that class size did not have much effect on their perceptions. It might be because the teachers covered all the aspects that could be done in the conventional class although they might not be able to attend to each individual student

When asked to show their opinions of the tutorial, the students could more clearly distinguish between the tutorial and the conventional class as seen in Table 4.

Table 4   Opinions of learning English in a tutorial mode

Items	Mean	Interpretation
Learning English in a tutorial mode is the same as what you used to do in LNG 101 and LNG 102	2.43	Agree
Learning English in a tutorial mode enables you to work in small groups	1.98	Agree
You can ask the teacher questions when learning English in a tutorial mode	1.85	Agree
Learning English in a tutorial enables the teacher to pay attention to every student	1.70	Totally agree
Learning English in a tutorial mode enables you to interact with the teacher and friends	1.71	Totally agree
You learn a lot in a tutorial mode	2.09	Agree
You can use English a lot in a tutorial mode	2.00	Agree
Students have a chance to show their opinions when learning in a tutorial mode	1.80	Totally agree

From the findings in Table 4, the students thought that this mode of learning enabled them to interact with the teacher and friends and they were able to learn more through

using English. In addition, they thought that the teacher could pay attention to every student. However, their perceptions of the difference between the tutorial and the conventional class were not clear as they thought that learning in the tutorial was the same as learning in the conventional class. Again, this may be because the activities used in the two modes are similar.

To conclude, the data from the rating scales showed that class size had no effect on the students' perception of the differences among the three types of classes; namely, the lecture, the tutorial and the conventional class, because the three types of classes incorporated all important aspects of teaching English, namely, input, practice, presentation of the task and feedback, albeit in different degrees.

In the open-ended section which asked the students to state the advantages of each mode of teaching and learning, the findings show the students' perceptions of the English class in relation to learning in 5 aspects: teacher, interaction, content, social aspects, and practical aspects. These are compared in Table 5.

Table 5   A comparison of the students' perceptions of advantages of the three modes of teaching

	Lecture	Tutorial	Conventional Class
Teacher	• Teacher not being able to take care of the students (3.7%) • Gaining knowledge from various teachers (5.6%)	• Teacher being able to take care of every student (20.7%) • Being able to ask questions to the teacher (37.7%)	• Teacher can take care of every student (20.7%) • Being able to speak with and ask questions to the teacher (11.3%)
Interaction	• Having the chance to work in groups (9.4%) • Having the chance to show opinions (11.3%)	• Being able to use English more (15.0%) • Being able to show opinions (18.8%)	• Having to work in groups (5.7%) • Being able to show opinions (7.5%)
Content	• Gaining a lot of knowledge (5.6%)	• Getting a variety of knowledge (13.2%)	• Gaining a lot of knowledge and understanding the content (5.7%)
Social aspects	• Getting to know more friends (16.9%)		
Practical aspects	• Saving energy, space (9.4%) • Convenience for assigning tasks (3.7%)		• Taking not much time to learn (11.3%) • Being able to concentrate (5.7%)

Comparing the advantages of the three modes presented in Table 5, it can be seen that a higher proportion of students cited advantages for tutorials than for the other two modes. The advantages stated for tutorials have much in common with those for conventional classes, but occur at higher frequencies. Conventional classes, however, do have some practical advantages not apparent in tutorials. For lectures, on the other hand, the proportions of students citing advantages are low, and the advantages cited are not clearly linked to learning (e.g. getting to know more friends). Therefore, it

appears that, at least from a learning perspective, students perceive lectures as being least useful.

However, the data from the diary contradicts the data from the students' perceptions as the diary reveals that the researcher was satisfied with the teaching and regarded the teaching conducted in lecture classes as successful. The following extracts showed her perceptions of the class when she acted as an observer.

> 'The room is big, the students' chairs can be moved around so the teacher can walk closely to the students supervising while they are working groups. Asking questions to each group helps them to have clear idea of what they are doing ... The students can present good tasks to the class.'

> 'The teacher always asks questions to students. I think the class goes very smoothly. Most of the students can answer correctly.'

> 'All the students are listening attentively, maybe because the topic the teacher is talking is interesting and her pace of teaching is good, not too slow not too fast.'

> 'I feel that the teaching today is successful considering the way all the students pay good attention to the class; they look happy answering the questions and joining the activities. Each task the teacher gave is not too big or too long. They do not get bored with the tasks.

The contradictions may have arisen from different perceptions because the two parties have different roles in the teaching and learning process. The teacher regarded pace of teaching, students' attention, and being able to monitor students' work in groups as important conditions in teaching, whereas the students looked at how much they learned from their friends and their teachers as an important aspect.

Although this research did not yield any substantial data about the effectiveness of using a combined lecture and tutorial approach in teaching English to replace the conventional class, it created an awareness in the researchers about conducting research to suit the problem they were facing. When teachers conduct research, they may do it from different reasons and for different purposes (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). The fact that the researchers were not able to reflect on the teaching process through using the data obtained from the research partly arose from the research procedures. The researchers did not conduct the research as action research where data was used as input for a change of action. Action research focuses on action and reflection as the data received can help the teachers plan their action, implement their plan, and revise and amend their plan (Wallace, 1991; McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

The data collection process in this study, however, was conducted once at the end of the teaching in order to see the students' attitudes towards lectures and tutorials. This meant that this research study could not be used to improve teaching and learning. Thus, although we learnt some things about the different modes of teaching, this

learning occurred too late to have any impact on the course. Therefore, although possibly valuable as research, this study did not have the desired impact on the teaching and learning situation.

Conclusion

The data from the research shows that of all the three types of learning mode, the students preferred the tutorial mode. However, if we compare the conventional class with the combination of lectures and tutorials, the students still preferred learning in a conventional class. These student perceptions were contradictory to the perceptions of the teacher/researcher. We cannot, therefore, reach any conclusions concerning appropriate modes of teaching English in large classes.

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Using E-mail Consultations in a Large Class

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Abstract
This study investigated how technology can be used to help teachers manage a large class while at the same time retaining a high quality of instruction. This research looked at giving online consultations to four groups of roughly 30 students, with one teacher responsible for about 60 students. Students were assigned to use e-mail to share and discuss problems in a task-based curriculum. The findings revealed that students posted an average of 1.65 messages which is considered too low to gain benefits in their learning. Two problems encountered were practical problems, such as limited time, unfamiliarity with the use of technology, and technical problems, and activity-specific problems when the subjects did not have a clear idea of what was expected of them.

Consultations
English language teaching has shifted focus to be more on the learners with the belief that learning becomes more effective when learners take responsibility for their own learning. In this scenario, learners need to transform their beliefs about language learning and their roles as learners so that they can become effective independent learners (Kelly 1996), the ultimate goal of a learner-centered approach. To facilitate the process of reorientation and personal discovery for learners, "consultations" or "counseling" is one of many tools available for teachers.

Consultation or counseling refers to "an activity that helps learners manage their own learning problems and/or developing learning skills" (Riamliw, 2002). Kelly (1996) looks at counseling as "a form of therapeutic dialogue that enables an individual to manage a problem." The two terms have one important thing in common, that is, "a relationship between two people: one needing an opportunity for talking over problems and the other having the sensitivity and maturity to understand and having the necessary knowledge and skills to enable a solution" (Kongchan, 2002).

Significance of consultations in language learning
It is believed that consultations help promote self-directed learning (Riamliw, 2002). In consultations, teachers discuss progress and problems with learners (as individuals or in groups) about their own learning focusing on making learners realize their own problems, and thus be responsible to solve those problems on their own (Carver & Dickinson, 1982; Kelly, 1996). In consultations, learners are given advice or suggestions so that they can cope with their learning problems by being able to monitor their weaknesses and correct their mistakes (Johnson & Lozada, 2001).

The consultation will be effective if learners make decisions themselves on how to solve problems. In the process of consultation, it is hoped that learners realize their control over their own learning and their responsibility for their own progress (Carver & Dickinson, 1982; Kelly, 1996).

Teacher-student consultations and student-student consultations

Generally, consultations are conducted between teachers and learners. The teachers' roles are to be a counselor and a good listener to whom learners can talk about their learning achievements, problems and future study plans (Kongchan, 2002). Within such a framework, Victoria Chan (1999) used teacher-student consultations to develop students' learning autonomy at the tertiary level. The approach she used for her ESL classroom was largely student-centered, including student-led seminars, self and peer evaluation, report writing tasks and teacher-student consultations as course components. The consultations were 30-minute discussion sessions between the teacher and each individual student. Her aims were to establish a personal relationship with the students as well as to discuss and evaluate students' progress and offer advice and guidance. These aims were to a large extent achieved, but there was still a lack of purpose to the students' work.

Even though consultations are beneficial to students in many ways, they are not without problems. When students come to consultation sessions, they bring with them similar problems in learning English, and as a result teachers have to repeat the same advice to a class of about 40-50 students. This makes consultations time-consuming and exhausting (Maneekhao, 2002).

With an attempt to alleviate the problem concerning time and workload, consultations at KMUTT are conducted in class time in groups, and students are involved from the first step (Maneekhao, 2002). They first share their problems in completing their assignments with their peers in groups. Later on, they share with the whole group and the teachers write the problems on the white board. The final step is for both teachers and students to supply solutions to each problem.

Now with an ever increasing number of students, teachers are facing a challenge, or maybe a pressure, to find alternative methods for consultations to make them less time-consuming and less exhausting. Student-student consultations might be an answer that we can employ to address the problem. Furthermore, technology for student-student consultations can be used because it has the potential to help accommodate more students.

Background/rationale of the study
Consultations at KMUTT

The School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), provides four Fundamental English courses for undergraduate students of science and technology. The first three courses are task-based and the last one is project-based. All students are required to take at least three English courses.

With this task-based curriculum, consultations have become one of the essential learner-centered activities to ensure success on tasks. In the three task-based courses, teachers act as counsellors in offering guidance, advice and support to the students.

The methods of consultations adopted at KMUTT are quite flexible. Teachers can give consultations to the students as a whole class, as groups or as individual students depending on the nature of the problems and time available. We have been running the consultations for four years and the methods have been regularly adjusted to give teachers more flexibility and freedom.

The main problems all teachers encounter are that consultations take a heavy toll on teachers' time. Initially, teachers had to do the consultations outside class in their own time. They spent about four hours for 40 students for one consultation each and in one semester, there are three consultations to fulfill. Johnson & Lozada (2001: 85) pointed out that "If the practical problems of devoting time to consultations can be overcome, they promise to be of great benefit to both teachers and students."

Another problem encountered is that most students do not feel free to discuss their problems openly with their teachers in English, especially when teachers give consultations to the whole class or to a group of students. In addition, students' problems are repetitive and it is very boring for both teachers and students to go over the same problems repeatedly.

All of these problems have become a great concern when the university has a policy to increase the size of the student intake. This means that there will be more students who teachers need to accommodate during consultations.

However, the solution lies in the university itself. Since KMUTT is a technology university, and there are computer facilities everywhere on campus, why not use this facility to offer consultations through e-mail, in other words, on-line consultations? Gardner & Miller (1999) suggest a numbers of reasons why e-mail should be used as a counseling tool. Firstly, shy learners may be more comfortable using e-mail than face-to-face consultations. They can consult about their problems at any time and from anywhere that is convenient. In addition, e-mail gives learners real reasons for writing. E-mail helps teachers save time because consultations can be given to the whole class in just one time. Finally, the record of learners' questions and problems can be useful for teachers to check back on when needed.

From all of the advantages of e-mail stated above, it is interesting to investigate the effectiveness of the use of e-mail consultations for a large class. We would also like to learn about the problems arising, and how to solve them so that it can be used more effectively.

Subjects
The subjects of this study were 118 Engineering and Science students who were studying their second Foundation English course (LNG 102). These students were enrolled in four classes with two teachers. The number of students in each class varied as shown in Table 1. Roughly 2 students from each class joined one consultation group so there are a total of about 8 students in one group, and 15 consultation groups altogether. For each teacher, this represents a large class of about 60 students per teacher.

Table 1   Number of subjects

	Class 1	**Class 2**	**Class 3**	**Class 4**
Number of students	32	21	29	36
Lecturers	T1	T1	T2	T2
Total number of students	118			

The two teachers were also the researchers. One of us took care of 7 consultation groups and the other 8 groups. We have been teaching English for an average of 15 years. In the last 5 years we have tried to integrate technology into our English classes in various aspects. Some examples include using computers to correct student written work, and using E-mail as a means for communication with students. The experience has given us some grounds to conduct this research

The tasks in LNG 102
In this course (LNG 102) students have to complete two tasks for which consultations are given: *resourcing task*, and *portfolio task*. In the *resourcing task*, the students work in groups of four. Initially, they select a topic concerning a certain problem, e.g. a social problem, a health problem, or a technological problem. Then they come up with three questions that would help guide them to find solutions to the problem. After that, they search for information from any sources, such as the Internet and the library, to answer their questions. The outputs of the task are an oral presentation and a report explaining the answers to their questions, how they worked, and their problems and solutions when doing the task. The students have four weeks to complete the task. One serious problem for the *resourcing task* was the students' inability to find relevant information. Due to a lack of internet-searching skills, many students could not find texts or articles that contained the answers they wanted while other students found too many articles. Furthermore, many of the articles found were irrelevant.

In the *portfolio task*, the students are assigned to practise any skill of English in their free time in the Self-access Learning Center and also use other resources such as films, news on television, newspapers and songs. Then they complete a task record form explaining the learning materials and summarizing the stories they read or listened to. Students are required to share what they have learnt from the practice, and their problems and solutions when doing the task. As this task is a course adjunct, the students could spend the whole semester completing six learning materials. The main problems with the *portfolio task* concerned writing in English when students have to complete the task record form.

Since the task-based approach to learning is new to the students and the two tasks pose some difficulties, consultations are arranged to facilitate the students to work on the tasks and to solve their language problems effectively. Moreover, since our teaching experience revealed that most students had similar problems and the students might be able to help each other solve the problems, we decided to investigate the use of student-student consultations to see if students can really help their peers to solve the problems. Moreover, it is also challenging to conduct the consultations on-line to facilitate the process.

Pedagogic approach
There are three major stages in managing the on-line consultations, namely, preparation stage, consultation stage and closing stage.

Preparation stage
A preparation stage is, in many ways, the most important stage. We made a precise plan about the time that the project would start and end, the approximate number of students in each consultation group, the topics of the discussion and so on. A handout was carefully prepared to convey all information that we thought might be useful for

the students, e.g. the definition of electronic consultations, the procedures and the duration of this activity (see Appendix 1 for the Electronic Consultation Handout for Students). In addition to the handout, there were two other things prepared in advance.

Creating consultation groups: Before creating the consultation groups, we checked the exact number of students in each class and the total number of students in four classes. Then, we discussed the number of consultation groups to be created and the suitable number of members to be allocated for each group. As we had four classes with different size, it was impossible to make every group the same size. Eventually, we ended up with fifteen consultation groups, namely Group A – Group O. Then, fifteen on-line Yahoo consultation groups were created. Each group was prepared for 6-8 members from four classes as shown in the diagram below.

Group A

Class 1   Class 2   Class 3   Class 4

(2 students)   (2 students)   (2 students)   (2 students)
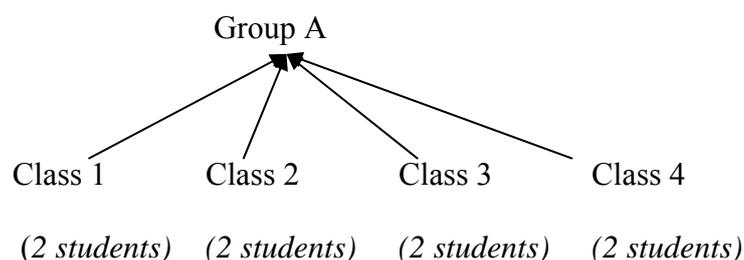
Preparing students: Talking with friends and the teachers via a discussion list was new to every student. As a result, preparation was crucial. In the first week of the semester, we assigned the students to become members and acquire a Yahoo account number. About one week later, each class was taken into a computer laboratory for a training session. In doing this, we created two extra consultation groups to train the students how to subscribe to Yahoogroups and how to send and read messages. We also tried to familiarise them with on-line consultations. It took two periods (about 100 minutes) to complete this stage.

In the computer laboratory, the handout was distributed and explained to the students. One major focus of the preparation stage was the kind of messages or the topics the students could post to the list. Finally, an address of a discussion group was given to the students. They were assigned to subscribe to the group and start the discussion by introducing themselves to the group.

Consultation stage
The next step is the consultation period and this period lasted for 14 weeks. The first message that each student sent to the group was an introduction. They used their real name and also stated their class number. We also asked them to start the consultation by telling their friends about their portfolio.

As the purpose of this activity was mainly to have students consult each other about English learning problems, the topics of discussion were not very broad. That is to say, they could only share with the group members what topic they had chosen in *resourcing task*, what materials they studied for the *portfolio task*, what they learnt from the tasks, what problems or difficulties they encountered when doing the tasks, and how they solved the problems. More importantly, they were encouraged to ask the group for any suggestions or help in order to complete the task successfully. Since we believed that the students had background knowledge about grammar, we also

encouraged them to discuss other language problems, such as how to write grammatically correct sentences.

Closing stage
Near the end of the semester, we sent a message to inform the students about their last chance to discuss with friends via the discussion list. Eventually, during the last week, we posted a message to signal the end of the discussion and distributed a questionnaire in class to survey their attitudes.

Research methodology
Types and purposes of data collected
There are two major areas of interest for us in this study. One is the students' participation in the electronic consultations, together with their opinions towards this activity. The second involves the quality of the messages they posted to the discussion list.

Two types of data collected are data from the questionnaires and data from the messages students posted. Data from the questionnaires (see Appendix 2) reveal three main areas including students' personal information, their participation in the consultations and their attitudes towards the activity. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out the frequency of reading and posting messages, reasons for posting or not posting messages, and their attitudes towards the activity. This included the appropriateness of the topics for discussion, the need for preparation and the advantages and disadvantages of electronic consultations.

Data from the students' postings were printed out and classified according to the types of information in the postings, such as self-introductions and greetings, statements and questions of academic problems, reports of the progress of work in class, opinions about the English course, and help and suggestions given to the groups. These data were used to find out topics of students' messages, the numbers of messages written during the period of the study, and the usefulness of the postings.

We hope that the data from the two sources will lead us to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of e-mail consultations as a replacement for the conventional consultations that our staff usually practise. This evaluation will be conducted in terms of the numbers and content of postings, and the students' participation and attitudes.

Data analysis
We distributed 118 questionnaires and received all of them back. Data from the questionnaires were tallied and percentages were calculated. In the open-ended section of the questionnaire, similar items were grouped and percentages calculated.

For the e-mail postings, in the period of 14 weeks of the study students wrote 190 messages which were classified into 5 categories of information according to the aims of the consultations or what we instructed them to do during the consultation stage (see 3.1.2). Then, the number of each category of messages was counted and percentages calculated to see the number of postings related to the categories identified in the consultation stage. The 190 postings include 237 instances of these 5 categories of information (some postings contained more than one category of information). The average number of words per posting was 39.49.

Findings

The findings will be reported under three topics; number of postings and the relevance to the aims of the messages posted, students' participation and reasons for posting and not posting their messages, and student's attitudes towards e-mail consultations.

Number of postings and the relevance to the aims of the messages posted:

The experiment lasted 14 weeks with the trial period in the first week when students were asked to practise sending messages of self-introductions. The second week was the start of the project when students were on their own doing online consultations to share and discuss problems in learning English and in doing their class assignments which include *portfolio* and *resourcing tasks*. Students were also asked to discuss how they solved their problems.

In total students posted 190 messages, which include 237 instances under the five categories. Figure 1 illustrates the ratio of each category of postings.

Figure 1   The ratio of each category of postings

1. self-introductions and greetings (53.58%)
2. academic problems (20.76%)
3. report of progress of work done (12.65%)
4. opinion concerning the course (5.06 %)
5. giving suggestions (8.01%)
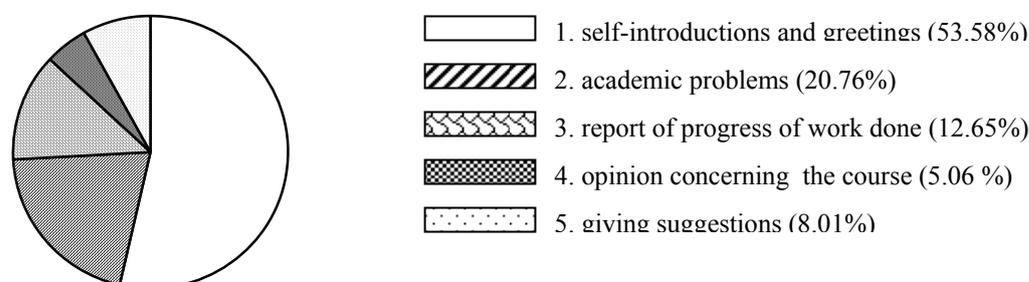
Table 2   The breakdown of postings of all 15 groups

Groups	Self–Introduction	Academic problems English	Academic problems Others	Report of progress of work	Opinion of the course	Giving suggestions English	Giving suggestions Others	Total instances
A	12	2	1	-	-	-	1	**16**
B	8	4	-	-	-	-	-	**12**
C	7	3	-	3	-	1	1	**15**
D	8	1	-	5	-	1	1	**16**
E	8	3	-	-	2	-	-	**13**
F	7	2	-	2	1	-	-	**12**
G	9	6	-	4	1	-	1	**21**
H	8	-	-	2	-	-	-	**10**
I	8	2	3	1	-	-	2	**16**
J	11	5	-	6	3	-	5	**30**
K	6	3	-	3	-	1	1	**14**
L	5	3	-	1	1	-	1	**11**
M	9	1	2	2	1	-	-	**15**
N	10	3		-	-	-	3	**16**
O	11	4	1	1	3	-	-	**20**
Total %	127 53.58%	**42** (17.72%) 49 20.67%	**7** (2.95%)	**30** 12.65%	**12** 6%	**3** (1.26%) 19 8.01%	**6** (6.75 %)	237

Table 2 shows the breakdown of postings of all 15 groups. Self-introductions (required for the first postings) were satisfactory (53.58% or 127 instances – some students introduced themselves more than once). However, many did not complete the other requirements. Only 17.72% (42 instances) addressed the academic problems which are directly related to the main aim of the consultations, only 12.65% (30

instances) reported progress of work done, and only 1.26% (3 instances) gave help and support concerning learning English.

Concerning the content for discussions, students discussed a lot about *portfolio* (15 instances) and very little (1 instance) about the *resourcing task*. The rest were about English skills in general and problems of time management (see Table 3).

With regard to the pattern of interaction between students and teachers, students were expected to help solve each other's problems. The teachers wanted to transfer the role of controlling the discussion to the students. However, the students did not join in very enthusiastically, so teachers had to step in. As a result, out of all the questions posted for solutions and suggestions, only 1 suggestion originated from peers, whereas 25 suggestions came from teachers. Because of this, almost all (96 %) of the interactions were between students and teachers, with only 4% being student-student interaction.

Table 3   Problems and responses

Groups	Statements & questions of academic problems	Report of progress of work	Giving help & suggestions	Content	**Intended audience of messages**
A	2	-	-	textbook reading strategy skill improvement in general	T T
B	4	-	-	portfolio skill improvement in general	T T
C	3	3	1	portfolio and uses of SAC resourcing task (sources)	T T
D	1	5	1	grammar (ask for sources to find grammar)	T
E	3	-	-	portfolio (watching films) time management	T T
F	2	2	-	portfolio (vocabulary) skill improvement in general	T T
G	6	4	-	portfolio (vocabulary) time management portfolio (find materials) resourcing task (change topic)	T T **S** T
H	-	2	-	portfolio	T
I	2	1	-	portfolio (topic selection) textbook reading strategy	T T
J	5	6	-	listening skill grammar portfolio (select activities in SAC) portfolio (grammar)	T T T T
K	3	3	1	resourcing task (topic selection)	T
L	3	1	-	portfolio portfolio (writing)	T T
M	1	2	-	portfolio (listening)	T
N	3	-	-	portfolio (listening)	T
O	4	1	-	learning styles portfolio (writing)	T T
Total	**42**	**31**	**3**	Textbook reading strategies = 2, Skills in general = 3, Portfolio = 15, Resourcing task = 3, Grammar = 2, Time management = 2, , Listening = 1, Learning style = 1	T= 25 (96%) S= 1 (4%)

In conclusion, when taking all of the content into consideration, the usefulness of the messages students posted was very low because most of them did not address the aims of the consultations. In addition, patterns of interaction were mostly student-teacher which is not the aim of the study.

Participation

Table 4 below shows the frequency of the students' postings. The data came from the dates of the messages students posted.

Table 4   The frequency of students' postings
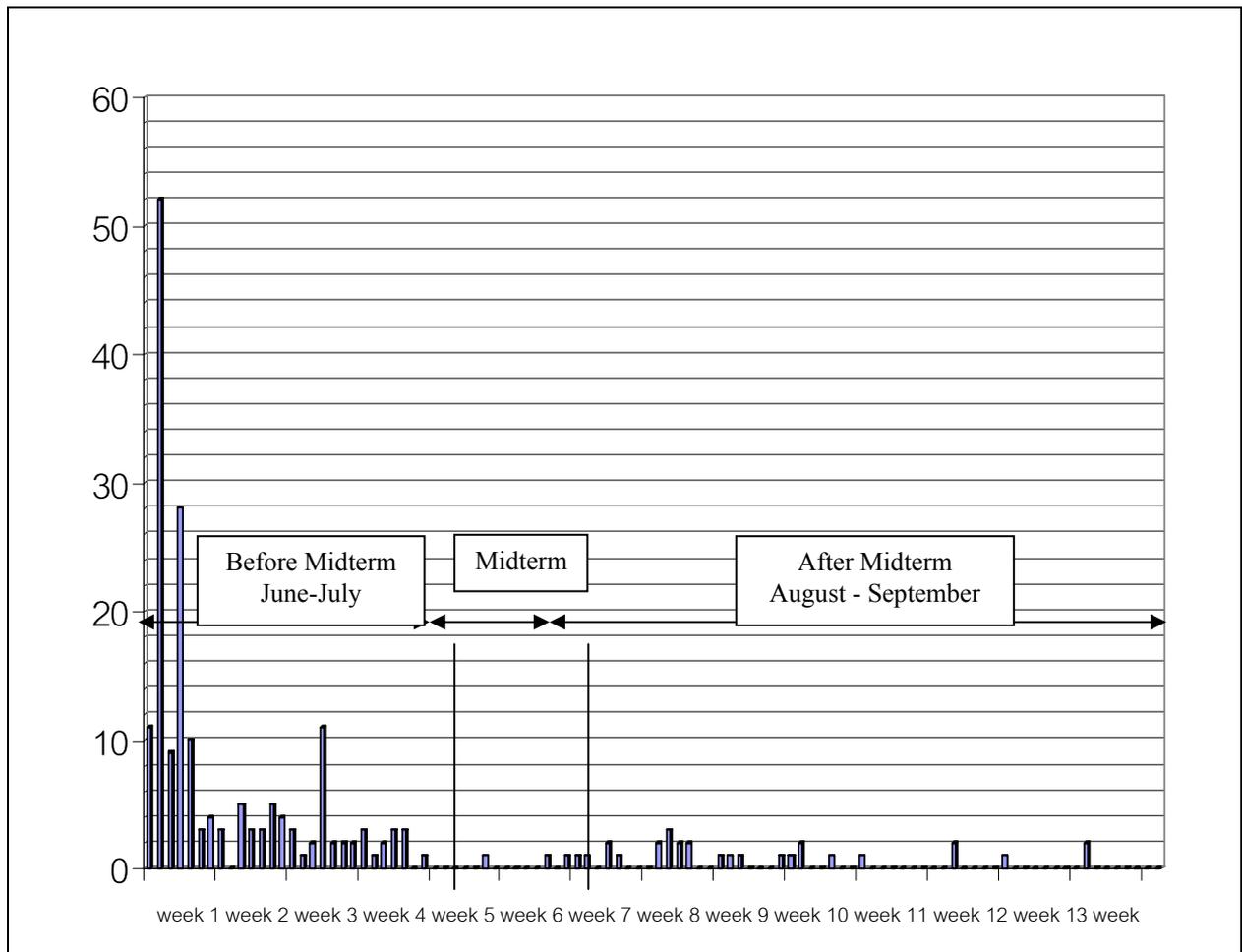
To investigate the phenomenon, it is necessary to look at the reasons why students posted and did not post messages. However, students had different frequencies of reading and posting messages and as a result it will be helpful to group students on the basis of their frequency of reading and posting messages (the data is taken from questionnaire items 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). Group 1 is those who neither read nor posted messages; Group 2 is those who did not read but did post messages; Group 3 is those who read but did not post messages; and Group 4 is those who both read and posted messages. Table 5 shows these 4 groups of students, and their frequency of reading and postings messages.

For reading messages, only 12.50% of the students from Group 3, and 6.49% of students from Group 4 read messages every week. As for posting, none of the students

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in groups 1 and 3 posted messages, and none of the students from groups 2 and 4 posted messages every week. From the total number of students, 65.25% (Group 4) read and posted messages. The frequency of the reading and posting messages is low.

Table 5   Groups of students and frequency of reading and posting messages

Group 1 not read and not post messages	**Group 2** not read but post messages	**Group 3** read but not post messages	**Group 4** read and post messages
Number of students: 13 (11.01%)	**Number of students:** 4 (3.38%)	**Number of students:** 24 (20.33%)	**Number of students:** 77 (65.25%)

Frequency of reading and posting:
 	
Reading – 0%
	Frequency of reading and posting:
	
	Reading - 0%
		Frequency of reading and postings:
		
		Reading -
		12.50% → every week
		16.66% → once every
		  two weeks
		70.83% → less
		  than twice a
		  month
			Frequency of reading and posting:
			
			Reading –
			6.49% → every week
			40.25% → once every
			  two weeks
			53.23% → less
			  than twice
			  a month

Posting – 0%	*Posting* –
	100% → less than
	  once a
	  month
		Posting - 0%	*Posting* –
			0% → every week
			12.98% → once
			  every two
			  weeks
			87.02% → less than
			  twice a
			  month

The reasons for not posting messages are grouped into practical problems which concern technical and time problems, general problems concerning the English language ability of students, and activity-specific problems dealing with the understanding of the nature of the activity. Table 6 below shows the reasons for not posting messages for each group of students.

Looking at Table 6, we can see that these four groups of students share more or less the same reasons for not posting messages. They mainly concern having no time and no ideas to write, slow systems and lack of computers. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no differences between the groups in the reasons for not posting messages. Interestingly, the problems with the use of English are not prominent and were not the main reasons for students not posting messages.

Table 6   Reasons for not posting messages

Group 1 not read and not post messages	Group 2 not read but post messages	Group 3 read but not post messages	Group 4 read and post messages
Reasons for not posting messages: 1. no time to consult (61.53%) (PP) 2. having no ideas to write (53.84%) (AP) 3. having no ideas of what to do in the activity (53.84%) (AP) 4. not familiar with using e-mail (38.46%) (PP) 5. lack of computers (38.46%) (PP) 6. slow system (38.46%) (PP)	**Reasons for not posting messages:** 1. slow system (75%) (PP) 2. no time to consult (50%) (PP) 3. lack of computers (50%) (PP) 4. having no ideas of what to do in the activity (50%) (AP)	**Reasons for not posting messages:** 1. slow system (25%) (PP) 2. no time to consult (45.83%) (PP) 1. having no ideas of what to do in the activity (41.66%) (AP) 2. having no ideas to write (66.66%) (AP)	**Reasons for not posting messages:** 1. having no ideas to write (49.35%) (AP) 2. slow system (33.76%)(PP) 3. lack of computers (32.46%) (PP) 4. no time to consult (27.27%) (PP)

Note: (PP) Practical problems, (AP) Activity-specific problems

Students' attitudes towards e-mail consultations
Table 7 reveals students' attitudes towards the usefulness of e-mail consultations. Almost all of the students (93.22%) think that the activity was very useful.

Table 7   Usefulness of online consultation

Usefulness	Useful	Useless	No response
Respondents	110 (93.22%)	2 (1.69%)	6 (5.08%)

Table 8 summarizes the reasons students think it was useful to do online consultations. Most of them (67.79%) believed that the activity could help them improve their English and 54.23% think that it could help them solve problems in learning. It is interesting how useful students thought the activity was when they participated so little.

Table 8   Reasons

Reasons	Respondents
Language improvement	80 (67.79%)
Solving problems in learning	64 (54.23%)
Better attitude towards English	42 (35.59%)
Computer skills	3 (2.54%)
Socialising	2 (1.69%)
Typing	1 (0.84%)

Discussion and recommendations

The main aim of this study is to look at how technology can be used to help teachers manage large classes while at the same time trying to retain a high quality of instruction. This research was conducted to introduce online consultations to four groups of roughly 30 students, with one teacher responsible for about 60 students.

In this study, students were assigned to use e-mail to share and discuss problems in learning English and in doing their class assignments, and to suggest to their peers how they could solve their problems. The results revealed that students posted an average of 1.65 messages which is considered too low to gain benefits in their learning. In addition, only 31% of the content of the postings directly related to the aim of the consultations.

Even though the findings are not promising, almost all of the students (93.20%) agreed that this activity was useful because it could help them improve their English as well as having the potential to help them solve problems in learning English. Moreover, it could help save teachers' time if conducted effectively and appropriately.

The findings reveal two types of problems encountered in the project. They are practical problems which concern time and technology as well as unfamiliarity with the use of e-mail, and activity specific problems. The followings are some suggestions for dealing with these problems:

Practical problems – The practical problems of students' inability to use e-mail and the lack of computers may be solved by itself when the university upgrades itself into an IT campus in the near future.

As for the problem of the lack of time to post messages, one worthwhile solution might be for the teachers to try to get the students to give English a higher priority. If the students are motivated, then they will allocate time for it and find every possible way to give themselves an opportunity to use English. As a result, the first two problems may also be solved once students are motivated.

Therefore ways of motivating students (see e.g. Byrnes, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001: Williams, 1999) should be given precedence and implemented in conjunction with e-mail consultations.

Activity specific problems – Students mentioned that they did not know exactly what to do in this activity and had no ideas concerning what to write in consultations. These problems revealed that they were insufficiently prepared for the e-mail consultation task.

The lack of success in implementing the task might come from the reason that students were not familiar with the nature of the task which had two new features that they had to cope with. The first one is for students to lead and take the initiative in giving suggestions to their peers about language learning. The other is for them to use e-mail in giving and receiving consultations. As Nolasco & Arthur (1990) put it, when discussing innovations in large classes, "learners may be particularly resistant to change if the change that is required of them runs counter to what is taking place elsewhere within the system." In doing this task, the students' role had to change totally from passive learning to active learning.

From these two new features that the students have to cope with, two types of training may be needed. The first one is training in the use of technology, and the second one is training in how students give consultations. The teachers provided adequate training for the first aspect. However, the second training, how to give consultations, which was crucial to the successful implementing of this task, was missing. We ignored this preparation because we thought that students would be able to do it without difficulty. In other words, we overlooked Shamim's (1996: 110) caution that "learner acceptance of a proposed change is largely taken for granted", an assumption that often leads to problems with innovation. As a result, learners had to struggle and this led to failure of the innovation.

Since the consultation task involved changing the role of the students in that they have to become a facilitator to help their peers solve language problems, learner preparation should consider cultural patterns (Shamim; 1990). In Thai culture, students' beliefs are generally that teachers are the people who have all the knowledge so they will be the people who give the knowledge to the students. In other words, students generally do not believe that it is their role to give knowledge to their peers.

In conclusion, when implementing innovations in the classroom, it is essential to take students' beliefs into account and give more attention to preparing students for the innovation. These considerations of how to implement the innovation were derived from a small research project concerning the setting up of e-mail consultations but it is likely that they will also be able to be applicable to other innovations that attempt to solve large class problems.

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Appendix 1 – On-line consultation class handout

Electronic consultation for LNG 102
1. **What is electronic consultation?**
   Consultation is a session set aside for students of LNG 102 to talk to, discuss, or share your problems in learning English with your teacher and/or friends.

   Due to an increased number of students enrolling in English courses, School of Liberal Arts is trying to find an effective way for teachers to accommodate a large number of students at one time when doing a consultation. The advancement of technology nowadays as well as the leadership of KMUTT in technology might be able to give a solution to teachers in conducting an effective consultation using an e-mail.

   Students will have to become a member of a Yahoo discussion list whose name is **LNG102Consultation**. There will be 20 groups of students and each group will have 8 students, 2 from 4 groups of LNG 102, and one teacher. You will consult with your teacher and friends about your problems in learning English under the three main topics learned in class. The consultation will be done via an e-mail, hence the name "**electronic consultation."**

2. **What do you consult?**
   You may talk about your problems in learning English in relation to the three main topics that you learned in class*, concordancing, portfolio* and *resourcing tasks*. You can share with the group what you've learned, discuss the problems or difficulties that you have when doing the activities, and say how you solve those problems. You can also give some suggestions or comments that you feel would be useful to the group members.

3. **What are the procedures?**

   First, get into a group of eight (2 from LNG 102 Groups 2, 4, 6, and 10.) .Your teacher will help with the selection of the group members.

   Second, become a member and acquire a YAHOO account number. You can do this by going to http://mail.yahoo.com/?.intl=us and click **at Sign up now** which appears on the same page. Then follow the instructions of acquiring an account number. If you have any problems, check with your friends or teacher.

   Third, get the address from your teacher to subscribe to Yahoogroups by following the instructions:

   - key in your address that you get from your teacher, such as http://groups.yahoo.com/group/consultation102A/. The page of the discussion list will appear.
   - click <Join this group> (this message is in a yellow box at the top right hand corner.)
   - enter your ID and password to sign in and follow the path of applying for a member of the group

You will receive a message from Yahoo introducing the group and how to post the message, and so on. Save that message for future reference.

4. **When does the consultation start?**
You can spend the month of June in familiarising yourself with sending messages via- e-mail , posting messages to the discussion list, practicing giving comments and so on.
The actual consultation can take place *from July to August*. You can post your messages as many times as needed.

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire
<div align="center">

Questionnaire for On-line Consultation for LNG 102
</div>

Please answer the questions

1. **Personal information**
You are a student of the Department of _____ in the Faculty of _____. Your English section number is _____.

2. **Your ability in using computer and your English proficiency** (Please circle the number that corresponds the most to you, 1 = not proficient, 5 = very proficient)
The ability in using computer
a. sending and receiving e-mails 1   2   3   4   5
b. typing in English   1   2   3   4   5
English proficiency
a. writing   1   2   3   4   5
b. speaking 1   2   3   4   5
c. reading 1   2   3   4   5

3. **Consultation**
3.1 Did you open your e-mail to read the postings? ﻖ Yes ﻖ No
3.2 If you did, how often?
a. every week   b. once every two weeks
     c. once a month   d. less than once a month
e. others. Please specify _____
3.3 Did you post messages? ﻖ Yes ﻖ No
3.4 If you did, how often?
a. every week   b. once every two weeks
     c. once a month   d. less than once a month
e. others, please specify _____
3.5 If you posted less than 3 messages or no message at all for the whole semester, please give your reasons (You can choose more than 1 reason.)
    ﻖ a. I am not competent in sending e-mails.
    ﻖ b. I could not find a computer to send e-mails.
    ﻖ c. The system was too slow so I felt discouraging.
    ﻖ d. I was afraid of making mistakes and felt embarrassing about them.
    ﻖ e. I did not see the usefulness and did not understand the aims of the activity.
    ﻖ f. No marks were given.
    ﻖ g. I had no time.
    ﻖ h. I could not think of anything and had no ideas to write.
    ﻖ i. I could consult with the teacher in person so there was no need for

online consultation.

ﻒ j. Other students in the group did not write and answered my e-mails.

ﻒ k. The consultation group was too big so I felt unfamiliar with them.

ﻒ l. I did not know exactly what to do in this activity

ﻒ m. Others, please specify _____

3.6 If you posted messages more than 3 times, please give your reasons (You can choose more than 1 reason.)

ﻒ a. I looked at this as a good opportunity to practice English.

ﻒ b. I would like to consult English language problems

ﻒ c. Teachers assigned me to do it.

ﻒ d. I think that it was my responsibility to do it.

ﻒ e. Others, please specify _____

3.7 When the teacher encouraged you to post messages, did you do it?

ﻒ Yes   ﻒ No

If yes, why?

_____

If no, why not?

_____

4. Topics for consultation

Do you think if these topics for consultations were appropriate?

TOPICS	APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
2.1 Problems in learning		because _____
2.2 Problems in doing portfolio		because _____
2.3 Problems in resourcing tasks		because _____

If you do not like these topics, please give suggestions. _____

3. Training

Would you like to have some training before doing consultation online?

ﻒ Yes   ﻒ No

If yes, what training would you like?

ﻒ Writing e-mail in English   ﻒ How to consult and give consultations

ﻒ   Others,   please   specify

_____

4. Do you think this activity is useful?

ﻒ Yes   ﻒ No

If you agree, how does this activity help?

ﻒ It can help improve my fluency in writing

ﻒ I can have good attitudes towards English language.

ﻒ It can help solve problems in learning.

ﻒ   Others,   please   specify

_____

7. Comments:

_____

_____

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