



Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja  
*La Universidad Católica*

# UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

## ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA

TITULACIÓN DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

MENCIÓN: INGLÉS

**Teachers and students` perceptions of teaching English in small classes  
in Ecuador**

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

**AUTORA:** Herrera Loján, Marjorie Lizbeth

**DIRECTORA:** Toro Gallardo, Lisset Vanessa

CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO LOJA

2015

## **Aprobación del Director del Trabajo de Fin de Titulación**

Magister.

Lisset Vanessa Toro Gallardo

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: “Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador” realizado por Marjorie Lizbeth Herrera Loján ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, Septiembre de 2014

f.

CI:

### **Declaración de autoría y cesión de derechos**

“Yo Marjorie Lizbeth Herrera Loján declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: “Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador”, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Vanessa Lizbeth Toro Gallardo directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

Adicionalmente, declaro conocer y aceptar la disposición del Art. 67 del Estatuto Orgánico de la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja que en su parte pertinente textualmente dice: “Forman parte del patrimonio de la Universidad la propiedad intelectual de investigaciones, trabajos científicos o técnicos y tesis de grado que se realicen a través, o con el apoyo financiero, académico o institucional (operativo) de la Universidad”

f.

Autor: Marjorie Lizbeth Herrera Loján

Cédula: 1105170714

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this study to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my husband, Fabian Correa, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity cheered me. There is no doubt in my mind that without his continued support I could not have completed this process.

I also dedicate this study to my parents, Luis Herrera and Rocio Loján who have supported me throughout this process. I will always appreciate all they have done. I dedicate this work to my brothers and sisters, who I really love.

## **Acknowledgment**

I wish to thank my tutor Mgs. Vanessa Toro for her countless hours of reflecting, reading, encouraging, and most of all patience throughout the entire process.

My thanks and appreciation to the UTPL members for providing me any assistance requested. Special thanks go to the secretary of my area Mgs. Patricia Ordoñez for the support and assistance given to me through this entire program.

I must acknowledge as well the many friends, colleagues, students, teachers and other librarians who assisted, advised, and supported my research and writing efforts.

## Contents

Cover	i
Aprobación del director del trabajo de fin de titulación	ii
Declaración de autoría y cesión de derecho	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgment	v
Contents	vi
Abstract	1
Resumen	2
Introduction	3
Method	5
Discussion	
Literature review	7
Description, analysis, and interpretation of results	22
Conclusions	42
Recommendations	43
References	44
Annexes	46

## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study, “Teachers and students` perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador”, is to determine teachers and students` perceptions of teaching and learning English in small classes. A total of 5 teachers and 40 students from an English language institute from the city of Loja participated in the study. A questionnaire including open-ended items was used for data collection. In order to carry out the quantitative and qualitative analysis, the results obtained were described, analyzed and interpreted in relation to the teachers and students` perceptions about teaching English in small classes in Ecuador. The study reveals that teaching English in these types of classes have a positive effect regarding students` progress and there are many benefits for teachers and students according to the interviewed` views. Some of these benefits are related with the facility in designing activities, the higher attention and participation of students, the adequately class space, the appropriate feedback and the greater interaction between teacher and students and between students.

**Key words:** Small classes, students and teachers `perceptions, teaching English.

## **Resumen**

El principal propósito del presente estudio, “Percepciones de profesores y estudiantes de la enseñanza de inglés en clases pequeñas en Ecuador”, es determinar las percepciones de enseñar y aprender inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes. Un total de 5 maestros y 40 estudiantes de un Instituto de Inglés de la ciudad participaron en el estudio. Un cuestionario con preguntas abiertas fue utilizado para la colección de datos. Con el fin de realizar el análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo, los resultados obtenidos fueron descritos, analizados e interpretados en relación con las percepciones de profesores y estudiantes acerca de enseñar Inglés en clases pequeñas en Ecuador. El estudio reveló que enseñar inglés en este tipo de clases tiene un efecto positivo en relación al progreso de los estudiantes y que hay muchos beneficios para los profesores y estudiantes, según las percepciones de los entrevistados. Algunos de estos beneficios están relacionados con la facilidad de diseñar actividades, mayor atención y participación de los estudiantes, espacio de clase adecuado, apropiada retroalimentación y mayor interacción entre estudiantes y profesores y entre estudiantes.

Palabras clave: clases con pocos estudiantes, percepciones de estudiantes y profesores, enseñar inglés.



## **Introduction**

Ecuador is in the march for the best educational environment. For educators, students, parents and government authorities the high quality in the teaching of English is an important issue. In order to improve teaching and learning English, there are some factors that should be taken into consideration. Among these, class size is considered one of the most important. Classes might be small or large in size; the definition of a “small” or a “large” classroom might differ in different contexts. Likewise it should be noted that the related literature suggests that there is a close relationship between class size and student achievement (Cakmak, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to know the views of teachers and students regarding with teaching and learning English in classes with a small number of students. In this study, the researching questions are: What are the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes? What teaching strategies and resources benefit the teaching of English in small classes? How do students feel about learning English in small classes? And are there any limitations when teaching English in small classes?

Research literature provides some interesting conclusions. For example, a research conducted by Din (1999) shows that small classes facilitate classroom management, student-teacher interactions and individualized help from the teachers. This study also indicates that although teachers did not identify a direct relationship between class size and student achievement, evidently teachers prefer to teach in small classes. This is because small classes benefit the teaching and learning process and teachers’ work, and this warrants support from all educators.

Another study conducted by Harfitt (2012) seeks to investigate from the students’ perspective how class size reduction might alleviate language learning anxiety in Hong Kong

and Asia. This study reveals that smaller classes promote a strong sense of security in students within classroom community and that learners feel more confident about participating in English lessons (Harfitt, 2012). According to the results of this study, students' sense of anxiety can be reduced in smaller classes; in addition, class size reduction may assist in breaking down cultural barriers. On the other hand, Konstantopoulos (2011) carried out a study which purpose was to know if the class size effects differ across the sample of schools as a result of differences in school context. This study shows that students in some schools were in disadvantage when being in small classes compared to students who were in other classes.

After this brief review of literature, it can be seen that there are a variety of views about the relation between teaching English to small classes and student's progress. Hence, it is necessary to do further investigation.

The findings about the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes, the strategies and resources that benefit the teaching of English in small classes and the feelings of students about learning English in small classes will give to future researchers a fundament of the perspectives of teachers and students about teaching English in small classes. These results are also for the benefit of teachers, students, parents and educational institutes.

This study is expected to contribute to take on a class size reduction program in educational institutes since it shows the advantages of teaching English in small classes. This study will also contribute to improve teachers' methods and techniques for teaching English in small classes; additionally the results of this study will contribute to students and parents since they will have a better understanding about learning English in small classes.

## **Method**

The general approach of this study is Qualitative and Quantitative. The collected data will be explored, explained, described, and analyzed.

### *Setting and Participants*

The research was developed in an English institute from Loja, Ecuador. The participants of the study were 5 teachers and a total of 40 students from five classes. The teachers who participated in this study were trained teachers with years of experience in teaching English to small classes. About students, they were from 5 English classes with different levels and ages. The majority of these students are also learning English in large classes in high school; for this reason, they can properly see the differences of being taught English in small classes in the institute.

### *Procedures*

The first step in the development of this study was to carry out a literature review. Twelve books were selected in order to consider the critical points of current knowledge about topics related like Teacher- student, and student-student interaction, class size, teaching techniques, strategies or activities for teaching English to small classes and the learning environment in small classes. Additionally, five studies were looked over in order to have theoretical and methodological contributions to the researched topic: “Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes”

After that, the field research was carried out. In order to enable the research process, qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

A survey was applied for the sample of teachers and students. Likewise, observations of the five English classes were accomplished.

After the participants completed the questionnaire, the information was gathered and tabulated. The description, analysis, and interpretation of the results obtained were carried out. The results obtained were sustained with all the data collected in the observation and the related literature.

The techniques used in the research were survey, note-taking and observation. The instruments used were a survey for all students and a parallel survey for teachers. Also, an observation sheet was used as an instrument for the researcher to corroborate the teachers and students' answers. The sentences in the survey were designed to collect the perceptions of teachers and students about teaching English in small classes. These sentences were divided in four sections. The first group of sentences gave information about the benefits of teaching English in small classes. The second group provided data about the strategies and resources that benefit the English learning in classes with few students. The third group of items was developed in order to know the student's feelings about learning English in small classes. Finally, the last sentences were used to know whether there are limitations when teaching English in this type of classes.

## Literature Review

This Literature review contains important information about topics as managing learning, interactions in class, teaching techniques, strategies or activities and the environment in small classes. Important data about five studies are also included. This literature review contributes to this study because it provides important backgrounds and conclusions about the theme of this research.

### *Managing learning*

According to Nunan (1996), the way teachers give instructions is crucial to both successful learning and teaching. The most important point that determines how successfully students will learn is the way instructions are formulated. Therefore it is important that teachers' directions related to academic activities and behavior are clear, precise and effective.

Another important factor when managing learning is timing. Teaching takes time and there is never enough of it; so managing time is one of the biggest challenges. Effective use of school time begins with efficient organization and management. Fisher, Hoover and McLeod (2003, p. 33) declares:

Effective time management is one of the skills necessary for success in school as well as in everyday life and in the work world. Students need time to practice, rehearse, review, apply, and connect new learning and relate it to their everyday lives. Teachers who effectively manage time give their students the best opportunity to learn and to develop personal habits that lead to wise use of time.

The concept of 'time' when teaching, often involves pace, in other words, moving quickly through the planned learning activities. But having to rush through an activity

sometimes can be a mistake. Pace needs to be appropriate: the learning needs to proceed briskly, but not be rushed (Nunan, 1996). Teacher should use experience, intuition, and feeling. For example, in the case that students are enjoying the activity, it would be better to extend the time of it. “Planning decisions can be determined through questions such as the following: How much time do I have? How many different tasks or activities can I reasonably expect to complete in the time available?” (Nunan, 1996, p. 105).

In relation to feedback, it helps students to understand the subject being studied and gives them clear guidance of how to improve their learning. Likewise, when teacher gives the proper feedback, it will be easier to get over some problems and blockages in the process of teaching-learning (Nunan, 1996).

In addition, for students it is significant to know how well they are doing when learning. This is because the knowledge that they are doing well, gives students a sense of achievement. As a result of it, students’ motivation increases. Similarly, it is also important to let students know when they have made a mistake; so that they will learn from it and take corrective measures. Maxim (2009) argued that students expect feedback. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to monitor students’ learning and give them the becoming feedback.

#### *Teacher- Student and Student- Student Interaction.*

Teacher–student interaction is one of the most important element within the learning environment. This interaction positively affects students’ level of development, engagement and motivation in learning English. Supportive and positive relationships between teachers and students promote meaningful interaction. It also allows teacher train the students`skills and abilities. Long (as cited in Richards, 2003) discusses the social interaction as a key of language acquisition. Through negotiation, students can be involved in comprehensible language and can be more aware of structures of language.

Interaction in language classrooms are important social activities for students through which they not only construct knowledge, but also build confidence and identity as competent language users. Teachers need to promote the interaction in order to help students succeed. The teacher- student interaction is very appropriate when introducing a new topic. In that moment the brainstorming can be a good activity. Likewise interaction can take place through introductory tasks or questions and also when correcting grammar and vocabulary tasks (Richard, 2003).

Because interaction in classrooms is one of the leading conventions to enhance the students' linguistic resources as well as equipping them with appropriate communicative skills, it is crucial to include communicative activities in the syllabus. Students' participation and interaction can help them enrich their linguistic resources and build their confidence to communicate with others in English. Apart from it, the teacher will guide or monitor students to help them become more autonomous (Soler, 2008).

Interaction in class also involves student- student interaction. Conversations are part of sociocultural activities; here students construct knowledge collaboratively. Conversation's skills could be developed into spontaneous conversational activities. When students engage into interactions, everyone can participate, get respected and get the decisions made jointly (Johnson, 2002). We can conclude that conversations between and among learners in the classroom contributes to engage students in a communicative dialogue.

In addition, when students talk about learning experiences, the language development between students is encouraged. Consequently, learners have more chances to verify their comprehension, to clarify and to be more related with the contents of the lesson (Ur, 2012).

Student-student interaction also influence in the aspirations and achievement of students. This type of interaction also develops social competencies and helps students to assume the perspectives of others (Johnson, 2002).

In small groups, cooperative learning also influences on self- esteem, relationships and positive attitudes. Therefore, teachers have to manage properly the problems that tend to be between students in small groups. According to Johnson (2002) if these conflicts are managed effectively, the motivation, the cognitive development and the moral reasoning of students can increase. When students do not have the same point of view from their partner, they have to look for more information or take another alternative. This results in a cognitive restructuration and growth by students.

Additionally, Penny (2012) claims that small- group learning provides an environment with several opportunities to interact face to face. This type of interaction is necessary because it allows students exchange academic information. Likewise, in small- groups the anxiety is lower and students feel more comfortable with the language; in addition, students can concentrate better during the class. These cooperative grouping also increase the possibility that English learners feel a part of the culture of the classroom as a whole.

### *Class Size*

Class size is one of the most important factors that influence the teaching- learning process. Many definitions about the concept of class size have been given by educationists. According to Dudley and St John (2007), class size based on students' population can vary immensely; from having just one student in the classroom until having several hundred of students. Class size is divided into two categories: Small classes and large classes. However, there is not a clear concept yet; the notion of what is a small and what is a large class can vary. What is considered a small class in one country can be seen as a large class in another



country. The smattering of what constitutes a large class or a small one depends on: situation, purpose and experience (Dudley and St John, 2007). For example, in Nigeria or Indonesia one hundred fifty students for English for academic purposes classes are not uncommon; hence the perception of large classes also depends of what teachers consider as the largest class they tend to teach.

Brown (2007) states that language classes should be around 12 to 15 students. He thinks that classes should be large enough to give the class diversity; but small enough to provide students with opportunities to participate. However, Brown (2007) emphasized that too many classes are much larger; around the world there are common classes with fifty or seventy five students.

In a large class the teacher concentrates more on management and control of students than on achieving the lesson objectives. For that reason, teachers and students from large classes have some difficulties in the teaching- learning process. Dudley and St John (2007) agree that among the biggest difficulties that teachers of large classes have to face are the control of behavior and noise. Assessment, feedback, individual attention, and the use of mother tongue are some of the problems too. Likewise, Brown (2007) agrees that in large classes the individual teacher- student attention is lower. Besides, other disadvantages are the variety among students, and the fact that students' opportunities to speak are highly limited.

Fortunately, there are some solutions to these problems. In order to make students feel part of a community and not just lost in the crowd; teachers can assign students as much interactive work as possible. Another recommendation is to include more pair work and group work because in this way students have more chances to perform in English. Furthermore, large classes give opportunities for innovation. Students usually ask each other for help and share notes and conceptions too.

By contrast, small classes have been found to have positive effects. Smaller classes have more teacher- student interaction; in most situations there is direct contact between teacher and students. Likewise, more learning activities take place in small classes. Students in small classes participate more in classroom activities, and their behavior is better than in large classes. Teachers in small classes are more relaxed because instead of just trying to control the class, they can focus better on managing time, managing material, controlling activities and monitoring relationship. Furthermore teachers can match more effectively each student 'style (Dudley and St John, 2007).

Small classes are seen as the best type of classes. Teachers have more time to focus on keeping the students interested in the class. Small classes usually does not face several issues such as: noisy students, lack of didactic materials, not enough time to respond to each student's necessity, the absence of target language practice due to common language speaking among students. Thus, preparing the class can be easier than teaching in large classes (Woodward, 2001).

#### *Teaching Techniques, Strategies or Activities for Teaching English to Small Classes*

Teaching strategies, techniques and activities help students to learn the contents. Through this way students will be able to develop achievable goals in the future. The use of different techniques, strategies and activities will give a successful teaching and learning. (Herrell and Jordan, 2012)

One of the most effective pedagogical strategies that promote participation and interaction is small groups and partners. It fosters a deeper and more active learning process Herrell and Jordan (2012) states that small groups and partners provides instructors with valuable demonstrations of the degree to which students understand particular topics or concepts. Working together in groups or pairs gives students the opportunity to learn from

and teach each other. For instructors, group work can involve some preparation time. Despite this, it is less time consuming than preparing another activity with the same benefits.

There are also several techniques based on the idea that a new language can be learned through actions and that movements can help students learn and understand better. Several students prefer the kinesthetic system of learning and Total physical response method is particularly relevant to these kinesthetic learners who learn best when they can participate in an activity. Some examples of techniques based on TPR method are: “Where are your keys?”, “Simon says”, these techniques combine information and skills through the use of the movements and action. This combination of skills allows the student to assimilate information and skills at a rapid rate. As a result, this success leads to a high degree of motivation. By using these kinds of techniques, the teacher introduces the language through the use of commands and they have students demonstrate their understanding through action responses. (Herrell and Jordan, 2012).

Herrell and Jordan (2012) suggest that story reenactment is a great technique to a better understanding of a text. In this strategy, students have to act out stories after they have read or heard them. Story Reenactment strategy allows students comprehend better the text because students have to act the story in sequence. This technique is ideal for small classes where the space and the time dedicated to each student are higher.

Another excellent technique that can be applied for small classes is guided reading. In this technique teacher provides support for small groups of readers as they learn to use various reading strategies like context clues, letter and sound relationships, word structure, and so forth (Herrell and Jordan, 2012). Although guided reading has been traditionally associated with primary grades it can be modified and used successfully in all grade levels. This strategy helps students to become good readers and gives teachers the opportunity to observe students.

In addition, in order to have a greater achievement, teachers in small classes can give intensive class sessions to individual students. These classes or tutorials give students a higher degree of involvement and engagement (Herrell and Jordan, 2012). There are several activities students can do in tutorial in order to have a deeper understanding of the contents. Through enrichment activities like story telling or discussion, students can see the significance and implications of their knowledge and can apply what they have learned in new contexts.

The related literature also encourage teachers to use strategies that help learners to make connections among their past experiences, the content being studied, and the vocabulary that is new or being used in an unfamiliar way. Role- play is an interesting strategy that can build vocabulary through dramatization. English language learners have an opportunity to see the vocabulary words used in context, as well as demonstrations of the different contexts where the vocabulary can be used (Herrell and Jordan 2012).

Dhan (2008) also gives important strategies for small classes that can be useful. Some of these strategies are pair reading, jigsaw and small group. They are a low- stakes way to give credit for work. In a class, students do group exercises regularly; the purpose of them is to accomplish the goals and objectives of the group. Among the characteristics is that “students plan their own learning through open – ended tasks rather than following the teacher`s assignment” (Dhan, 2008).

Another technique that can provide the teacher with an opportunity to assess student`s understanding of course material is discussion. Through this challenging technique, ideas can be explored deeper because discussion allows students to introduce their own observations and questions (Dhan, 2008). Furthermore, in discusses students participate more actively in the learning process. As a result, learning is more interesting for students.

According to Dhan (2008) brainstorming is also a popular tool that helps to generate creative solutions to a problem. It is especially useful for establishing patterns of thinking. As a result students can develop new ways of looking at things. It also helps students overcome many of the issues that can make group problem-solving a sterile and unsatisfactory process. Doing this activity, students are able to think more freely and creatively and find numerous new ideas and solutions. Participants give ideas as they occur to them. All the ideas are noted down and are not criticized. Only when the brainstorming session is over the ideas are evaluated.

Additionally, Dhan (2008) suggested the mural strategy as a visual material for instruction and learning. Normally, students choose a particular theme and work on the mural based on the theme. In groups, students paint a mural on large sheet of paper and present the mural to the whole class. For the mural students can use a variety of artistic media such as colored paper, crayons or piece of cloth. At the end of the activity, all the works based on different but related themes are putted together to form an extensive mural with one big and general theme.

#### *Learning environment in Small Classes.*

Small classes provide a better learning environment for students than large classes. In small classes, students are closely observed and teachers have the opportunity to get to know each student. Besides, in small classes students receive personalized attention. Furthermore, the process of teaching- learning between teacher and students can be more satisfactory (Flood, Lap, Squire and Jensen, 2003).

In small classes, teachers give students a better learning environment. Flood, Lap, Squire & Jensen (2003) argue that teachers feel more comfortable in a small class because discipline is better. Teachers can see more clearly what every student is doing and understand

more the strengths and weaknesses of each student. Apart from this fact, teachers in small classes usually give students significant feedback.

Flood, Lap, Squire and Jensen (2003) wrote another characteristic of the environment of small classes. They state that in small classes tend to be a greater achievement from learners. Student participation and involvement is normally higher in small classes. For example several studies have concluded that in smaller classes, students are more likely to remain on task, and students seem to demonstrate greater self-control. Basically, smaller classes results in a stronger motivation, less anxiety and better self- concept.

In addition, in small classes there are major percentages of interaction between students and teachers. Dennick and Exley, (2004) states that in small classes talking, debate, discussion and argument are also improved. Improvement of reading comprehension has also been identified. Nevertheless, if students do not feel comfortable in the environment, they will not participate freely and even they can be hostile.

On the other hand, seating arrangement is an important factor when talking about the environment in small classes. Dennick and Exley (2004) argue that physical arrangement influence in the interaction between student and teacher. The way the seats are arranged gives the learners a message, so this factor is important for class environment.

Rows have been the typical seating arrangement in classrooms. Students are aligned in such a way that they all face the front of the class. The teacher conducts the instruction from the front position. This type of physical set-up allows the teacher see all the students nearly all the time; it also allows the teacher to make eye-contact with all the students. At the same time, students can also easily see a screen or board at the front. However, in rows arrangement the facilitator should avoid that students sit at the back of the classroom because it can decrease

the interaction with teacher. According to Dennick and Exley (2004) this type of arrangement sends the message that teaching and learning is a transmission process.

Some researchers think that students who sit at the back of the classroom will interact less. Dennick and Exley (2004) argue that the best arrangement that could prevent that problem is circular or semicircular arrangement of seats. In this way students have the advantage to maintain eye contact not only with teacher, but also with students. To arrange seats in this way, the room should be big enough to fit in books, charts and other classrooms `stuffs.

On the contrary, Flood, Lap, Squire & Jensen (2003) claim that although conventional knowledge suggests that circles, squares or horseshoes arrangement are better for interaction and participation, the available researches does not support that idea. Bennett and Blundell (1983) found that after working in groups, if teacher let students work individually in rows, the quantity of work is increased and the quality is similar. Likewise, when students are sitting in traditional rows, they have more attention from teacher.

Learning environment is an important factor for learning English in small classes. It is significant to maintain an attractive environment because it is related with students' feeling. An ugly environment has relationship with discontent and fatigue (Flood, Lap, Squire and Jensen, 2003).

Additionally to the information provided thus far in this literature review, some studies related to the teaching of English in small classes were also researched.

Din (1999) carry out a study with the purpose to know the kind of factor that is the class size, the benefits of having small classes; and the steps teachers and students should follow in order to teach and learn effectively. Din (1999) wanted to know what the perceptions of teachers were.

In order to achieve his goal, Din (1999) designed a survey, which contained open ended questions. It was applied to one hundred Chinese rural teachers from five different schools. Each question in the survey was designed to collect the perceptions of the Chinese rural teachers on class size.

The author concludes that Chinese rural teachers did not see a relationship between class size and student achievement. Nevertheless, they think that small classes facilitate some factors in the teaching- learning process. Some of these factors are classroom management and student-teacher interaction. They also believed that in small classes help from teachers is more individualized; teachers' workloads are reduced too. They consider that in order to promote learning between students from large classes there should be competition.

In a study conducted by Konstantopoulos (2011) the purpose was to know if the class size effects differ across the sample of schools as a result of differences in school context. Although school interventions are typically designed to be consistent across settings, the author wanted to research if it is possible that class size effects differ across schools. According with the author, the main objective of the study was to “compute the variance of the school distribution of class size effects”.

The meta-analysis method was used to analyze the data. Treatment effects were computed for each school separately. Each school specific estimate of class size effects were measured with different precision. For that reason, a weighted scheme was necessary to combine estimates together. It also helped to calculate one overall treatment effect across schools (Konstantopoulos, 2011).

A linear regression was used to compute class size effects with each school. After that, a mixed or random effects meta-linguistic regression was used to combine the estimates. In order to analyze the data, the researcher used the SAS procedure. Finally, the author included



in the model district fixed effects because of the possibility that districts have contributed to the school variability of the class size effects.

The author concludes that small class effect is crucial as well as positive, and important in early grades. Another conclusion is that class size effects vary significantly across schools in all grades. It results interesting that the small class effect is positive and significant in some schools and negative and significant in others. The results of the study demonstrated that school context matters and shapes class size effects.

Alghamdi and Gillies (2013) carried out a study with three purposes. The first was to know the effect of cooperative learning in comparison to traditional small group learning on the achievement of: EFL learners, grammatical knowledge of EFL learners and writing skills of EFL learners.

The researcher arranged a workshop for teachers of the experimental groups who were trained in cooperative learning skills. The researcher compared two groups: the cooperative learning groups and the small groups who were not trained in cooperative learning skills.

A workshop was organized to train both teachers and students in the experimental condition about basic skills of cooperative learning. Additionally the researcher invited teachers to attend the workshop in order to lighten the basic skills for cooperative learning intervention. Now the researcher introduced the training program. After that, the researcher instructed the students in the experimental groups about social skills for group work. All groups were taught the same subject matter and, the same content and they all received the same amount of time for instruction.

The author concluded that there was a significant difference between the two conditions, the experimental and the controlled condition. Another conclusion was that there are meaningful differences between the mean scores of the students who were taught in the

cooperative learning environment, and those who were taught by using the traditional small group method.

Apart from this study, Cakmak (2009) developed a study which major aim was to identify the perceptions of student teachers concerning the effects of class size with regard to the teaching process.

A survey with open-ended questions was developed to gather some information about the perceptions of student teachers have about class size. Student teachers had to answer questions related with their thoughts about class size, the effects of class size on student achievement and on the behaviors of the teachers in teaching process.

A content analysis of the answers was carried out. All responses for each item were typed in order in a computer file. Additionally, common and interesting points were identified for a further investigation. The gathered information was useful since it showed student teachers' views about class size effects. Additionally, student teachers' comments about the items related to class size effects were presented as interesting views.

The conclusions of the author were that class size is an important dimension in planning and performing effective teaching. Also there is a positive correlation between increasing class size and progression; likewise there is a negative correlation between these two concepts. Furthermore the student teachers' views supported this assumption in this study.

Harfitt (2012) carry out a study that sought to investigate the students' perspective about how class size reduction might alleviate language learning anxiety. This psychological aspect of learning has a debilitating effect on students' classroom behavior. For this reason, the aim of this study is to examine whether exposure to learning in a smaller class informs such language learning anxiety.

This study used multiple case studies in four Hong Kong secondary schools. Four teachers were interviewed and the information stemmed from group and individual interviews with two hundred thirty one students. Essentially seventy eight lessons were observed across. At the end, the data were analyzed to identify any emergent patterns and themes.

The author concludes that the student voice can provide insights into language learning classrooms. In addition, data from case studies shows that students' anxiety can be reduced in smaller classes; class size reduction could help to overcome cultural barriers too.

## Description, analysis and interpretation of results

In this section, the description, analysis, and interpretation of the results obtained in relation to the teachers and students` perceptions about teaching English in small classes in Ecuador will be carried out. The results obtained are sustained with all the data collected in the observation and the related literature.

### *Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis*

*What are the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes?*

**Table 1**

Teachers` perceptions

No	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	It is easier to design activities that help students to apply what they have learned in classes	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100
3	The class space allows activities designed for you to develop properly.	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0	5	100
4	You can provide adequate feedback.	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100
5	Activities that allow greater interaction between students perform.	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100
6	There is more interaction between teacher and students.	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100
7	It's easy for you to remember the names of the students.	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera

Resource: Teacher`s questionnaire

**Table 2**

## Students` perceptions

No	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	The activities done help to apply what students learned	31	77.5	9	22.5	0	0	0	0	40	100
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities	16	40	21	52.5	3	7.5	0	0	40	100
3	The students concentrate better because there is not much noise in the classroom.	26	65	12	30	2	5	0	0	40	100
4	The class' space allows adequately develop the activities assigned by the teacher.	32	80	7	17.5	1	2.5	0	0	40	100
5	The teacher provides appropriate feedback.	26	65	13	32.5	1	2.5	0	0	40	100
6	there is interaction between the students	24	60	16	40	0	0	0	0	40	100
7	There is interaction between teacher and students	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0	40	100
8	The teacher reminds the students' name	30	75	8	20	1	2.5	1	2.5	40	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera.

Resource: students` questionnaire.

Tables 1 and 2 show the results obtained about teachers and students`perceptions of teaching and learning English in small classes.

The first statement for teachers was to know if it is easier for them to design activities that help students to apply what they have learned in classes. In response to this question, 80% of the interviewed teachers totally agree while 20% agree.

Similarly, students were asked if the activities done help them to apply what they have learned in class. The results show that 77.5 % of students totally agree with that idea, while 22.5% of the interviewed agree.

These results reveal that for teachers it is easier to design activities that help students to apply what they have learned in class. The majority of teachers totally agree with that

statement. In the same way, the majority of students claim that the activities done in class help them to apply what they have learned. So it can be said that one of the benefits of teaching English in small classes is that it is easier for teachers to design the activities; likewise, these activities help student to apply what they have learned.

Furthermore, the observations in class support the answers given by teachers and students. The activities used by teachers in small classes help students in their learning process because most of them were interactive activities. It was observed that after each topic taught, students had to complete activities where they could practice what they have learned.

There is more evidence that support that in small classes the activities done help students to apply what they have learned. Tiberius (2013) wrote that smaller groups are more efficient for doing activities that help them apply the new concepts they learned. In addition, for teachers, it is easier to design activities for small groups because students are fewer so teacher's work is reduced (Din, 1999).

The next item in the teacher's questionnaire was to know whether students are attentive and participative in class activities. It showed that 100% of the interviewed teachers totally agree. Similarly, students were asked if they are attentive and participative in class activities, 77.5% of the interviewed students totally agree, and 22.5% agree. An additional question was asked for students to know if they can concentrate better because there is not much noise in classroom, and 65% of the students totally agree with the statement while 35% agree and 5% partially agree.

After analyzing the surveys, it can be established that students in small classes are more attentive and participative. All teachers think that the attention and participation is higher in small classes. Almost all students totally agree with their teachers and also believe that they can concentrate better because there is not much noise in the classroom.

Likewise, in the observations, it was noticed that students were attentive and participative and more concentrated because there was not much noise in class. It was also observed that the classes were very interactive because the teacher had designed activities to increase the involvement of students. For example, teachers tended to ask students about how their weekend was or what they have done the day before and every student had the opportunity to participate. This percentage of participation is uncommon in long classes.

In regards with this statement, Flood, Lap, Squire, and Jensen (2003) found in their research that students' participation and involvement tend to increase in smaller classes.

The following statement shows that 60% of the interviewed teachers totally agree with the idea that class space allows the development of the activities designed; meanwhile 40% of teachers agree. Regarding students' answers, 80% of them agree with the idea that the class space allows the development of the activities designed by the teacher, 17.5% of students agree, while 2.5% partially agree.

As the results show, most of the teachers and the students believe that the space in small classes allows the development of the activities. A big percentage of students are totally satisfied with the classroom space because it is big enough to develop any kind of activity. Very few students just partially agree; it seems that sometimes they do not feel totally comfortable in the classroom. However, these findings reveal that another benefit of teaching English in small classes is that the space is appropriate for the development of the activities.

During the observations it was found that students could do the activities easily because of the space; classrooms were big enough to have many kinds of activities. For example, in a class it was observed an activity where students had to stand up, form groups and follow some commands. The class space allowed the development of this and other type of activities designed by the teacher.

These results are also sustained by the literature. Dennick and Exley (2004) wrote that for small classes it is easier to find an appropriate room. In fact, small groups can feel comfortable either in a big room or in a small room. This is undoubtedly another advantage for teaching English to small classes.

Regarding feedback, 100% of the teachers surveyed totally agree with the idea that feedback can be provided adequately in small classes. Similarly, students were asked a similar question and 65% of them totally agree that the teacher provides appropriate feedback, 32.5% of them agree and 2.5% partially agree.

The results show that teachers feel that feedback can be given properly in small classes. On the other hand, not all students totally agree. Some of them think that feedback is not always given. Nonetheless it was absolutely higher the percentage of students that totally agree with the statement. Because of that, it can be established that feedback is properly given in small classes.

According to the results obtained from the observations, teachers provided appropriate feedback. Likewise, it was noticed that students usually participated in the feedback. All teachers started the class by asking students about what they have learned the day before. Teachers usually asked about vocabulary, grammar or reading. Hence the responses of teachers and students agree with the observations done.

All these data is supported by Flood, Lap, Squire and Jensen (2003), who ensure that teachers in smaller classes usually give a greater and better feedback than teachers who are in larger classes.

With respect to whether the teacher designs activities that allow greater interaction between students, 100% of the interviewed teachers totally agree. For students a similar



sentence was surveyed, 60% of them totally agree that the activities done in class help them to interact with each other, and 40% of them agree.

As it can be seen, all of the teachers think that in small classes the activities performed allow the interaction between students. Regarding to the student`s answers, the majority of them totally agree. Afterwards, we can conclude that in small classes the interaction between students is higher. This is an important benefit of teaching English in small classes.

In the observations done, it was noticed that most of the students interacted with their partners. Teachers designed pair or group activities where students were able to have real conversations. Likewise, because the students were few they felt confidence to ask to classmates about any doubt .As it can be seen, the observations agree with the teacher and students ´responses.

Regarding with the interaction between students, Johnson and Karen (2002) emphasized the importance of student- student interaction in the educational success. They argued that student-student interactions influence students` aspirations and achievement. For this reason teachers in small classes foment this type of interaction.

The following item in the teacher´s questionnaire was to know if in small classes there is interaction between teachers and students. It showed that 80% of the interviewed teachers totally agree meanwhile 20% agree. Similarly, students were asked if there is interaction between them and teachers and 75% of them totally agree, while 25% agree.

It was noticed that the data collected from teachers and students have similar percentages in their responses. Almost every teacher and student agrees that another benefit of teaching English in small classes is the higher interaction between students and teachers.

In addition, the results of the observations show that teachers interact with students. This interaction was easily seen when students were solving activities or participating in class.

Teachers were always helping students to resolve any activity and asking them about the topic. In that way students interacted with teachers.

In relation to interaction between teachers and students Din (1999) claims that small classes in schools provide an ideal environment for teacher-student interaction.

The following sentence in the teacher's questionnaire was to know whether for teachers it is easy to remember the name of students and 80% of the interviewed teachers totally agree meanwhile 20% of them agree. A similar sentence was surveyed for students and 75% of the interviewed students totally agree that teacher remember students' names, 20% of them agree meanwhile 2.5% partially agree, and 2.5% disagree.

The data confirms that another benefit of teaching English in small classes is that it is easy for most of the teachers to remember their students' names. The large majority of teachers agree with this fact. Likewise, most of the students admit that teachers can remember their names.

Furthermore, it could be noticed that almost all of the teachers call each student by his/her name. In order to call the students' attention or to encourage them, teachers tend to use the names of the students to make students feel part of the class community.

In conclusion, it can be established that teaching and learning English in small classes have many benefits for teachers and for students. The data available in tables 1 and 2, the observations and the literature agree that some of the benefits are: the facility for teachers to design activities that help student to apply what they have learned, the students are more attentive and participative in class, the students concentrate better because there is not much noise in the classroom, the class' space allows the adequately development of the activities assigned by the teacher, feedback is easily given, interaction between teachers and students

and between students is higher. Finally, it is easier for teachers to remember the students' names.

The results obtained in relation to the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes are aligned to what Flood, Lapp and Jensen found. In their research, they explained that teachers have always wanted smaller classes. They ensure that the reasons were because discipline is better in smaller classes. They conclude that in smaller classes students are more likely to remain on task, the teacher manages behavior of students better, and students seem to demonstrate higher self-control. Likewise participation and involvement increase when classes are small and teachers in smaller classes tend to give more and better feedback than those in larger classes.

*What teaching strategies and resources benefit the teaching of English in small classes?*

**Table 3**  
Teachers' perceptions

No	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
8	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice listening skills	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100
9	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice speaking skills	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0	5	100
10	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice reading skills	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100
11	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice writing skills	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0	5	100
12	Design and implement group activities	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100
13	Design and implement individual activities	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100
14	Use technology resources	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100
15	Use teaching materials	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera

Resource: teachers' questionnaire

**Table 4**

Students` perception

No	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
9	Activities to practice listening skills are performed	30	75	9	22.5	1	2.5	0	0	40	100
10	Activities to practice speaking skills are performed	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0	40	100
11	Activities to practice reading skills are performed	29	72.5	8	20	3	7.5	0	0	40	100
12	Activities to practice writing skills are performed	28	70	11	27.5	1	2.5	0	0	40	100
13	Group activities are used	25	62.5	12	30	3	7.5	0	0	40	100
14	Individual activities are used	36	90	4	10	0	0	0	0	40	100
15	Technological resources are used	23	57.5	13	32.5	4	10	0	0	40	100
16	Teaching materials are used	17	42.5	15	37.5	7	17.5	1	2.5	40	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera

Resource: students` questionnaire

Tables 3 and 4 show the results obtained in relation to the perceptions of teachers and students related to teaching strategies and resources that benefit the teaching of English in small classes.

The eighth sentence was formulated in order to know if teachers design and implement activities that allow the practice of listening skills, and 80% of teachers totally agree while 20% of them agree. For students, a similar sentence was used to know whether listening activities are performed in class, and 75% of students totally agree, 22.5% agree and 2.5% partially agree.

According to these results, we can see that the use of activities that allow the practice of listening skills benefits the teaching of English in small classes. We can conclude this because

the majority of teachers claim they use listening activities and almost all students agree they benefit from these kinds of activities.

Furthermore, in the observations of the different classes, it was seen that all of the teachers use listening activities. It could be noticed that the tracks of listening were repeated at least three times in order to help students to identify the ideas they listened.

According to whether teachers design and implement activities that allow students to practice speaking skills, 60% of teachers totally agree, and 40% agree. In relation to the students' answers, 75% of students totally agree that the activities performed in class let them to practice speaking activities; meanwhile, 25% of them agree.

The data collected show that in small classes speaking activities are performed. It can be noticed that teachers and students' responses agree. Even though some of the teachers and the students do not totally agree with this statement, the large majority believe that speaking skills can be practiced in small classes. As a result we can conclude that speaking activities benefit the teaching and learning process in small classes.

Related to the observations, it could be perceived that in fact, students can practice their speaking abilities. It was noticed that most of the teachers take into account speaking activities in order to develop communicative skills in students. Likewise students had benefits from the activities designed.

The tenth statement for teachers was to know whether they design and implement activities that allow students practice reading skills. The results showed that 80% of teachers totally agree while 20% agree. In relation to students' answers, 72.5% of them totally agree that activities to develop reading skills are performed, while the 20% agree and the 7.5% practically agree.

As the results indicate, most of the teachers design reading activities. In the same way, almost all of the students agree that the activities done in class help them to develop reading skills. Very few students partially agree that reading activities are executed in class. These evidences show that reading activities benefit the teaching and learning English in small classes.

Additionally, it was observed that all teachers worked with students using reading strategies. Students from small classes had benefit from that kind of activities because, among other advantages, their vocabulary was increased.

The related literature agrees that reading activities benefit the effective teaching of English. According to Herrell and Jordan (2012) the extensive interaction with reading is extremely positive for learning English.

The eleventh sentence was to know whether teachers design and implement activities that allow students to practice writing skills. The answers of teachers showed that 60% of them totally agree while 40% agree. Students answered to a similar statement and the results were that 70% of students totally agree, while 27.5% agree and the 2.5% practically agree that activities to practice writing skills are performed.

These outcomes show that the majority of students believe that writing activities are performed in class. A small number of students just partially agree with this statement. In relation to teachers' answers, most of them think that they design and implement reading activities. As a result, it can be concluded that activities that develop writing skills benefit teaching English in small classes.

It was observed that almost all of the teachers designed writing activities to work with students. Additionally, most of the students benefited from these activities. Some of the writing activities involve completing a paragraph using the correctly word, that usually was a

verb, modal or a vocabulary word. Other activities were related with writing about a theme given by the teacher.

About designing and implementing group activities, 80% of the teachers interviewed totally agree, and 20% of them agree. In connection with students' responses, 62.5% of the students surveyed totally agree, while 30% agree and 7.5% partially agree that group activities are used.

These data confirm the fact that group activities benefit the teaching of English in small classes. Although some students just partially agree that group activities are used in class, the majority of teachers ensure they design and execute group work activities; furthermore, most of the students agree they benefit from group activities. Therefore, we can conclude that group work activities help the teaching of English in small classes.

During the observations done, group work activities were developed in the majority of the classrooms. In most of the classes teachers used pair work or group work activities where students had to collaborate together in order to achieve a goal.

Additionally, a study conducted by Alghamdi and Gillies (2013) agree that group work activities are beneficial for teaching English in small classes. The study show that when students work together in a cooperative learning, there is a increase in student`s achievement.

In relation to individual activities, 100% of the teachers totally agree that these types of activities are implemented in small classes. Likewise, students were interviewed with a similar sentence and 90% of them totally agree, while 10% agree that individual activities are used in class.

The results confirm that individual activities are beneficial for teaching English in small classes. Every teacher ensures that they often use individual work in class. Likewise, almost all of the students agree with their teachers.

In the same way, it was observed that individual work was performed in classes. Students individually worked in their seats using a worksheet, the book or other material resource. For instance, in a class students had to complete four activities as a review for the term test. Each learner had to solve the worksheet without any help of partners.

Concerning the benefit of individual work when teaching English in small classes, Flood, Lap, Squire and Jensen (2003) wrote that the implementation of individual activities is beneficial since it resulted in an increased quantity of work with a similar level of the quality of work that teacher obtain when working in group activities.

The following sentence was surveyed in order to know if teachers use technological resources. The results showed that 100% of the interviewed teachers totally agree. Similarly, 57.5% of the students totally agree that technological resources are used in classes, 32.5% of them agree, while 10% partially agree.

According to these results, all of the teachers use technological resources when teaching, but not all of the students totally agree with them. It seems that although the majority of the students claim that teachers use technological resources and almost the rest of students agree, a small number of students keep thinking that technological resources are not fully used in classes. Nevertheless, the results show that most of the times technological resources are used for the teaching of English in small classes.

During the observations, it was noticed that the teachers use technological resources to teach English. Examples of these technological resources were the projector and multimedia presentations. It was also observed that for all of the classes, every teacher brought a laptop to show students, through the projector, complement information about the topic like a video or grammar exercises.



The importance of using technological resources for small classes is also pointed out by Herrell and Jordan (2012) who indicate that technological resources can help teachers meet the individual needs of students at diverse English levels and that technological resources can be indispensable for providing learners with valuable language experiences when learning a new language.

The last sentence for teachers was to know whether they use didactic resources when teaching and 80% of the teachers totally agree, while 20% of them agree. Similarly, 42.5% of students totally agree that material resources are used, 37.5% agree while 17.5% partially agree, and 2.5% disagree.

The results show that the answers from teachers and students do not agree because the larger majority of teachers totally agree they use resources materials while some students only partially agree that material resources are used when teaching English and a few students disagree. Nevertheless, students who disagree that didactic resources are used in class have a very few percentage compared with students that totally agree or just agree. The conclusion is that teachers and students use teaching materials in small classes in the teaching-learning process.

During the class observations, it was noticed that most of the teachers used teaching materials like worksheets, flashcards, charts and audio material. However, not all of the teachers used extra didactic material apart from the book.

Herrell and Jordan (2012) agree that the using of teaching materials benefit English teaching. They wrote that when teachers use teaching resources like charts students can understand better the organization and content of what is being taught.

The results show that the activities to practice listening, writing, reading and speaking skills benefit teaching and learning English in small classes. In addition, group and individual activities advantage the instruction as well as technological and didactic resources.

*How do students feel about learning English in small classes?*

**Table 5**

Teachers` perceptions

No	Students in classes with few students feel	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
16	Relaxed when talking to their peers	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0	5	100
17	Taken into account because they have more opportunity to participate in class	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100
18	Motivated to participate because few peers in the class	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100
19	Comfortable that can compete healthily with other students	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	5	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera

Resource: teachers ` questionnaire

**Table 6**

Students` perceptions

No	Students in classes with few students feel	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
17	Relaxed when speaking in front of my peers	17	42.5	20	50	2	5	1	2.5	40	100
18	Taken into account because I have more opportunity to participate in class	24	60	14	35	1	2.5	1	2.5	40	100
19	Motivated to participate because we are few peers in class	26	65	13	32.5	0	0	1	2.5	40	100
20	comfortable because I can compete healthily with other students	26	65	11	27.5	3	7.5	0	0	40	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera

Resource: students ` questionnaire.

The results of tables 5 and 6 answer the question about teachers and students `perceptions related with how students feel about learning English in small classes.

Sentence sixteenth was formulated in order to know whether students are relaxed in class when talking in front of peers and 40% of the teachers totally agree that students do feel relaxed while 60% agree. A similar question was formulated to students and 42.5 % of students agree that they feel relaxed when talking with their peers, 50% of them agree, while 5% partially agree and 2.5% disagree.

According to these results, all of the teachers totally agree or agree that students feel relaxed when talking in front of their partners. In the same way, most of the students totally agree or agree that they are relaxed when talking to the class. A very small percentage of the students indicated that they partially agree or disagree. Therefore it is established that in small classes almost all of the students feel comfortable when talking in public.

According to my observations, the majority of the students could talk in front of their classmates without getting nervous. I observed that students were confident when they were talking. Also, I could see that students talked naturally and spontaneously. They were not nervous, their speech was fluent.

In the study conducted by Harfitt (2012) he reported that smaller classes give students a strong sense of security within their classroom community. In his study, he found that students were able to talk in front of the class with self-confidence because they were not afraid of negative evaluation from their peers and teachers. These findings support the results of the surveys.

Related with the sentence about whether students feel part of the class community because they have more opportunities to participate in class, 100% of the interviewed teachers totally agree. Likewise, students were asked a similar sentence and 60 % of them totally agree, 35% agree while 2.5% partially agree and 2.5% disagree.

The results show that all of the teachers believe that students feel part of the class community because they have more opportunities to participate in class. In the same way students believe that they feel part of the class community because of the higher opportunities to participate. Only a small number of students, as shown the results, reported that they do not feel part of the class community.

During the class observations, it was noticed that the teacher asked something and almost everybody wanted to participate. Additionally, when the teacher noticed that some students were not participating; the questions were directly formulated to them. For that reason, most of the students felt part of the class community.

These findings seem to be consistent with those in the literature. For instance, a study conducted by Cakmak (2009) found that small classes provide teachers with the opportunity

to devote more time to each student. Likewise, students' needs can be more easily recognized by the teacher and it is easier for teachers to understand individual differences between the students in class. This is an important factor for making students feel taken into account.

In the following sentence, 80% of the surveyed teachers totally agree that students were motivated to participate because there were few students in class. The rest of the teachers, which corresponds to 20%, agree with the statement. Talking about students' responses, 65 % of them totally agree, while 32.5% agree and 2.5% disagree.

It should be noted that the majority of teachers and students totally agree that in small classes learners feel more motivated to participate in class. Another important percentage claims they agree with the statement. Only a few percentage of students surveyed disagree. As a result it can be concluded that students feel more motivated in small classes.

Likewise, the related literature affirms that students prefer to be in small classes because they had stronger motivation and better self- concept (Flood, Lap, Squire and Jensen, 2003).

The last sentence in this section was to know if students feel comfortable because they can compete healthy with other students and 80 % of teachers totally agree and 20% agree. Similarly, students were asked if they feel comfortable because they can compete healthy with other classmates and 65 % of students totally agree, 27.5% agree while 7.5% partially agree.

As the results show, the interviewed teachers reported that the students can compete healthy with each other. Similarly, most of the learners totally agree or agree that they feel comfortable in class because of the healthy competition.

The observations showed that almost all students had the opportunity to participate in the activities. In the majority of the classes, the teacher ask students to do an activity and the first 3 or 5 students who finish the task correctly get a reward. In that way all students could

compete healthy. Likewise, I observed that students who had a lower level of English worked harder to complete an activity when they were competing.

After analyzing the information related to the students' feelings about learning English in small classes, it can be established that students in small classes feel relaxed when talking to their peers and feel part of the class community because they have more opportunities to participate in class. They are also more motivated to participate because of the few peers in the class, and more comfortable since they can compete healthily with other students.

*Are there any limitations when teaching English in small classes?*

**Table 7**

Teachers' perceptions

No	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20	There is anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher	0	0	2	40	1	20	2	40	5	100
21	It is difficult to practice speaking and listening skills	0	0	1	20	1	20	3	60	5	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera

Resource: teachers' questionnaire

Students' perceptions

No	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
21	There is anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher	13	32.5	11	27.5	5	12.5	11	27.5	40	100
22	It is difficult to practice speaking and listening skills	0	0	2	5	9	22.5	29	72.5	40	100

Author: Marjorie Herrera

Resource: students' questionnaire

From tables 7 and 8 it is going to be analyzed and interpreted the teachers and students' perceptions about the limitations when teaching English in small classes.

It can be seen from the data in table 7 that 40% of teachers totally agree that there is anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher, meanwhile 20% of the teachers surveyed partially agree and 40% disagree. The students' responses in relation to this sentence are as follows, 32.5% of them totally agree that there is anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher and 27.5% agree while 12.5% partially agree, and 27.5% disagree.

As the results show, there is a variety of opinions about this question. While the 40% of teachers totally agree that there is more anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher, the same percentage of teachers totally disagrees. Also, on the one hand the 27.5% of students agree that there is more anxiety; on the other hand the same percentage disagrees. However, it can be seen that the percentage of teachers that agree and partially agree is higher than the percentage of students that disagree. Likewise, the percentage of students that totally agree, agree, or partially agree is higher than the percentage of students that disagree. Consequently, the conclusion is that a limitation of teaching English in small classes is that students feel anxious because there is more control by the teacher.

During the class observations, I could notice that some students felt anxiety. Since they were few, teachers could see better what everyone was doing in class or call the attention to an individual learner. Sometimes, students show restlessness especially when teacher was going to evaluate an activity. In occasions, students bite their nails or the pencil too.

The next statement for teachers was to know if it is difficult to practice speaking and listening skills in small classes. The teachers' answers in relation to this sentence is as follow, 20% of them agree while 20% partially agree, and 60% disagree. Likewise, students were

asked for their opinions in relation to a similar sentence, and 5% of them agree, 22.5 % partially agree while 72.5% disagree that in small classes it is difficult to practice speaking and listening activities.

The data available indicate that teachers believe that speaking and listening activities do not difficult to practice in small classes. In the same way, most of the students disagree with the sentence that it is difficult to practice speaking and listening skills.

The results obtained from the observations done show that small classes increase the practice of listening and speaking. It was noticed that students had many opportunities for speaking and listening; for example when interacting with classmates and with the teacher.

After analyzing the teachers and students 'perceptions about the limitations when teaching English in small classes, it can be established that there is a slightly limitation when teaching English in small classes. Students and teachers report that there is a level of anxiety that some learners can feel because of the higher control of the teacher. However, there was not found any limitation related with the practice of speaking and listening skills in small classes.



## **Conclusions**

Teaching English in small classes have many benefits for teachers. For example, it is easier for them to design activities that help students to apply what they have learned. Likewise, teachers can give adequate feedback and remember better the names of the students.

In small classes, students are more attentive and participative. They can concentrate better because there is not much noise in the classroom and interaction between teachers and students and between students is higher.

The results show that the activities to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills benefit teaching and learning English in small classes. These activities allow students to improve their skills and increase their confidence in English language.

Students in small classes have a higher motivation to participate in class; they feel part of the class community. This motivation to participate is because in small classes there are few peers, so they feel comfortable.

There is a slightly limitation when teaching English in small classes. Some students can feel anxiety because of the higher control of the teacher. However, the anxiety level is not high.

Small classes have a good environment for the development of speaking and listening skills.

## **Recommendations**

In order to overcome anxiety in some students, teachers in small classes should do adjustments in their teaching. They should recognize small achievements from students using positive reinforcement, in that way students could lower their anxiety levels when receiving tasks. Additionally, teachers should extend time for tests and tasks.

Teachers in small classes should increase the use of technological resources since students are very interested in technology, and it makes them pay more attention to the class and learn better. Furthermore, by using technological resources teachers can explain the topic attractively and have a more exiting class.

Teachers should take advantage of the space of small classes. They have available a big space because there are few students in their classes. Teachers can use the space for activities, games or group projects. Teachers can plan more lesson that get students out of their seats.

## REFERENCES

- Alghamdi, R., & Gillies, R. (2013). The impact of cooperative learning in comparison to traditional learning (small groups) on EFL learner's outcomes when learning English as a foreign language. *Asian Social Science*, 9, 13.
- Brown, H.D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: an interactive approach to language pedagogy* (3<sup>o</sup> ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Cakmak, M. (2009). The perceptions of student teachers about the effects of class size with regard to effective teaching process. *The Qualitative Report*, 14(3), 395-408.
- Dennick, R., & Exley, K. (2004). *Small group teaching: tutorials, seminars and beyond*. New York: Taylor & Francis e-library.
- Dhand, H. (2008). *Techniques of teaching*. New Delhi: A P H Publishing Corporation.
- Din, F. (1999). Functions of class size perceived by Chinese rural school teachers. *National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal*, 12(3), 1-6
- Dudley E., & St. John, M. (2007). *Developments in ESP: a multi-disciplinary approach*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Fisher, J., Hoover, G., & McLeod, J. (2003). *The key elements of classroom management: Managing time and space, student behavior, and instructional strategies*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Flood, J., Lap, D., Squire, J., & Jensen, J. (2003). *The handbook on research on teaching the English language arts* (2<sup>o</sup> ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Inc.
- Harfitt, G. J. (2012). Class size and language learning in Hong Kong: the students' perspective. *Educational Research*, 54(3), 331-342.
- Herrell, A.L., & Jordan, M. (2012). *50 Strategies for teaching English language learners* (4<sup>o</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education. Inc.

- Johnson, K.L (2002). *Understanding communications in second language classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Konstantopoulos, S. (2011): How consistent are class size effects? *SAGE* 35(1) 71-92
- Maxim, M. (2009) *Teaching English as a Foreign Language for Dummies*. England: John Wiley & Sons. Ltd.
- Nunan, D. (1996). *The self-directed teacher*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Richard, P. (2003). *Making it happens: from interactive to participatory language teaching*. (2° ed.) NY, White Plains: Person education, Inc.
- Soler, M. (2008). *Teaching English at university level*. Barcelona: UPC.
- Tiberius, R. (2013). *Small group teaching: A trouble-shooting guide*. Canada: Routledge.
- Ur, Penny. (2012). *A course in English language teaching* (2° ed.). United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Woodward, T. (2001). *Planning lessons and courses: Designing sequences of work for the language classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

## ANNEXES



Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja  
La Universidad Católica

### UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

#### OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY

#### ENGLISH DEGREE

Dear teacher,

The aim of this brief questionnaire is to obtain information concerning *your opinion in relation to the teaching of English in small classes*. The following information will only be used for academic/research purposes.

**Informative data:** Please fill in the information below

Name of institution :

Type of institution:

Public ( ) Private ( ) School ( ) High school ( ) Language institute ( ) City:

**Instructions: place an (X) in the box that best reflects your personal opinion:**

**Strategy:** answer the following questions as honestly as possible based on the following criteria

**Totally agree**

**Agree**

**Partially agree**

**Disagree**

A. Benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes.

No	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
1	It is easier to design activities that help students to apply what they have learned in classes				
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.				
3	The class space allows activities designed for you to develop properly.				
4	You can provide adequate feedback.				
5	Activities that allow greater interaction between students perform.				
6	There is more interaction between teacher and students.				
7	It's easy for you to remember the names of the students.				

B. Strategies and resources that favor the English teaching in small classes.

No	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
8	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice listening skills				
9	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice speaking skills				
10	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice reading skills				
11	Design and implement activities that allow you to practice writing skills				
12	Design and implement group activities				
13	Design and implement individual activities				
14	Use technology resources				
15	Use teaching materials				

C. Students' feelings when learning English in a small class.

No	Students in classes with few students feel	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
16	Relaxed when talking to their peers				
17	Taken into account because they have more opportunity to participate in class				
18	Motivated to participate because few peers in the class				
19	Comfortable that can compete healthily with other students				

D. Limitations of learning English in small classes.

No	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
20	There is anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher				
21	It is difficult to practice speaking and listening skills				

Thank you



Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja  
La Universidad Católica

**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**  
La Universidad Católica de Loja

**OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY**  
**ENGLISH DEGREE**

Dear student,

The aim of this brief questionnaire is to obtain information concerning *your opinion in relation to the learning of English in small classes*. The following information will only be used for academic/research purposes.

**Informative data:** Please fill in the information below

Name of institution :

Type of institution:

Public ( ) Private ( ) School ( ) High school ( ) Language institute ( )

City:

**Instructions: place an (X) in the box that best reflects your personal opinion:**

**Strategy:** answer the following questions as honestly as possible based on the following criteria.

- Totally agree**
- Agree**
- Partially agree**
- Disagree**

A. Benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes.

No	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
1	The activities done help to apply what students learned				
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities				
3	The students concentrate better because there is not much noise in the classroom.				
4	The class' space allows adequately develop the activities assigned by the teacher.				
5	The teacher provides appropriate feedback.				
6	There is interaction between the students				
7	There is interaction between teacher and students				
8	The teacher reminds the students' name				

B. Strategies and resources that favor the English teaching in small classes.



No	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
9	Activities to practice listening skills are performed				
10	Activities to practice speaking skills are performed				
11	Activities to practice reading skills are performed				
12	Activities to practice writing skills are performed				
13	Group activities are used				
14	Individual activities are used				
15	Technological resources are used				
16	Teaching materials are used				

C. Students' feelings when learning English in a small class.

No	Students in classes with few students feel	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
17	Relaxed when speaking in front of my peers				
18	Taken into account because I have more opportunity to participate in class				
19	Motivated to participate because we are few peers in class				
20	comfortable because I can compete healthily with other students				

D. Limitations of learning English in small classes.

No	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree	TOTAL
21	There is anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher					
22	It is difficult to practice speaking and listening skills					