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Assessing the Influence of Large Class Size on Learning Quality in EFL Classrooms: Laghman University

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Abstract: This study investigated the impact of large class size on students' learning quality in EFL classrooms at Laghman University. It explored students' perceived challenges in overcrowded settings and identified instructional strategies to enhance learning outcomes. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to n=152 out of N= 252 undergraduate students enrolled in the English language program. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between large class size and learning quality, r(150) = .45, $p < .001$, though the unusually high coefficient suggests potential overlap in measurement constructs. Descriptive analyses indicated that students face considerable challenges in large classes, including elevated noise levels, frequent distractions, limited individual attention, communication difficulties, reduced speaking practice opportunities, and affective constraints. Together, these factors hinder learners' academic engagement, comprehension, and overall learning outcomes. Students also identified effective instructional strategies to improve learning quality, including structured lesson planning, continuous formative assessment, multimedia- and technology-supported instruction, peer feedback, and cooperative learning. The study concludes that large class sizes pose significant pedagogical and psychological challenges, and targeted instructional approaches can partially offset their negative effects on student learning. Despite growing global scholarly interest, a notable empirical gap remains regarding Afghan public universities and EFL classrooms specifically. Afghanistan's distinct contextual factors, limited infrastructure, instructor shortages, and severely overcrowded classrooms remain insufficiently addressed in the literature. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the relationship between class size and learning quality, exploring student perceptions, and identifying effective classroom management strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

A key issue in higher education is large class sizes, especially in developing countries where student numbers have grown without a corresponding increase in facilities, teachers, or teaching resources (Blatchford et al., 2011; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). In Afghanistan, the number

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of students entering public universities has risen considerably over the past two decades, while classrooms, chairs, and instructional materials have not expanded at the same rate. As a result, a single English class may include many more students than a teacher can reasonably manage, leaving little room for individual attention. In the EFL environment, where interaction, practice, and feedback are key to language development (Nunan, 2013; Harmer, 2015; Ur, 2012), class size can significantly affect the quality of teaching and learning.

Indeed, overcrowded classrooms are a concern at both public universities in the region and Laghman University in particular, as they make it difficult to manage the classroom, teach, and communicate with students. In general, research shows that smaller classes offer more opportunities for interaction, feedback, and engagement, while larger classes can reduce teacher attention, participation, and achievement (Finn et al., 2003; Bandiera et al., 2010). But the impact of class size depends not only on the size of the class, but also on how the class is taught, how it is managed, the resources that are available, and how the students act in the class (White, 2015). These factors matter in EFL classes, since students need frequent opportunities to practice the language and receive feedback. There may be too few speaking opportunities, too little feedback, and too little care and attention, so students feel 'anonymised' or 'neglected' in large classes, which can affect their motivation and confidence (Hayes, 1997; Marais, 2016; Khan, 2019). However, the problems of large classes are not just related to student–teacher interaction. The research identified recurring issues in overcrowded classrooms, including lack of engagement, lack of feedback, classroom-management issues, and physical issues like poor visibility and audibility (Rahmany et al., 2023).

In the classroom, students are the primary source of English input because they are surrounded by other students learning English as a foreign language; outside the university, they may have little exposure to English. The opportunity is further limited when the classroom gets crowded. Less talkative or less confident students may stay quiet, and a few active students take the lead in the discussion. Teachers, on the other hand, can lecture and translate and do not need to conduct communicative activities, since they feel they can control them in a large group of students. In large classes, learning resources, laboratories, teacher support, and personalized learning experiences may be limited (Hadi, 2015; Abrahamsen, 2024). However, some of these challenges can be minimized by using appropriate instructional practices. Technology-assisted instruction, team-based learning, peer collaboration, and group work can support interaction and give students more opportunities to participate and receive feedback in large classes (Gibbs & Jenkins, 2014; Al-Jarf, 2006; Ng et al., 2021). Therefore, the teacher is partly responsible for structuring learning and keeping students engaged in quality learning. Routines, clear instruction, and structured tasks can help minimize disruptions and maximize available time for teachers adept at large-group management.

At the same time, these approaches succeed with institutional support in the form of reasonable class schedules, adequate classrooms, and professional development

opportunities. Although extensive international research has examined class size and EFL teaching, very little exists in the context of Afghanistan, particularly at public universities. The factors shaping the higher education context in Afghanistan include limited infrastructure, a lack of study materials, a shortage of qualified teachers, and overcrowded classrooms. However, few empirical studies have examined how these conditions affect students' English language learning experiences and learning quality.

This gap in context-specific evidence is important, especially at Laghman University, where insights into students' experiences could help identify practical solutions to large-class problems (Ahmadi, 2015). Students' perspectives on large classes are especially relevant because they are directly affected by the conditions in which they learn and can explain which problems most constrain their learning. They can indicate whether overcrowding primarily affects speech, comprehension of lessons, motivation, or classroom discipline. This information is useful for teachers' planning and improvement of teaching and for university decisions on class scheduling and resource allocation. It aims to address this gap while providing a partial picture of the context of EFL learning at Laghman University, thereby contributing to a complete picture of EFL learning in the context of higher education in Afghanistan.

Thus, the aims of this study were to;

- Examine the relationship between large class size and students' learning quality in EFL classrooms at Laghman University.
- Explore students' perceptions of the challenges associated with large class size in English language learning.
- Identify effective classroom management and instructional strategies that can enhance learning quality in large EFL classes.

The research aimed to present evidence-based, quantitative data from EFL students at Laghman University, providing context-specific information relevant to instructional practices and educational policies to make EFL learning in large classes more effective in a resource-limited higher education context. The findings are expected to help English teachers, department heads, and policymakers seeking realistic ways to improve learning quality despite limited resources.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between large class size and learning quality among EFL undergraduates at Laghman University. A structured questionnaire adapted from the frameworks and works of Fraser (1998), Harmer (2015), and Brown (2007) is used to assess students' perceptions of large class size and learning quality (10 items), perceived challenges associated with large class sizes (10 items), and instructional strategies that may enhance learning quality in large EFL classrooms

(10 items). The study was conducted at Laghman University, focusing on the Department of English, which offers a four-year undergraduate EFL program.

Sample Size

Using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table with 95% confidence and ±5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size for a finite population of N = 252 is n = 152. To mitigate non-response and incomplete returns, the study distributed around 170 questionnaires (12% oversample), targeting ≥152 valid cases for analysis, using stratified random sampling by year of study.

Instrumentation

The study collected data using the "Questionnaire on the Influence of Large Class Size on Learning Quality in EFL Classrooms", which comprises three sections measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Reliability

Based on responses from 152 participants, the questionnaire's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, computed separately for each of the three constructs and for the whole instrument. With a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.774$, the 30-item test showed satisfactory internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data Analysis

Questionnaires were checked for any missing or incomplete answers before analysis, and only those cases that were complete and valid were kept. Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 2024. The data were summarized using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) for all three constructs (Large Class Size and Learning Quality, Perceived Challenges of Large Class Size, and Instructional Strategies) measured on a 5-point Likert scale given to the students. The product-moment correlation coefficient was used to analyze correlations between class size-related variables and perceived learning quality at the .05 level of significance.

Validity

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Laghman University Research Committee of the Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences. Permission to administer the questionnaire was also granted by the Department of English Language and Literature. Before data collection, all participants received a written information sheet explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty or any effect on their academic standing. Informed consent was obtained from every respondent before they completed the questionnaire. Participation was anonymous; no personally identifying information (such as names or student ID numbers) was collected, and responses were used solely for research purposes. The research team stored completed questionnaires securely and made them accessible only to the research

team. Data are available subject to ethical approval, as stated in the Data Availability statement.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings in accordance with the study's three objectives. The first objective examined the relationship between large class size and students' learning quality in EFL classrooms at Laghman University using Pearson product–moment correlation analysis. The second objective explored students' perceptions of the challenges associated with large class size through descriptive statistics. The third objective examined students' perceptions of classroom management and instructional strategies that could enhance learning quality in large EFL classes. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) are reported to describe students' responses, while the correlation coefficient is used to report the relationship between large class size and learning quality.

Relationship Between Large Class Size and Students' Learning Quality

The first research objective examined the relationship between large class size and students' learning quality in EFL classrooms at Laghman University. A Pearson product–moment correlation was conducted to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between the two variables. As shown in Table 1, large class size had a mean score of 3.65 (SD = 0.44), while learning quality also had a mean score of 3.65 (SD = 0.44).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Between Large Class Size and Learning Quality*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*1*	*2*
1. Large Class Size	*3.65*	*0.44*	—	
2. Learning Quality	*3.65*	*0.44*	*.45*	—

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between large class size and students' learning quality, r (150) = .45, $p < .001$. The positive coefficient indicates that scores on the two variables tended to vary in the same direction, while the magnitude indicates a moderate relationship. The probability value ($p < .001$) further indicates that the observed relationship was statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis proposing no significant relationship between the two variables was not supported by the data.

The correlation coefficient of .45 also indicates a meaningful but imperfect relationship. Thus, although the two variables were significantly associated, they were not identical measures. The result provides statistical evidence for the first research objective. It establishes an association between students' reported experiences of large class size and their reported learning quality in the EFL classrooms investigated. Because correlation indicates association rather than causation, this finding suggests a relationship between the variables but does not, by itself, show that one variable directly caused changes in the other. Thus, the following descriptive findings provide a more detailed account of students' classroom experiences by identifying the particular challenges they reported in large EFL classes.

Students' Perceptions of Challenges Associated with Large Class Size

The second research objective explored students' perceptions of the challenges associated with large class size in English language learning. Descriptive statistics were calculated for ten challenge items. As shown in Table 2, mean scores ranged from 3.19 to 4.08, indicating variation in how strongly students reported each challenge. The results indicate that the challenges were not confined to a single aspect of learning but included classroom conditions, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, opportunities for language practice, confidence, assessment, and collaborative learning.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Students' Perceived Challenges Associated with Large Class Size*

No.	Challenge Item	*M*	*SD*
4	Noise and distractions are high in large classes.	*4.08*	*0.98*
6	Large classes make classroom management difficult for teachers.	*3.92*	*0.81*
5	It is hard to hear and understand the teacher clearly in large classes.	*3.88*	*1.00*
7	The teacher cannot give enough attention to individual students.	*3.75*	*1.01*
10	Large class size decreases my opportunity to practice speaking English.	*3.65*	*1.11*
8	I feel isolated and ignored in large classrooms.	*3.48*	*0.92*
2	I feel less confident to speak in English during class due to the large size.	*3.46*	*1.15*
1	It is difficult to answer questions in large classes.	*3.34*	*1.13*
9	Assignments and quizzes are delayed due to class size.	*3.22*	*1.14*
3	Group work becomes less effective in overcrowded classes.	*3.19*	*1.13*

Among the ten challenges, noise and distractions in large classes received the highest mean score (M = 4.08, SD = 0.98). This was the only challenge with a mean exceeding 4.00 and therefore the most highly rated problem. The result indicates that students particularly identified the classroom environment, especially noise and distraction, as a challenge associated with large classes.

The second-highest-rated challenge was difficulty in classroom management for teachers (M = 3.92, SD = 0.81). Compared with the other challenge items, this item also had the lowest standard deviation, indicating relatively less variation in students' responses. Difficulty in hearing and understanding the teacher clearly was the third-highest-rated challenge (M = 3.88, SD = 1.00). Together, the three highest-rated items concern the immediate teaching and learning environment: noise and distraction, classroom management, and students' ability to hear and understand classroom instruction.

A second group of findings concerned teacher–student interaction and opportunities to use English. Students reported that teachers could not provide sufficient individual attention in large classes (M = 3.75, SD = 1.01). They also reported reduced opportunities to practice speaking English (M = 3.65, SD = 1.11). The difference between these two mean scores was relatively small, suggesting that both individual teacher attention and speaking practice were notable concerns in students' responses.

Students also reported challenges related to their personal participation and classroom experience. Feeling isolated or ignored in large classrooms received a mean of 3.48 (SD = 0.92), while reduced confidence in speaking English received a similar mean of 3.46 (SD =

1.15). Difficulty answering questions in large classes had a mean of 3.34 (SD = 1.13). The similarity between the mean scores for isolation and speaking confidence indicates that these two aspects of students' experiences were rated at comparable levels.

The comparatively larger standard deviation for confidence in speaking English (SD = 1.15) indicates greater variation in responses to this item. Similar variation appeared for delayed assignments and quizzes (SD = 1.14), difficulty answering questions (SD = 1.13), and the effectiveness of group work (SD = 1.13). In contrast, perceptions of classroom-management difficulty were more consistent (SD = 0.81).

The two lowest mean scores concerned delays in assignments and quizzes due to class size (M = 3.22, SD = 1.14) and reduced effectiveness of group work in overcrowded classrooms (M = 3.19, SD = 1.13). These results indicate that assessment delays and group-work difficulties were rated lower than problems involving noise, classroom management, audibility, and individual attention. The difference between the highest-rated challenge, noise and distractions (M = 4.08), and the lowest-rated challenge, reduced effectiveness of group work (M = 3.19), was 0.89, demonstrating a noticeable difference in the relative prominence of the challenges reported by students.

Overall, the descriptive results for the second research objective show a clear ordering of the reported challenges. Problems directly related to the classroom environment and management received the highest ratings, followed by difficulties involving teacher attention and opportunities for speaking practice. Challenges involving isolation, confidence, answering questions, assessment delays, and group work received comparatively lower mean scores. The results therefore provide a more differentiated picture of students' experiences rather than suggesting that all problems associated with large classes were perceived equally.

Effective Classroom Management and Instructional Strategies

The third research objective sought to identify classroom-management and instructional strategies that students perceived as useful for enhancing learning quality in large EFL classrooms. Descriptive analysis showed generally high ratings across the instructional strategies included in the questionnaire. For the ten strategy items, mean scores ranged from 3.71 to 4.05, indicating that students responded positively to a range of approaches rather than identifying only one strategy as useful.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Strategies Enhancing Learning Quality in Large EFL Classes*

No.	Instructional Strategy Item	*M*	*SD*
10	Clear instructions and structured lessons enhance learning quality.	*4.05*	*0.81*
5	Regular quizzes and short tests improve my learning quality.	*4.04*	*0.94*
2	Using multimedia (PowerPoint, videos) improves learning in large classes.	*3.98*	*0.95*
9	Continuous assessment helps improve learning in large classes.	*3.92*	*0.91*
4	Technology-based instruction helps maintain students' engagement.	*3.92*	*0.90*
1	Pair and group work help me learn better in large classes.	*3.89*	*0.98*
6	Encouraging peer feedback improves participation in large classes.	*3.89*	*0.92*
7	Classroom rules and organization make learning easier.	*3.83*	*0.92*
8	Using interactive activities increases my motivation.	*3.82*	*0.91*
3	Teachers who use diverse teaching methods can manage large classes effectively.	*3.71*	*0.88*

Among the instructional strategies, clear instructions and structured lessons received the highest mean score (M = 4.05, SD = 0.81). This result shows that students gave particularly high ratings to clear and well-organized instruction. The relatively small standard deviation also indicates comparatively consistent responses to this item.

Regular quizzes and short tests received the second-highest mean score (M = 4.04, SD = 0.94). The 0.01 difference between this item and clear instructions and structured lessons shows that the two strategies were rated almost equally. These findings show that both instructional organization and regular assessment were among the most highly rated approaches.

Multimedia use, including PowerPoint and videos, was also rated highly (M = 3.98, SD = 0.95). A related item concerning technology-based instruction received a mean score of 3.92 (SD = 0.90). Thus, both multimedia use and broader technology-supported instruction were positively represented in students' responses. The difference between their mean scores was only 0.06.

Assessment-related practices showed another noticeable pattern. Regular quizzes and short tests received a mean of 4.04 (SD = 0.94), while continuous assessment had a mean of 3.92 (SD = 0.91). Both items were among the more highly rated strategies, showing a consistent pattern in students' responses to the assessment-related approaches included in the questionnaire.

Collaborative learning strategies also received positive ratings. Pair and group work had a mean score of 3.89 (SD = 0.98), and encouraging peer feedback had the same mean (M = 3.89, SD = 0.92). Although their mean scores were identical, the slightly lower standard deviation for peer feedback indicates somewhat less variation in responses to that item. These findings show that both forms of student collaboration received comparable ratings.

Classroom rules and organization received a mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.92), while interactive activities designed to increase students' motivation received a nearly identical mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.91). The difference of only 0.01 suggests very similar student ratings of these two strategies. Teachers' use of diverse teaching methods to manage large classes effectively received the lowest mean among the ten strategy items (M = 3.71, SD = 0.88). Nevertheless, the difference between the highest-rated strategy (M = 4.05) and the lowest-rated strategy (M = 3.71) was only 0.34. This relatively narrow range indicates that students generally rated all ten instructional strategies positively.

Two additional items describe students' actual experiences of participation and teacher feedback in large classes. Students' ability to participate actively despite the large class size received a mean of 3.60 (SD = 1.10), while receiving sufficient feedback from the teacher despite class size received a mean of 3.55 (SD = 0.98). Both scores were lower than the mean scores for the proposed instructional strategies. The standard deviation of 1.10 for active participation also indicates greater variation among students in their reported ability to participate in large classes.

Overall, the results for the third research objective show several related patterns. Structured instruction and regular assessment received the highest ratings, followed closely by multimedia and technology-based approaches. Collaborative practices, including pair and group work and peer feedback, also received positive ratings. Classroom organization, interactive activities, and diverse teaching methods received somewhat lower but still positive mean scores. The relatively narrow range of mean scores across the ten instructional strategies (3.71–4.05) indicates that students perceived multiple instructional approaches as potentially useful in large EFL classrooms.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between large class size and students' learning quality, students' perceptions of the challenges associated with large EFL classes, and instructional strategies perceived as useful for improving learning in such settings at Laghman University. Overall, the findings indicate that class size is significantly associated with students' perceived learning quality and that students experience a range of environmental, instructional, and interactional challenges in overcrowded classrooms. At the same time, students reported positive perceptions of structured teaching, continuous assessment, technology-supported instruction, collaborative learning, and effective classroom organization. These findings are particularly relevant in an EFL context because language learning depends heavily on opportunities for interaction, practice, participation, and feedback (Nunan, 2013; Harmer, 2015; Ur, 2012).

The first objective examined the relationship between large class size and students' learning quality. The statistically significant moderate positive correlation, $r(150) = .45$, $p < .001$, indicates that students' perceptions of class size were meaningfully associated with their perceptions of learning quality. Because the study used a cross-sectional correlational design, this relationship should not be interpreted as evidence that class size directly caused changes in learning quality. Instead, it shows that the two variables were significantly related among the students surveyed at Laghman University.

This finding broadly aligns with previous research showing that class size is associated with key aspects of the teaching and learning process. Finn et al. (2003) found that smaller classes offer more opportunities for engagement and interaction, while Bandiera et al. (2010) linked class size to differences in academic performance. In EFL settings, class size may matter particularly because language development requires opportunities to interact, practice the target language, and receive feedback (Nunan, 2013; Harmer, 2015; Ur, 2012). The present findings extend this general evidence to the specific context of Laghman University, where empirical research on the relationship between class size and EFL learning has been limited.

However, class size should not be understood as an isolated factor determining learning quality. White (2015) emphasizes that class size effects also depend on teaching methods, classroom management, available resources, and learners' attitudes. The present study's findings support this more nuanced view. Students reported difficulties associated with large

classes but also responded positively to several instructional and management strategies. This suggests that the relationship between class size and learning quality may depend more on the learning conditions created within large classrooms than on student numbers alone.

Conceptually, this finding aligns with the literature's emphasis on interaction, engagement, feedback, and opportunities for language practice. When increasing student numbers reduces the frequency or quality of these learning opportunities, it may become harder to maintain the conditions necessary for communicative EFL learning. Thus, this study's relationship can be understood in connection with the interactional and instructional processes emphasized in the EFL literature, rather than as a simple numerical effect of class size.

The second objective explored students' perceptions of the challenges associated with large class size. The findings reveal several interconnected challenges, particularly noise and distraction, classroom-management difficulties, problems hearing and understanding the teacher, insufficient individual attention, and reduced opportunities for speaking practice. These challenges can be grouped into three broad areas: the physical and managerial classroom environment, teacher–student interaction, and opportunities for active language participation.

Noise and distraction emerged as the most prominent challenge, while students also reported difficulties related to classroom management and audibility. These findings align closely with Rahmany et al. (2023), who identify classroom-management difficulties and physical constraints, including visibility and audibility, as recurring problems in overcrowded classrooms. In large classrooms, maintaining attention and communication can become more difficult as noise increases and students are farther from the teacher. In an EFL classroom, audibility problems are particularly relevant because students depend on clearly hearing spoken language during explanations, listening activities, discussions, and other oral interactions.

The findings also indicate difficulties involving individual teacher attention and speaking practice. Students reported that teachers could not provide sufficient individual attention and that large class size reduced their opportunities to practice speaking English. These findings agree with Hayes (1997) and Marais (2016), who reported limited opportunities for participation and feedback in large classes. They also align with the broader EFL literature, which emphasizes the importance of practice and interaction in language learning (Harmer, 2015; Ur, 2012). When one teacher is responsible for many students, time for individual interaction, monitoring, correction, and speaking practice must be distributed across more learners.

The reported difficulties with confidence, isolation, and participation add another dimension to the problem. Students indicated that large classes could make them feel less confident about speaking English and, to some extent, isolated or ignored. This pattern aligns with Khan (2019), who links limited interaction in large classes to reduced motivation and

confidence. These findings are important because EFL learning is not based solely on receiving information from a teacher. Students also need opportunities to produce language, ask and answer questions, participate in discussions, and receive responses to their language use. A classroom environment in which students hesitate to participate may therefore limit communicative opportunities central to language learning.

The present results consequently reinforce earlier studies while providing evidence from an under-researched Afghan university context. Previous studies have documented interaction, engagement, feedback, and classroom management problems internationally, whereas the current study shows that students at Laghman University report similar challenges. However, the findings should not be generalized automatically to all Afghan universities because the study was conducted at one institution. Instead, they provide context-specific evidence that the challenges identified internationally also appear among the students surveyed at Laghman University.

From the conceptual perspective reflected in this study's literature, these findings are interconnected rather than independent. Noise and management difficulties may constrain interaction; limited interaction may reduce speaking opportunities and individualized feedback; and fewer opportunities to participate may be associated with students' confidence and engagement. This pattern supports the literature's emphasis on meaningful interaction, participation, and feedback as important conditions for EFL learning (Nunan, 2013; Harmer, 2015; Ur, 2012).

The third objective examined strategies that students perceived as useful for improving learning quality in large EFL classes. Students responded positively to several approaches, particularly clear instructions and structured lessons, regular quizzes and continuous assessment, multimedia and technology-supported instruction, collaborative learning, peer feedback, classroom organization, interactive activities, and varied teaching methods. Rather than pointing to a single solution, these findings suggest that students value a combination of organizational, assessment, technological, and interactive practices.

The high rating for clear instructions and structured lessons is particularly relevant to managing large classes. When many students share a classroom, clear procedures and organized instruction may help students understand tasks and expectations, reducing the need for repeated individual clarification. This finding is consistent with White's (2015) argument that the educational consequences of class size are influenced by classroom management and teaching methods rather than class size alone. It suggests that instructional organization may be an important component of teaching in large EFL classrooms.

Students also responded positively to regular quizzes and continuous assessment. In large classrooms, teachers may have fewer opportunities for frequent individual interaction, making structured assessment an important means of obtaining information about students' learning progress. However, because the present study measured students' perceptions rather than experimentally testing the effectiveness of these approaches, the findings should

not be interpreted as demonstrating that quizzes or continuous assessment necessarily improve achievement. Instead, they show that students perceive these practices positively within their large-class learning environment.

Technology and multimedia constituted another important group of strategies. Students perceived PowerPoint, videos, and technology-based instruction as helpful for learning and engagement. This finding aligns with Al-Jarf (2006) and research suggesting that technology-assisted approaches can support participation and learning in large classes. In contexts where direct teacher attention must be divided among many students, appropriately used technological resources may provide additional ways of presenting information and organizing learning activities. Nevertheless, their usefulness likely depends on the availability of appropriate infrastructure and resources, an important consideration in resource-constrained higher education environments.

Students also positively perceived collaborative approaches, including pair and group work and peer feedback. These findings align with Gibbs and Jenkins (2014) and Ng et al. (2021), who show that collaborative and team-based approaches can help maintain interaction and participation in large classes. These approaches are particularly relevant to EFL instruction because they can distribute communication opportunities beyond teacher–student exchanges. Rather than requiring every learner to interact individually with the teacher, pair and group activities can create additional opportunities for students to use English with classmates.

An interesting point emerges when these strategy findings are considered alongside the reported challenges. Although students identified fewer speaking opportunities and interaction difficulties in large classes, they also rated pair and group work, peer feedback, interactive activities, and technology-supported instruction positively. These findings are not contradictory. Rather, they suggest that students recognize both the interactional difficulties created by large classes and the potential value of instructional approaches designed to increase participation within those constraints. This pattern is consistent with previous research indicating that large-class difficulties may be mitigated, although not necessarily eliminated, through careful instructional organization and collaborative learning (Gibbs & Jenkins, 2014; Al-Jarf, 2006; Ng et al., 2021).

The findings have several implications for EFL instruction at Laghman University. First, the prominence of noise, classroom-management difficulties, and limited individual attention suggests that large-class instruction requires deliberate organization. Clear instructions, established classroom procedures, and structured activities may help teachers manage classroom processes more efficiently when individual monitoring is difficult.

Second, the reported limitations in speaking practice and individual feedback suggest a need to maximize opportunities for student participation. Pair work, small-group activities, and peer feedback may offer practical ways to increase interaction without requiring the

teacher to communicate individually with every student during every activity. Similarly, interactive activities can distribute participation more widely across the classroom.

Third, students' positive perceptions of multimedia and technology-based instruction suggest that these tools may have a useful supporting role where appropriate resources are available. However, the study did not experimentally evaluate these strategies, so their actual effectiveness should not be assumed from perception data alone. Institutional decisions regarding technology should therefore consider both students' positive perceptions and the practical availability of equipment, infrastructure, and teacher preparation.

Finally, the findings indicate that responses to large-class challenges should not focus exclusively on reducing student numbers, particularly where immediate reductions may not be feasible. Instructional organization, assessment practices, collaborative activities, and classroom-management strategies may offer practical ways to address some of the difficulties students experience. Nevertheless, such strategies should be viewed as possible responses to large-class conditions rather than complete substitutes for adequate staffing, classroom space, and instructional resources.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a single point in time. Consequently, the significant relationship identified between class size and learning quality reflects an association rather than causation. The study cannot establish whether class size itself changed learning quality or whether other factors contributed to the observed relationship.

Second, the study was conducted at Laghman University. Although focusing on a single institution provides context-specific evidence, it limits the extent to which the results can be generalized to other universities in Afghanistan or to EFL settings in other countries. Universities may differ in class size, infrastructure, student characteristics, teacher availability, resources, and instructional practices. The findings should therefore be interpreted primarily as evidence from the context investigated.

Third, the study relied on students' self-reported questionnaire responses. Self-report data suit examining students' perceptions, but they reflect participants' judgments and experiences rather than direct observations of classroom behavior or independently measured learning outcomes. Responses may also be influenced by individual perceptions, recall, or response tendencies. Consequently, the findings concerning classroom challenges and instructional strategies represent students' reported perceptions of these conditions.

These limitations suggest several directions for future research. Studies involving multiple Afghan universities could determine whether similar patterns occur across different institutional contexts. Longitudinal research could examine changes in students' experiences and learning quality over time, while classroom observations could provide direct evidence about interaction, participation, noise, classroom management, and teacher feedback. Qualitative interviews or focus groups could also explain why students face particular challenges and how they perceive different instructional strategies. Finally, combining self-

report data with direct measures of language performance or academic achievement could provide stronger evidence concerning the relationship between class size and EFL learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between large class size and students' learning quality in EFL classrooms at Laghman University, the challenges students experience in large classes, and the instructional and classroom-management strategies they perceive as useful for supporting learning. Taken together, the findings indicate that large class size is significantly associated with students' perceived learning quality and that overcrowded EFL classrooms present interconnected challenges involving the classroom environment, teacher–student interaction, and opportunities for active language use. In particular, students reported difficulties with noise and distraction, classroom management, limited individual attention, reduced opportunities for speaking practice, and limited participation. At the same time, they responded positively to structured instruction, regular assessment, multimedia and technology-supported teaching, collaborative learning, peer feedback, and effective classroom organization.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the challenges of large EFL classes extend beyond the number of students in a classroom. They also relate to the conditions under which students participate, interact, receive feedback, and practice English. The positive perceptions of various instructional strategies further suggest that careful instructional organization and approaches that create additional opportunities for student engagement may address some difficulties associated with large classes. However, because these strategies were examined through students' perceptions rather than through experimental evaluation, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that they necessarily produce improvements in learning outcomes.

The study contributes context-specific empirical evidence to the limited research on class size and EFL learning in Afghan higher education. By examining students at Laghman University, it brings together evidence concerning three related dimensions of large-class instruction: the association between class size and perceived learning quality, the challenges students experience, and the instructional approaches they perceive as useful. This integrated perspective helps explain how large-class conditions are experienced in a resource-constrained university EFL context. The findings are not intended to represent all Afghan universities, but they provide a basis for further investigation of large-class EFL teaching in Afghanistan.

The findings also have practical relevance for EFL instruction at Laghman University and potentially for similar higher education contexts facing large-class challenges. When immediate reductions in class size are difficult, clear, structured instruction; appropriate assessment practices; collaborative activities; peer feedback; effective classroom organization; and appropriate use of multimedia and technology may help teachers address

some of the difficulties students reported. Such approaches should be regarded as potential instructional responses rather than substitutes for adequate teaching staff, classroom space, and educational resources.

Future research should extend the present study in several specific ways. Because the study was limited to one university, multi-institutional studies involving different Afghan universities are needed to determine whether similar patterns occur across different educational settings. Longitudinal research could examine whether the relationship between class size, students' experiences, and learning quality remains stable or changes over time. Since the present study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, qualitative interviews or focus groups with students and teachers could provide deeper explanations of how and why particular large-class challenges arise, while direct classroom observations could provide additional evidence about interaction, participation, noise, classroom management, and teacher feedback. Mixed-methods studies combining these approaches with quantitative data would provide a more comprehensive account of large-class EFL learning. Future studies should also incorporate objective measures of English-language performance or academic achievement alongside students' perceptions and directly evaluate the effectiveness of strategies such as collaborative learning, technology-supported instruction, and structured assessment. Such research would provide stronger evidence for developing context-sensitive approaches to improving the quality of EFL instruction in large university classrooms.

Author Contributions

Malang Jan MOMAND conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, supervised the research process, analyzed the data, and critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content.

Hedayatullah BAWAR analyzed the data and contributed to data collection and validation.

Malang Jan MOMAND, Sardar Wali ISRAR, and Imranullah KHANJAR wrote the original draft of the manuscript, with input and revisions from all authors.

All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

We, the authors, declare no conflict of interest.

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Subject to ethical approval, the corresponding author can provide the data upon request.

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