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**Teacher and students' perceptions of teaching English in small classes in
Ecuador**

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN.

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APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

Licenciado.

Paúl Fernando González Torres.

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: “Teacher and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador”, realizado por Ramos Verdesoto Omar Alí, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, febrero de 2015

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo, Ramos Verdesoto Omar Alí, declaro ser autor del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: “Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador”, de la Titulación de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Paúl Fernando González Torres director del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos y acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis to my wife and my children. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents Welmi and Papo, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity made me fight until I get this incredible moment.

I also dedicate this thesis to all my brothers and sisters who have supported and comforted me during my worst moments.

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ABSTRACT

This research evaluates the topic “Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador”. The government goal is to increase the teaching of English, so the study was done to know if working with small classes benefits learning in relation with the pupil’s progress.

The samples were taken with surveys in 5 classes comprehended from eighth to tenth grade of Basic General Education, and from first to second grade of Senior High School in a private high school located in Quito “Educational Unit Letort”, each class with no more than 20 students between 12-16 years old.

To analyze the data, a quantitative approach was used. A questionnaire of 21 and 22 questions for teachers and students was administered. Their responses were qualitatively analyzed according to the frequency found for each question. Additionally, 5 hours of class observation was performed which served to support and compare the results.

The findings demonstrated that teachers and students perceived small classes to be beneficial for classroom management. It also enhance interaction between teacher-students and student-student, improving teaching effectiveness and learning atmosphere.

Keywords: perceptions, teachers, students, small classes, increase, improve, teaching, quantitative, qualitative.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación evalúa el tópico “Las percepciones de los profesores y estudiantes en la enseñanza de Inglés en clases pequeñas en Ecuador”. La meta del Gobierno es mejorar la enseñanza del Inglés, por lo tanto, el estudio fue hecho para conocer el efecto que genera el aprendizaje del Inglés con pocos estudiantes y medir sus beneficios académicos.

La muestra para este estudio fue tomada a través de encuestas. Cinco clases desde octavo a décimo curso de Educación General Básica, y de primero a segundo de Bachillerato en un Colegio privado en Quito, “Unidad Educativa Letort”, cursos con no más de 20 estudiantes entre los 12-16 años de edad.

Para la investigación cuantitativa, estudiantes y profesores recibieron una encuesta con 22 y 21 preguntas respectivamente. Para la investigación cualitativa, 5 horas de clase fueron visitadas completando la hoja de observación.

Las conclusiones indicaron que profesores y estudiantes percibieron a las clases pequeñas como un factor beneficioso que facilita el manejo de la clase, aumenta la interacción entre profesores-estudiantes y estudiantes-estudiantes; hay efectividad en la enseñanza, mejorando la atmosfera de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: percepción, profesores, estudiantes, clases pequeñas, incrementar, mejorar, enseñanza, cuantitativo, cualitativo.

INTRODUCTION

The Ecuadorian Government has the big challenge of trying to improve the process of teaching-learning English in public high schools in Ecuador, because recent studies done by Ministry of Education demonstrated that students leaving high schools with their bachelor degrees, have at least an average of 60% or less of knowledge in English. However, it is noticeable that there are more factors which could affect the teaching-learning process. In this way, it is possible to mention: if the EFL teachers have enough expertise and competence to perform their job, if class hours are sufficient to complete the program, if there are adequate rooms to convey information, if technology and didactic sources are provided, etc.

On the other hand, it is also important to consider if the students are well motivated to learn English as a foreign language, and if class size could influence the teaching-learning process, because it is known that in public high schools in Ecuador, the average of students is 50-60 pupils per grade, so probably there will be big differences between large classes and small classes.

Hence, the principal purpose of this study is to know the teachers' and students' perceptions of teaching and learning English in small classes, through the following questions:

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?

Are there any limitations when teaching English in small classes?

This is an important and useful research because after the investigation, it will be possible to understand and implement changes and amendments that high schools in Ecuador require to enhance the teaching-learning English process.

Previous studies indicate that, in small classes, the whole process of teaching-learning English, is better executed by teachers and students. One similar research was done by Blatchford, Basset and Brown (2005), who addressed their research with the purpose to find clear differences on teacher-pupil interactions, pupil engagement, and pupil-pupil interactions working with different class size. Two objectives were mentioned in this study: a) relations between size of class and pupil progress, b) relations between size of class and classroom processes. After the investigation, the authors concluded that the small classes lead to more individualized task related contacts among teacher and pupils, and it is possible to strengthen the teaching-learning process because there are more opportunities to give positive feedback when the students made mistakes. Moreover, this study highlight the importance to consider teacher's pedagogical beliefs. The authors do not mention any limitations for this study.

Another study was carried out in Saudi Arabia by Bahanshal (2013), who states that his study tries to analyze the Saudi secondary teacher's perception when teaching English in large classes compared to small classes, as well as, to verify the correct method to teach English. The best method to perform this investigation was the qualitative approach, and some other interesting data were collected using observations, interviews and surveys. The conclusion in this study evidence that large classes are not a pedagogical dilemma, as the problems found in large classes which raised more demands and actions from language teachers in large classes than in smaller ones. So, it is effective to look for some methods and different strategies that could be applied to reduce the effects of large classes, increasing the teaching and learning level to its maximum performance. No limitations were mentioned by the author.

Another research paper completed in China by Feng (1999), investigates the benefits of having small classes in Chinese schools. The results show that teachers think that small classes are perfect for classroom management, better for student-teacher interactions, and more focal feedback from the teachers. However, teachers believe that in large classes peer help is an important aspect for students' success. No limitations were mentioned in this study.

This research will help students and teachers of EFL in Ecuador, because they will understand that small classes are perfect to perform teaching-learning process. On the other hand, teacher in all levels must receive training where it is possible to update and to acquire new strategies to teach English.

Moreover, there is a big difference between public and private schools. The first ones require important technology for learning such as, audio visual room, didactic material, tape record, electricity. The second ones have these important issues, but sometimes they are not used by the teacher. Available hour classes are also very profitable in the teaching-learning English process, more hours are better.

For the reasons mentioned above, this research is also useful for the government because if they are interested in promoting and causing a real change in the curricula for English subject, this is a good resource to get some important information. In addition, this study could serve for future investigations related to the topic.

In this research, some methodological limitations were appearing while the process, for example, the surveys were given only to 5 teachers and to 100 students , and only 5 observation sheets were filled in the class observation. With this sample, it is not possible to generalize the findings. This study was developed in a private high school which is better equipped in relation with public high schools. Nevertheless, other studies were done in public system, so it is possible to compare both.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

The focus of this research is to obtain perceptions from students and teachers with respect to small classes thus, in order to obtain data to develop this investigation, the researcher selected a private high school located in the urban area north sector of Quito.

Five random classes were selected with no more than 20 students with their respective teachers were, so the sample consisted of 100 students and 5 teachers, the classes were from eighth to tenth grade of Basic General Education, and from first to second grade of Senior High School.

The students were aged between 12-16 years old and attended classes in the morning from 7:00 to 14:00. They mostly take five subjects in English: Natural Science, Math, English, Social Studies and Music. For this reason, they have a good level of English. In addition, the classes were well equipped with projector and CD player.

Procedures

For this study, the first step was to carry out bibliographic research about small classes and related previous studies was to look for evidence from books available in physical and virtual libraries, web sites, and internet journals. The second step was to involve the school in field investigation using surveys for teacher, students, and some observation sheets.

The instruments used to collect the information consisted of 100 questionnaires for students, 5 questionnaires for teachers, 5 observation sheets for the researcher, and a presentation letter issued by UTPL in order to obtain the authorization of the school's principal to conduct the research in the more convenient day for high school. A few minutes before each class start, some instructions were given to the students in order to achieve a good

understanding of what was expected from them. Each student received 1 questionnaire with 22 statements, and each teacher received 1 questionnaire with 21 statements. In addition, the researcher filled 1 observation sheet per class which contained 22 statements as well. Therefore, in order to examine the participants' responses, the use of a quantitative approach was necessary. The 5 observational sheets were also analyzed through a qualitative approach.

In order to analyze the results, it was mandatory to compare the percentage of the responses to each statement given by the participants in quantitative questionnaires with the results obtained through the class observation sheets in qualitative questionnaires, which were filled by the researcher during the observation.

The tabulation of data was done manually by the researcher transferring the information to an electronic format. The results were entered to the corresponding column of the data base nominated as: totally agree, agree, partially agree and disagree. These results were summed up according to the responses' frequency, and then the values were converted into percentages for easy analysis. This analogy gave us a good appreciation of the truthful responses from the students.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

The present literature review reflects the problems or acceptance situations that teachers could have in Ecuador for teaching English in high schools. For this study and further application of the results in our country, and in order to benefit the teaching-learning English, some topics related to the research work and some previous studies were investigated.

Managing Learning

It is possible to divide managing learning in three different actions. The first and very important aspect in this concept are the clear instructions that the teacher must give to the students at the beginning of the class, if this does not happen, surely the students will not understand clearly what they have to do, so the class will turn into a complete mess, with time-wasting confusion, early loss of control, and lack of effective practice. The instructions must be given in accordance with the development and knowledge of English in the different groups of the classroom, so clear and easy tasks for the beginners, and little more complicated instructions for advanced students thus, it is recommendable to give instructions before giving out materials or dividing a class into knowledge groups, and practice with little and easy tasks. This will help the students to clarify things and understand in a shorten time the process of instructions (Ur, 2005)

The second issue is feedback, and in general is the process in which the teacher lets the students know their performance in the process of learning English. Normally, feedback is given to improve the development of the students. Teachers use some words in response to good learning English of the students, words like “yes”, “all right”, “perfect”, “very good”, will enhance the student confidence. Teachers also use some body language like a raised eyebrow in response to a mistake in grammar use or bad pronunciation. However feedback

has two main important components: assessment and correction. Assessment is used by teachers to inform the students if they used the English rules in a good or bad way. On the other hand, correction is used by teachers to explain English with different ways; the goal is to enhance the performance of the students (Ur, 2005)

The third aspect in managing learning is timing, and is intrinsically used into the hour classes, in other words, the teacher should divide one hour class in three or four periods of ten minutes, because one hour class has 45 minutes. In each period teachers give the students some instructions and activities to be performed by them, the final period could be used for a rapid assessment and feedback (Ur, 2005).

Teacher-student, and student-student interaction

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) state:

Observation has shown that the most common type of classroom interaction is the known as “IRF”-Initiation-Response-Feedback: the teacher initiates an exchange, usually in the form of a question, one of the students answers, the teacher gives feedback (assessment, correction, comment), initiates the next question-and so on.

It is possible to find other alternative patterns, and not always the initiatives could be in hands of the teacher. If students are working together, interactions might be between them. Another way is students working with materials and technology, so interactions might be between students and materials. It is very common to classify forms of interactions with capital words T and S like the following examples given by (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975):

TT = Teacher very active, students only receptive

T = Teacher active, students mainly receptive

TS = Teacher and students fairly equally active

S = Students active, teacher mainly receptive

SS = Students very active, teacher only receptive

Interaction patterns involve grouping students into the classroom using very different ways when they are working. The groups depend on the type of the activity, the knowledge of the students, and the aim of the activity. It is possible to mention different groups to understand better this concept, for example Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) states:

Group work, where students work in small groups on tasks that implies interaction conveying information.

Closed-ended teacher questioning (“IRF”), in which only one correct response gets approved.

Individual work, the teacher gives some kind of individual tasks, and the students must work on them independently, the function of the teacher is to walk around monitoring and giving feedback when necessary.

Choral responses, in this one, the instruction or cue that is given by the teacher is repeated by all the students in chorus.

Collaboration, is when the students do the same kind of job like in individual work, but work together usually in pairs trying to achieve the best results as they can.

Students initiate-teacher answers, this is like a play or guessing game, some students think questions and teacher responds, but the only rule is that the teacher chose which student asks.

Full class interaction, is with the total participation of the students choosing a topic that is discussed by the students, the teacher may intervene occasionally.

Teacher talk, this activity is done only for the teacher, and the students must be in silence copying the dictation of teacher.

Self-access, the learning tasks are chosen by the students and work autonomously.

Class size

Class size means the number of students that the classes can have, and vary immensely, so an ESP (English for specific purposes) teacher probably could have only one student. For instance, a trader person, or an ESP teacher could have several hundred of students too, like in public high schools. It seems that this variation in number of students not only occurs in English classes.

The definition of large class is not an absolute; it depends on the country, the kind of schools in that countries, and if the schools have English as the primary language like EFL (English as foreign language) schools. For example, in primary and secondary education, a class with an average of 35-40 pupils may be a large class, while in private EFL schools, over 15 students could be large. It is possible to find the largest classes in tertiary EAP (English for academic purposes) situations -150 students is not uncommon in some countries such as Nigeria or Indonesia, in these countries classes with more than 50 students are small classes. A study conducted by Coleman (1988) confirmed “that the perception of large is related to the size of the largest class teachers regularly teach” (Dudley & Jo St John, 2007).

However, Leo (2007) states that the time teachers monitor or interact with students makes the big difference between a large class and a smaller class. Then with 30 students or less the teacher can usually get around to all the groups in a lesson, and spend a few moments giving feedback, listening and making notes for the next class. On the contrary, with large classes it is almost impossible to reach all the students and spend with them a few minutes; the class is very noisy, so the teacher cannot hear the pupils.

Teaching techniques, strategies or activities for teaching English to small classes

Social strategies are the most important because these result from a strong motivation to communicate and to learn English as a second language. In peer group support, it is normally and easy to find groups of children joined before, who act as if they know what is going on, giving the perception by using a few words and phrases that they understand everything. Sometimes they make friends, others go around the class and help who needs. Of course, if they want to interact with others need language to do so. Thus, the cognitive strategies, such as inferring meanings and formulating rules feed off these social interactions. Teachers can explain this process stating: finding a student guide in the classroom, who is sociable and helpful to befriend new children and initiate them into classroom and playground routines; sitting him among others with the same interest, plays and share the same first language: to be sure that they always work in collaborative groups and pairs, especially in situations where communicative language could not be avoided and activities require a lot of simple repetitive language (Mills & Mills, 1993).

Further a language syllabus mentioned here is a mixture of what are termed communicative and task based approaches. Lots of things of what has been said here concerns particular management techniques which will help children's learning of English. We can find the best opportunities to apply this concept in schools, and to make use of this, teachers must ask themselves: which are the needs of child at that moment?, what English students can learn in a particular situation?. So in classes the teacher uses commands, simple greetings and politeness formulas, names of objects present in class, certain items that are very easy to teach like possessives, prepositions, states, etc. (Chamot & Barnhardt, 1999).

As soon as students are learning some grammar, teachers are anxious to begin teaching reading and writing, this action allows children to develop literacy skills; however, the students must not feel undue pressure from the teacher to do so (Mills & Mills, 1993).

Nevertheless, Chamot and Barnhardt (1999) say that the Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning is focused in deep research on learning strategies in which data were controlled on the strategy use proper foreign and second language learners ranging from elementary through university level. The usefulness and applicability of the learning strategies permit their inclusion in a broad range of learning tasks. All the modalities of learning English – reading, listening, writing and speaking can be benefit for the use of strategies applied by the students, as well as the retention of vocabulary and content information are enhanced too. The model has four metacognitive processes:

Planning – Monitoring - Problem solving – Evaluating

Strategy: seat goals – Definition: develop personal objectives; identify the purpose of the task-
Metacognitive Processes: planning.

Strategy: directed attention-Definition: decide in advance to focus on particular task and ignore distractions-Metacognitive Processes: planning, monitoring, problem solving.

Strategy: active background knowledge-Definition: use what you know. Elaborate on prior knowledge- Metacognitive Processes: planning, monitoring, problem solving.

Strategy: predict-Definition: anticipate information to prepare and give direction for the task-
Metacognitive Processes: planning.

Strategy: Organizational planning-Definition: plan the task and content sequence-
Metacognitive Processes: planning.

Strategy: self management-Definition: arrange for conditions that help you learn-
Metacognitive Processes: planning.

Strategy: ask if it makes sense-Definition: check understanding and production to keep track
of progress and identify problems-Metacognitive Processes: monitoring. (Chamot &
Barnhardt, 1999)

Learning environment in small classes

Brown (2007) suggested that the physical environment of the class for good learning is
considered the easiest and simplest principle of classroom management It is possible to
consider four categories:

Sight, sound, and comfort – the students recognize and will be really affected by what
they hear, see, touch, and smell when they enter to the classroom. Then the classroom must be
neat, very clean and orderly in presentation. Chalkboards must be erased of useless
information. Chairs are in military order. The class must to be free from external noises as
machinery, airplanes, cars, etc. Heating or cooling systems could be used if it is possible.

Seating arrangements – if the chairs and tables of the class have the possibility to be
removal, consider the chance to arrange it in semi circles, U-shapes, concentric circles, always
thinking that your students must be face to face with the teacher. If the class is too small only
one circle is enough. Try to arrange the class in the form where interactions among students
occurs.

Chalkboard – the use of this devise permits you to illustrate your class with visual input
of words, charts, pictures and graphs.

Equipment – if your class has enough technology, you will be surprised of the improvements shown by your students when you use equipment constantly for example radios, films, music.

The voice and body language are very important in the development of one class because with your body you can imitate the language or some words and your voice must not be so loud, it only must be heard for all the students into the class.

In the same manner Brown (2007) suggest some concepts in close relation with learning environment in small classes including the teacher in the classroom, proximity, movement, awareness, using the voice, different seating arrangements, orderly rows, circles and horseshoes, separate tables.

As mentioned in the last paragraph with the themes exposed and explained above, now some previous studies done in other countries around the world are presented and explained now.

Blatchford et al. (2007) mention in their study some questions trying to understand if teachers in large and small classes differ in time spent on teaching or time spent on instructional activities overall, time for each individual student, time for the complete group and interaction if there are interactions between teacher –students, student-student, and student-teacher.

The method used in Blatchford et al. (2007) was a longitudinal research to capture effects of naturally occurring differences in class size and pupil ratios, connections between class size and pupil attainment, connections with different classroom processes like student engagement, within class grouping and peer relations. The quantitative information was collected from systematic observations in large and small classes that would permit us to address basic questions on teaching time and teacher and pupil interactions. First of all, the

task was to observe when classroom-based activities could have taken place. The aim was to observe each child over two days. 22312 observations were collected in total, with an average of 87 observations per child. Four observers were contracted; all of them were experienced researchers who had training with working in schools and can explain the research and put teachers and pupils at their ease.

As a result of this study, it is possible to understand clear differences between small and large classes in teacher-pupil interactions. For instance, in small classes the interactions are more active. It was also found that in smaller classes there was more individualization of teaching.

Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2011) state that if there was more active involvement with the teacher through primary and secondary education and if this action vary the pupil attainment level.

The observation system was the technique used in this study, the basic action was to observe some classroom-based activities and provide an important and systematic account of pupil's behavior. Observations were done by the researcher on each child in turn in blocks of ten-seconds time intervals, with spaces of twenty seconds between observations to permit documenting what happened in the last ten seconds. 34.420 ten-second observations were counted in total. There were two observation categories devised on the basis of well established systems, both are CSPAR (Class size and pupil adult ratio differences) and SPRING studies. The mentioned categories to the target child; teachers, support staff and other children were observed just in the moment when they came into contact with them. For this purpose, there were two very experienced observers and researchers who were active workers in schools. The principle work was to avoid passing judgments, so one observer had enormous experience working in schools involving systematic observations. The other

observer had initial training in which they were provided with an observation manual of categories, conventions and procedures, they had also tips acquired during previous use. There were conventions and work on videotapes jointed by periodic checks of accuracy and understanding of how to use categories. The principle explanatory variable of interest was class size which was centered before analysis. Furthermore to class size, the following variables were included in the analysis too: pupil level of performance at the beginning of the year (low, medium or high), special educational needs, gender, number of teachers, school subjects and support staff presence.

As the conclusion, perhaps the main implication of this study is that smaller classes can benefit all pupils in terms of individual, active attention from teachers, so this implies that small classes can be an effective educational initiative right through school, but lower performing pupils at secondary level could particularly benefit from small classes.

Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2005) suggest that probably there are effects of class size differences on teacher-pupil interactions, pupil engagement and pupil-pupil interaction.

The method employed in this study was to use a longitudinal research design, random selection of participating schools, and measurement of effects of naturally occurring differences in class size applying measures carefully drawn up on the basis of last research and pilot work. The CSPAR study had two objectives: it was mentioned to examine relations between: a) size of class and pupils progress, b) size of class and classroom processes, such as teacher and pupil behavior, inside class grouping efforts, teacher self perceptions, assessment and record keeping. Classes were selected on a random basis from the class size supplied by the school.

After the observations, the conclusions were that the small classes lead to more individualized task related contacts among teacher and pupils, where pupils are less one of the

crowd-and a more active role for pupils in interactions with their teachers. Moreover, this study suggests that is important to consider teacher's pedagogical beliefs. Another conclusion is the need to consider forms or ways in which relationships between class size, teacher and pupil behavior could be moderated by the school subject.

Bahanshal (2013) states that his study tries to explore the Saudi secondary teacher's perception when teaching English in large classes compared to small classes, and to determine the best method to teach English in such context.

To perform this study the method of qualitative approach seems more convenient to classify these themes as it is interested in people as the tool of research. Some other interesting data were collected using observation, interviews and surveys. For collecting the data, the researcher employed personal interviews of six Saudi secondary English teachers. Talking about the interviews, this is a semi structured one where the "interviewer has a set of predetermined questions, but the interviewer is free to follow up a question with additional questions that probe further" (Perry, 2005: 119). Interviews facilitate the understanding of the phenomenon of learning desire through the interviews' points of view not as the investigators could perceive. For this reason, the researcher asked each student to describe the size of his/her class using a scale with four points as follows: 1) very large, 2) large, 3) average, 4) small. Depending on their answers, more open-end questions were presented taking account their perceptions of the right number of students in each class and the reasons of their chose.

In this study, the conclusion informs that large classes are not firmly a pedagogical dilemma as the difficulties found in large classes which raised more demands and actions from language teachers in large classes in relation with their counterparts teaching smaller ones. Therefore, it is important and possible to affirm that class size has a preponderant role in the teaching and learning process, so it is effective to look for some methods and apply

effective strategies that reduce the effects of large classes and increase the teaching and learning level to its maximum performance. Other aspects such as students, teachers and facilities available in some schools could influence the effectiveness of any techniques. As stated by Feng (1999), class size is a factor that influence the teaching-learning and benefits the teaching of English in small classes in Chinese schools.

For this study, five schools were selected: three elementary and two secondary, all of these were ordinary schools, not different from the rest of the schools in the official district. For this purpose, every school received a survey package with an anonymous questionnaire and an introduction letter which explains the purpose of the study by a project assistant. However, not all the teachers could obtain the manila package with the surveys in, only teachers with more than 5 years of experience should obtain the surveys. In total, 100 surveys were distributed in this way. Maybe 50% of the teachers were surveyed in each school. In addition, the teachers must answer the surveys, put it into a sealed envelope and return them to the principal. After two weeks, the project assistant could collect the data. A survey questionnaire was developed based on the research questions. Fundamentally the questions were open-ended, and they were designed to collect the perceptions of the Chinese rural teachers in relation with class size.

As a result, the findings of the study show that the Chinese rural teachers did not promote a mandatory relation or link between class size and students achievement. However, they think that small classes are better for classroom management, perfect student-teacher interactions, more focal feedback from the teachers. All of these results mean less work for teachers. Teachers prefer to teach in small classes, after all, small classes enhance the teaching and learning process and teachers' work-fare, which warrants support from all educators. The influence of other societal factors like home influence, school, and classroom learning

atmosphere were identified as very important factors to learning results by the Chinese rural educators.

As the results of the surveys indicated, the Chinese rural teachers try to encourage competition among students. This creates competitive class activities. Teachers believe that this competition improves student's achievement. In the meantime, teachers also think that peer help is a very important factor for students' success in large classes.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This study was conducted in a northern Quito-Ecuador high school. It is regarded as an urban private school and all of the students have a good economical position. Five small complete classes with no more than 20 students were randomly chosen for this research. For this purpose, teachers and students received questionnaires to be answered by them with true and honest responses; the analysis and interpretation of the results will show the readers if working with small groups in Ecuador enhance the teaching-learning EFL process.

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

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

Table 1

Teachers' Perceptions

N°	In classes with a small number of students:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	It is easier to design activities that help the students to apply what they have learned.	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
3	Classroom space allows students to properly do the activities designed.	3	60	1	20	1	20	0	0
4	Appropriate feedback can be given.	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
5	Activities that allow more interaction among students are performed.	3	60	1	20	1	20	0	0
6	There is more interaction between the teacher and the students.	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
7	It is easier to remember students' names.	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0

Author: Omar Alí Ramos Verdesoto

Source: "Letort Educational Unit"

Table 2

Students' Perceptions

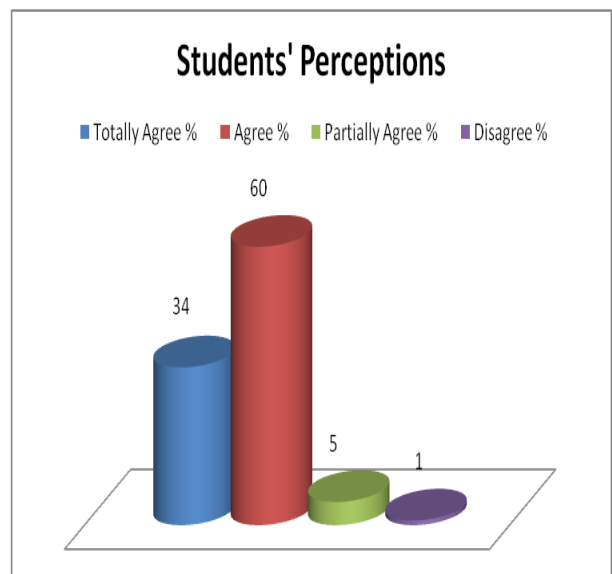
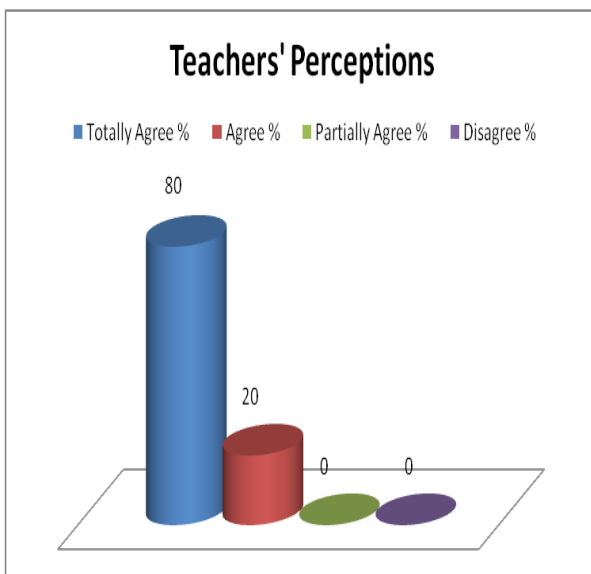
N°	In classes with a small number of students:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn.	34	34	60	60	5	5	1	1
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.	19	19	59	59	20	20	2	2
3	The students can better concentrate because there is less noise in the classroom.	31	31	39	39	25	25	5	5
4	The classroom space allows students to carry out the activities assigned by the teacher.	49	49	35	35	14	14	2	2
5	Students receive proper feedback form the teacher.	41	41	39	39	17	17	3	3
6	There is interaction between the students.	51	51	40	40	8	8	1	1
7	There is interaction between the teacher and students.	58	58	33	33	8	8	1	1
8	The teacher remembers the students' names.	64	64	24	24	10	10	2	2

Author: Omar Ali Ramos Verdesoto

Source: "Letort Educational Unit"

It is easier to design activities that help the students to apply what they have learned.

The activities done in class help to apply what students learn.



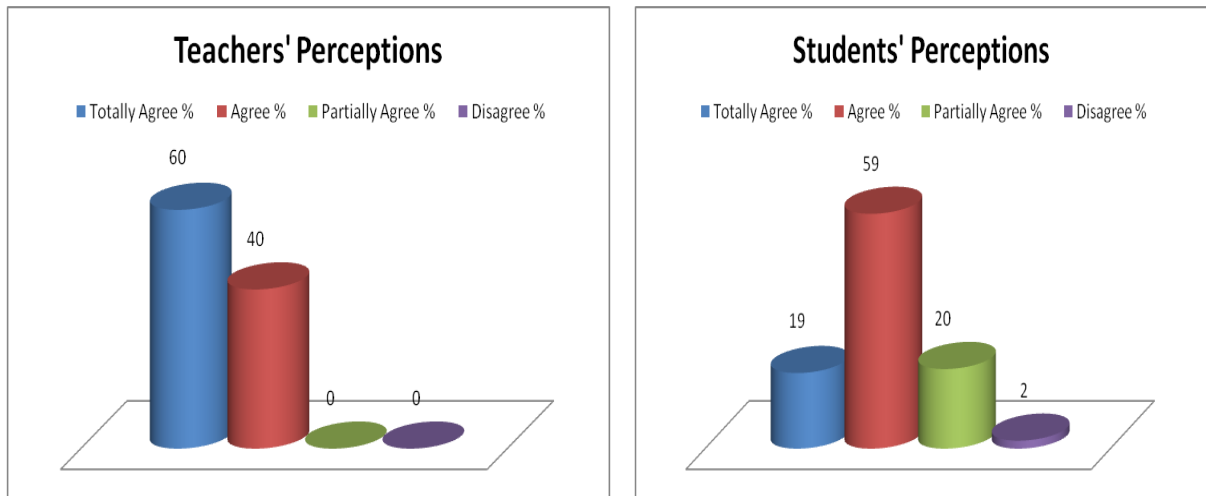
In the graphics above, it is observable that the majority of teachers and students' responses strongly agree with item number one.

Item 1. Regarding to the first statement, which states that the design of new activities permit the students to practice what they have learnt in small classes, 80% and 20% of the teachers' responses totally agree and agree respectively; these categorical affirmative answers clearly state that it is easy for teachers to apply new activities and tasks when the classes have 20 students or less. Feng (1999) suggests that class size is a factor that influence teaching-learning English.

Moreover, students' responses in table 2 indicates that 34% totally agree and 60% agree, and only 5% partially agree and 1% disagree. The answers given to the statement confirmed that students enjoyed and accepted positively the implementation of new activities. According to the class observation, students were very interested when the teacher applied a new activity in which they work in pairs reading a book and then brainstorming some new words trying to arrange complete sentences using it.

Although students' responses were partially agree and disagree to the statement, it shows a certain degree of dissatisfaction when performing new activities in the class. It did not have any influence in the final conclusion. It is much better to work with small classes when the teachers design activities that let the students practice the knowledge acquired.

The students are attentive and participate in class activities.

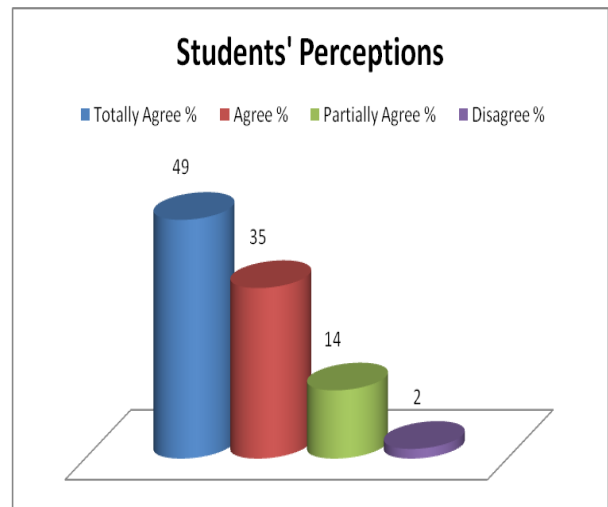
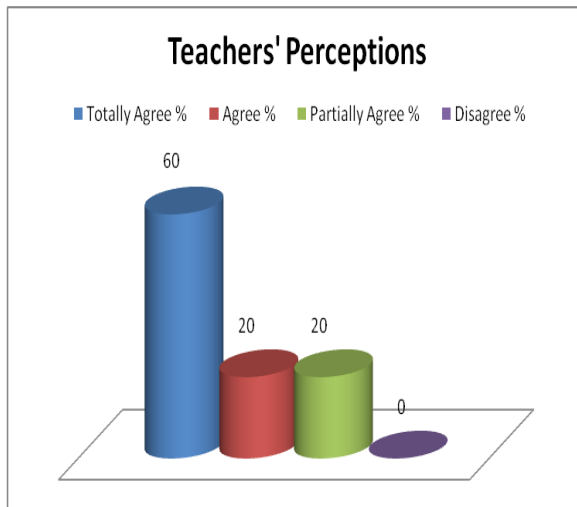


Item 2. The second statement mentions if students pay attention and participate in the activities of the class. The graphic inserted above clearly establish that responses given by the teachers show that the majority 60% totally agree and 40% agree. No responses were found for partially agree and disagree. Equivalently, students' answers were 19% totally agree and 59% agree. However, some responses in students' questionnaire indicated that 20% partially agree and 2% disagree. The final results evidence that the students feel very comfortable and collaborative with their participation in the activities in class because they pay total attention to the instructions given by the teacher. Ur (2005) mentioned that the instructions which are given to the students at beginning of the class are crucial and the most important in the development of an hour class.

On the other hand, this assertion was possible to infer in accordance with the researcher's observation, which made it easy to note that students were very participative in the day's lesson about "conditional if". Thus, it is logical to confirm that the attention and participation of the students are better achieved in small classes.

Classroom space allows students to properly do the activities designed.

The classroom space allows students to carry out the activities assigned by the teacher.



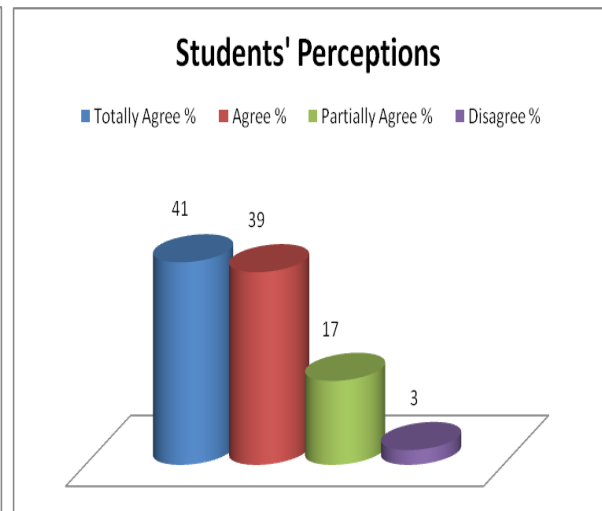
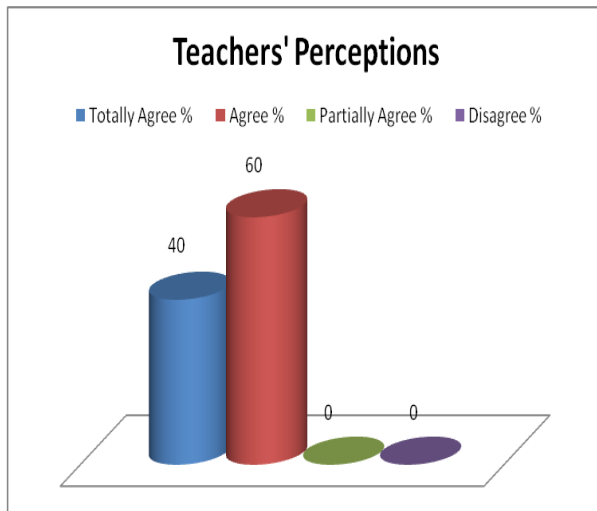
Item 3. The third statement considers if the classroom space allows the activities developed by the teacher are properly performed, as the above graphics show, the teachers' answers indicated 80% (combination of totally agree with agree), and 20% partially agree is observed. In the same manner the students' results were 84% (combination of totally agree with agree) and 16% (combination of partially agree with disagree). The analysis of the percentages in the table above gives us an idea that the classroom space is enough and ample. This allows the teachers to expand their activities. Moreover, from the observation, it is concluded that for some special activities, the surveyed high school has some specific areas for specific purposes, for instance, there is a cinema or video tape room, where students attend when they have special listening activities, so it is feasible to conclude that with small classes it is possible to apply all of the activities developed by the teacher.

At the same time, it is important to mention that when the classroom physical space is not enough to develop with satisfaction the programmed activities, the teacher must arrange the class in rows, shoe horse, circles, etc., depending on the diary tasks and the curricula.

Brown (2007) suggested that the physical environment of the class for good learning is considered the easiest and simple principle of classroom management.

Appropriate feedback can be given.

Students receive proper feedback from the teacher.



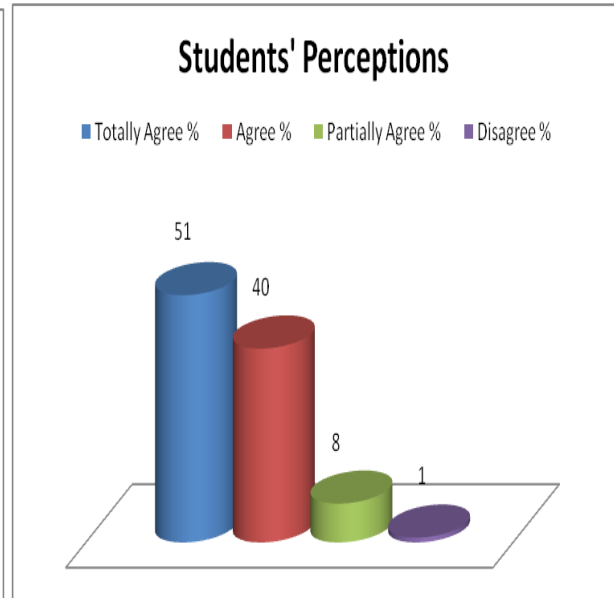
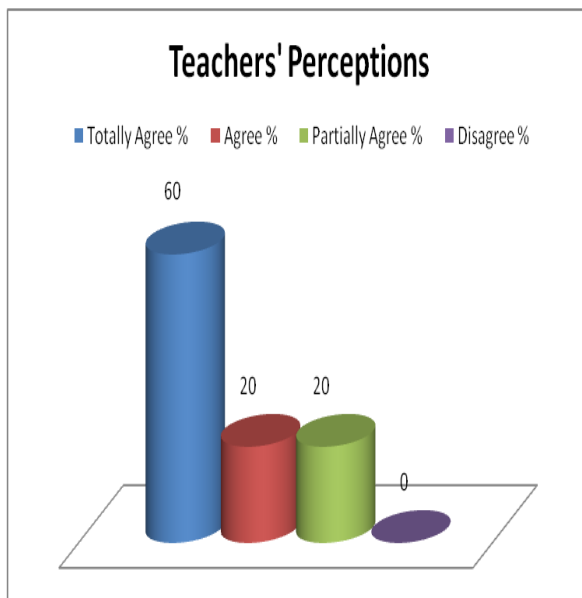
Item 4. This statement tries to investigate if an appropriate feedback can be provided in small classes. The inserted graphic above displays the results of teachers' answers: 40% totally agree and 60% agree. These results clearly show that small classes allow the teacher to give feedback instantly to students when they require so. At the same time, the graphic which belongs to students' responses reported mixed perceptions as; 41% totally agree and 39% agree, and 20% (combination of partially agree and disagree) were reported. The students' responses mostly agree with the statement which confirms that students are provided with feedback to reinforce the lesson.

Moreover, the observation sheet clearly reported that in small classes, the teacher gave positive feedback when the students require, because the teacher had enough time to observe, check and correct deficiencies shown by some students, so feedback is better performed in small classes. According to Spratt, Pulverness, and Williams (2005) giving feedback is giving information to learners about their learning. Feedback can spotlight on learner's language or

skills. Sometimes feedback is given to the whole class, thus, feedback is given to small groups or individual learners. The principal goal of feedback is to motivate learners and to help them to find out which are their problems.

Activities that allow more interaction among students are performed.

There is interaction between the students.

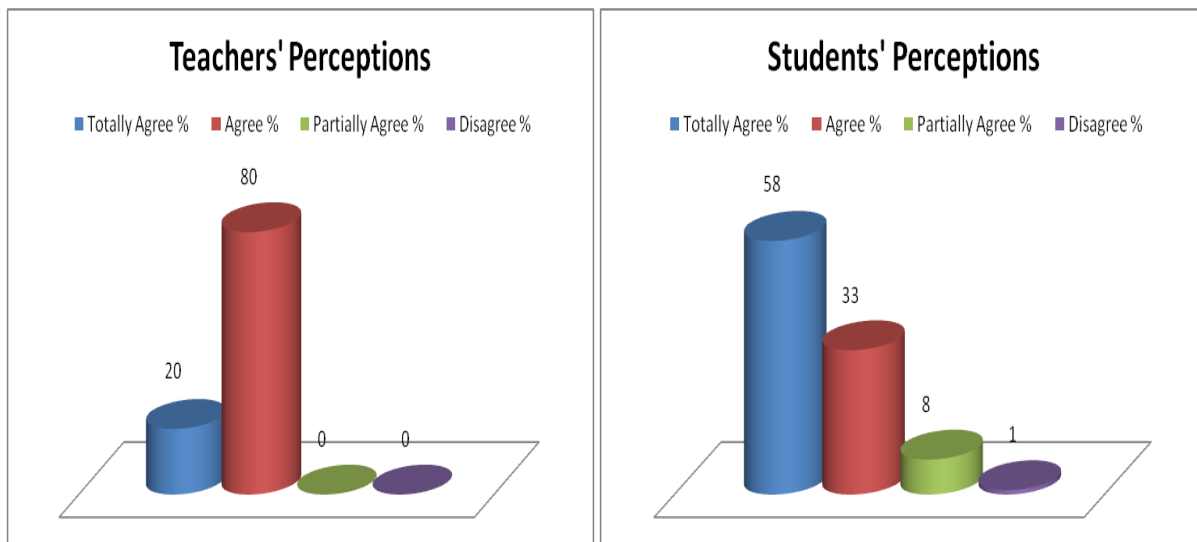


Item 5. In relation to this statement, which mentions if the activities allow a good interaction among the students, the teacher's graphic above shows the following responses: 60% totally agree and 20% agree, while 20% reported partially agree. Similarly, the students survey reported as the graphic indicates: 51% totally agree and 40% agree taking, while 9% (partially agree with disagree). It is possible to ascertain that the vast majority of responses reveal that there is a very good interaction among students in small classes.

Additionally, the observation during the class demonstrated that when the students worked in pairs, they developed great interaction because there is enough opportunity to establish relations with their classmates improving pronunciation and other skills. These results agree when Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) state that it is possible to find more alternative patterns, and not always the initiative could be in hands of the teachers. If students

are working together, interactions might be between them, thus small classes always improve interactions.

There is more interaction between the teacher and the students.



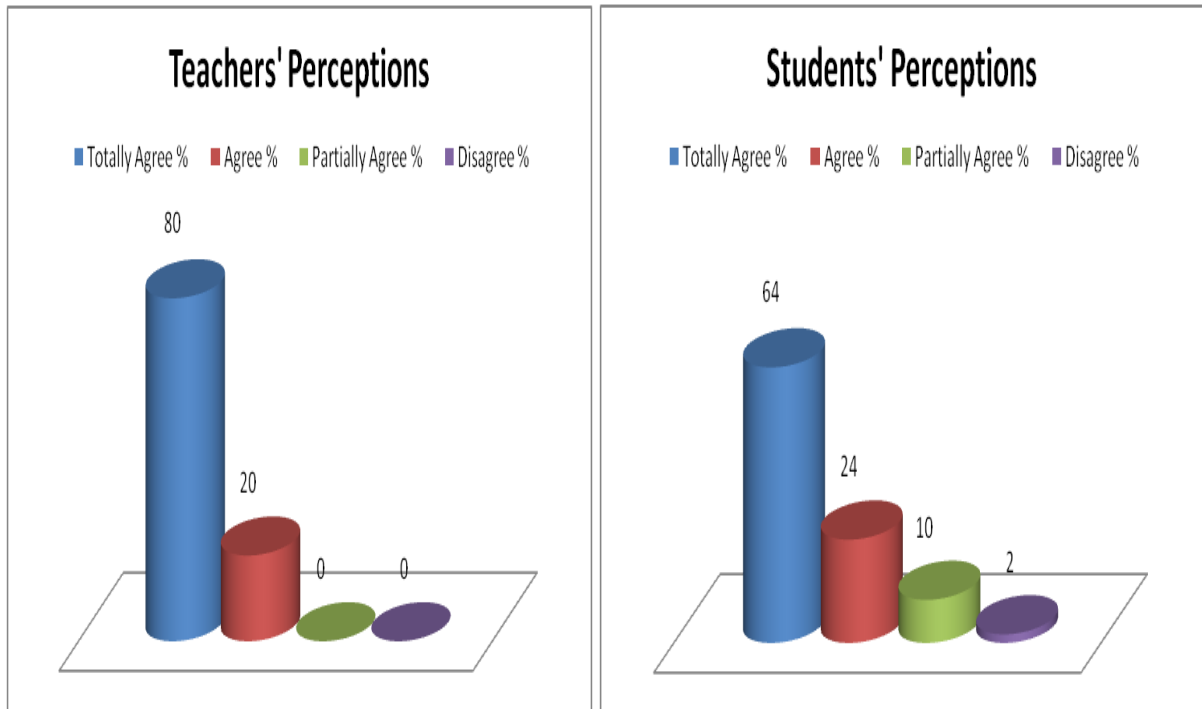
Item 6. Regarding statement 6, which states that there is a good interaction between the teacher and students, the graphics clearly indicate that the immense majority of teachers' responses positively by 100% (totally agree plus agree). Similarly, almost the majority of students' responses were in favor to the statement by 58% totally agree and 33% agree, so 9% (combination of partially agree and disagree) are the rest of the answers.

Indeed, the extensive positive responses to this comment both from teachers and students mean that there is a very healthy climate of relationship between them. This assertion is confirmed with the observation done by the researcher in the class, because it was possible to see that the teacher always permits the pupils to interact with him when the input was not clear, allowing him to give individual attention when required. This phenomenon is achievable only with small classes and with enough time per class.

Furthermore, the assertion exposed above is confirmed when Blatchford et al. (2007) mention in their study that, it is possible to understand clear differences between small and

large classes in teacher–pupil interactions. For example, in small classes interactions are more active.

It is easier to remember students' names.



Item 7. Regarding this statement, which states that it is easy for the teacher to remember the names of the students, the percentages represented above confirm that the absolute teachers' responses corresponded to 80% totally agree and 20% agree.

Consequently, 100% of surveyed teachers do not have any problem when they must call the students by their names in normal activities, or giving feedback when pupils require so. In small classes, it is easy for the teachers to remember the name of the students.

In addition, the surveyed students confirm with their responses, that they have a similar perception with the teachers regarding to this statement, as the graphic above expresses: 64% totally agree and 24% agree, being a positive feedback. The percentages for negative feedback were: 10% partially agree and 2% disagree. This estimate does not have a real consequence

when we mention that it is easy for the teachers to memorize the names of the students in small classes.

Consequently, in my observation the teacher easily called the students by their names. The students seemed to feel important to the teacher and more confident when they were called by their names. In accordance with their investigation Ballantine & Spade (2008) mentioned that working with small classes allows the teacher to monitor students' performance one by one.

In response to the first question "What are the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes", it is possible to conclude in accordance with the responses to the surveys, and inferring from the classroom observation sheets, that the students feel more comfortable and exploit in a better way the effort made by the teacher in small classes. It is possible to reinforce this conclusion with the argument given by Leo (2007), who states that the time teachers monitor or interact with students makes the big difference between a large class with a small class. Then, with 30 students or less, the teacher can usually get around to all the groups in a lesson plan, and spend a few moments giving feedback, listening and making notes for the next class. On the contrary, with large classes, it is almost impossible to reach all the students and spend with them a few minutes: the class is very noisy, so the teacher cannot hear the pupils.

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

Table 3

Teachers' Perceptions

N°	In classes with a small number of students, it is easier to:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
8	Design and apply activities that allow student to practice listening skills.	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice speaking skills.	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
10	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice reading skills.	1	20	3	60	1	20	0	0
11	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice writing skills.	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
12	Design and apply group work activities.	3	60	1	20	1	20	0	0
13	Design and implement individual activities.	2	40	2	40	1	20	0	0
14	Use technological tools	2	40	1	20	0	0	2	40
15	Use didactic materials.	1	20	3	60	0	0	1	20

Author: Omar Ali Ramos Verdesoto

Source: "Letort Educational Unit"

Table 4

Students' Perceptions

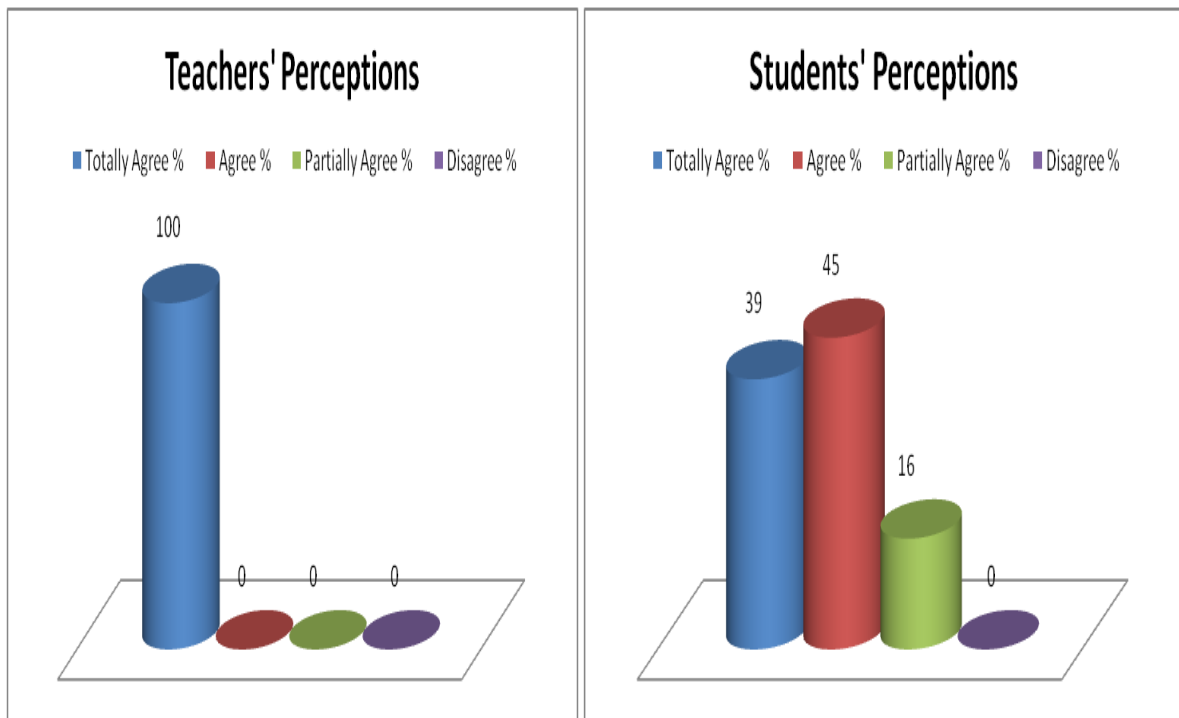
N°	In classes with a small number of students:	<i>Totally agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Partially agree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
8	The activities done allow students to practice listening skills.	39	39	45	45	16	16	0	0
9	The activities done allow students to practice speaking skills.	37	37	46	46	17	17	0	0
10	The activities done allow students to practice reading skills.	50	50	37	37	12	12	1	1
11	The activities done allow students to practice writing skills.	38	38	51	51	11	11	0	0
12	Group work activities are used.	41	41	43	43	12	12	4	4
13	Individual activities are used.	58	58	33	33	8	8	1	1
14	Technological tools are used.	18	18	23	23	39	39	20	20
15	Didactic materials are used.	16	16	36	36	36	36	12	12

Author: Omar Ali Ramos Verdesoto

Source: "Letort Educational Unit"

Design and apply activities that allow student to practice listening skills.

The activities done allow students to practice listening skills.

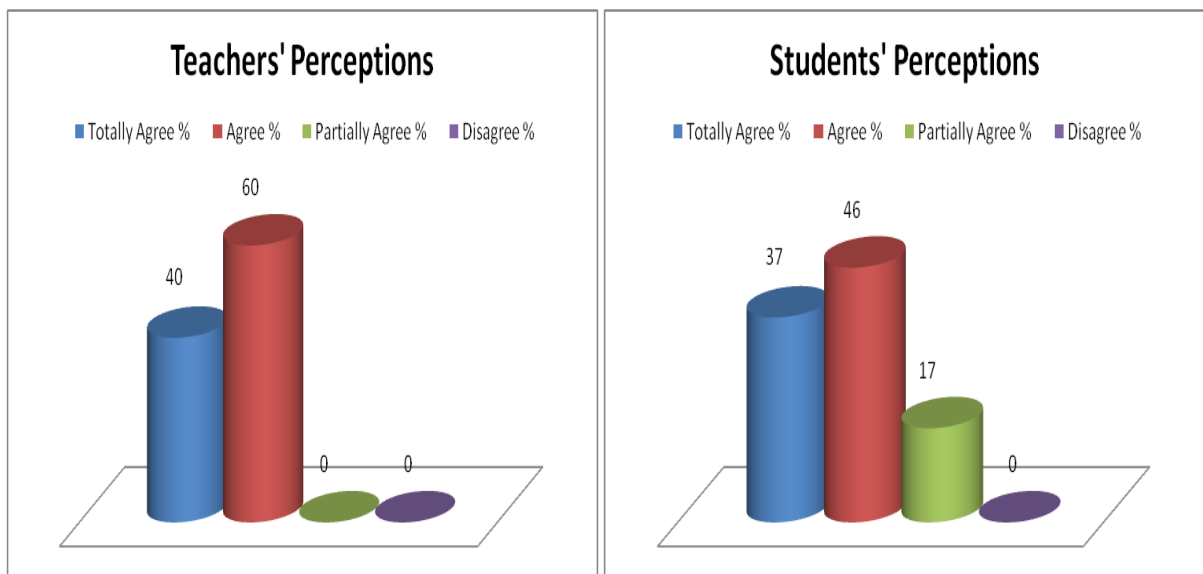


Item 8. In regard to the statement 8, which mentions if there are activities to practice listening skills, the graphic above for teachers' questionnaire shows 100% of responses totally agree. Similarly, the graphic for students' responses clearly states preponderance of positive answers in this way: 39% totally agree, 45% agree and 16% partially agree. No answers for disagree were found.

The results described in percentages definitely express that listening activities are developed in small classes in this high school. The observations sheets also demonstrated that some activities were applied to enhance listening roles, for example, the students listen to a song trying to understand the lyrics, or when the cinema room is used to watch a film, so it is possible to assume that small classes permit listening roles with the pupils.

Design and apply activities that allow students to practice speaking skills.

The activities done allow students to practice speaking skills.

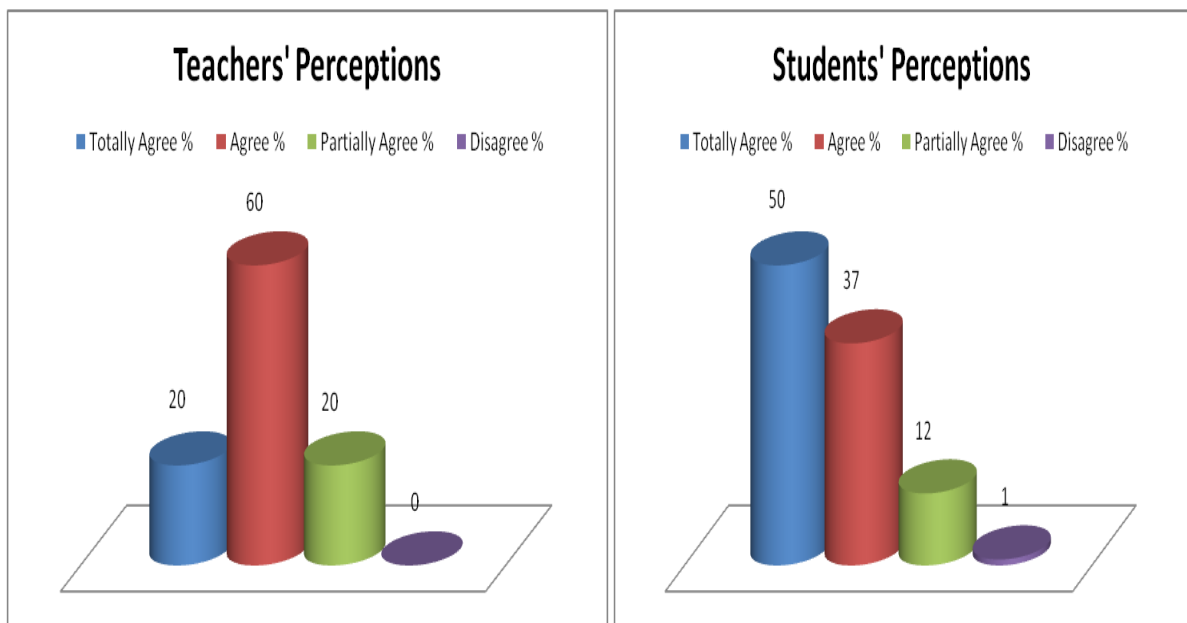


Item 9. The statement 9 states if there are activities that allow to practice speaking skills, the graphic for teachers shows a clear majority of responses 40% totally agree and 60% agree, as well as, the graphic for students indicates that 37% totally agree, 46% agree and 17% partially agree. None response were found for disagree in both teachers' and students' questionnaire.

Identical with the item 8, in this high school the students feel comfortable because the teacher develops activities that let the students to speak one each other. For example, the observation process denotes that grouping students to develop certain activities increase liaison among students. However, working with students in pairs, is also a very important resource to get speaking relation between students, thus having small classes are better for speaking practice. According to Mills and Mills (1993), finding a student guide in the classroom, who is sociable and helpful to befriend, sitting him among others with the same interests, to be sure that they always work in collaborative groups and pairs.

Design and apply activities that allow students to practice reading skills.

The activities done allow students to practice reading skills.

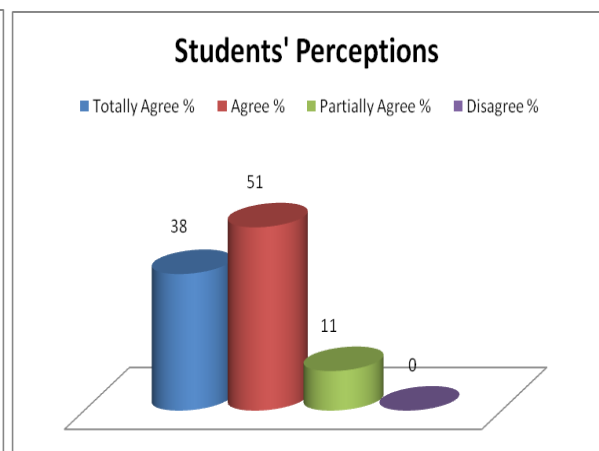
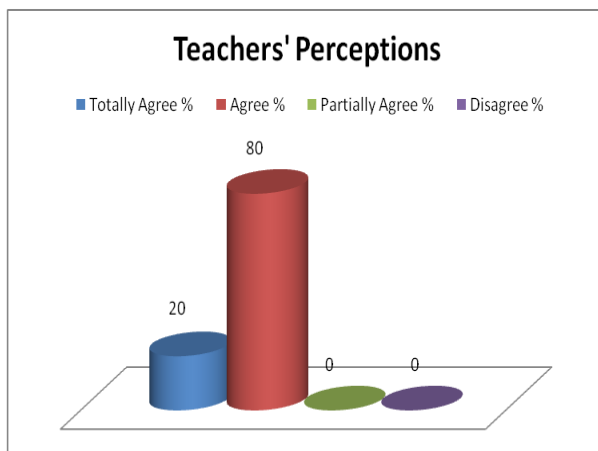


Item 10. This statement states that there are activities that allow to practice reading skills; the representation above for teachers' answers indicates: 20% totally agree, 60% agree and 20% partially agree, the graphic for students is close similar: 50% totally agree and 37% partially agree. The greater number of positive responses from teachers and students to this statement, strongly indicates that the students appear to be satisfied with the exercises implemented by the teachers to increment the reading skill.

Likewise, the class observation supports the responses given by the staff surveyed, because it was possible to see the permanent use of reading materials like books, magazines, press, etc. What is more, each student has to read one little book every three months, at the final of the lecture they have to summarize each chapter, and these summarized chapters must be presented to the teacher. This kind of exercise is very essential and useful because the students will progress the reading and writing skills. Fisher et al., (2003) state that at times asking students to work in groups in reading activities can be more helpful.

Design and apply activities that allow students to practice writing skills.

The activities done allow students to practice writing skills.



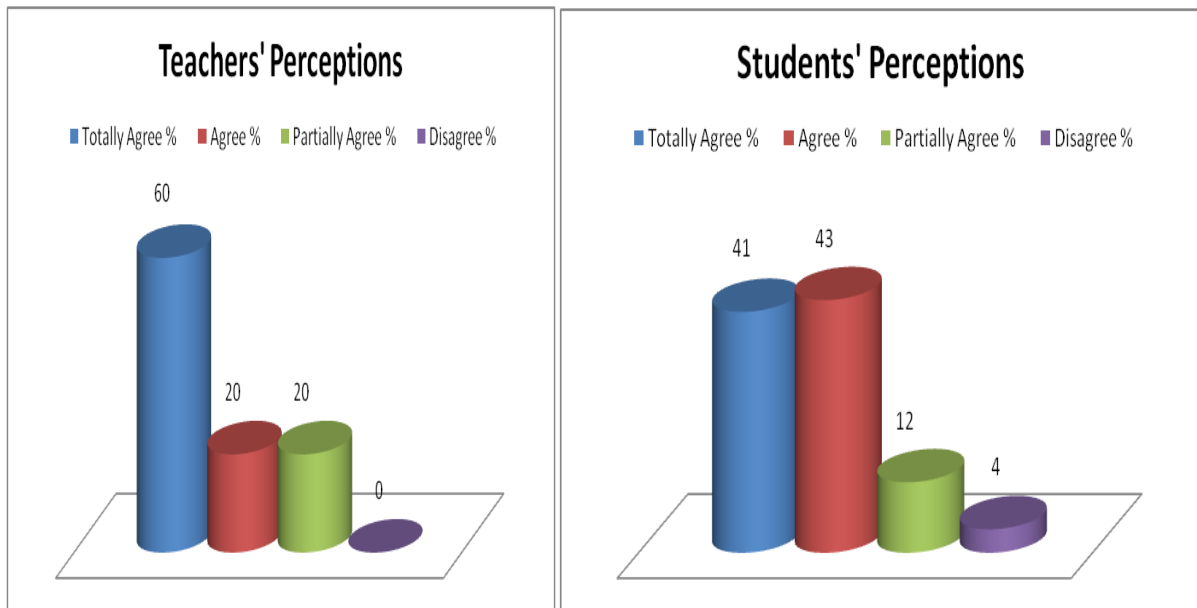
Item 11. The teachers' responses display 100% (combination of totally agree with agree), conform the vast majority of answers as the chart above shows, in the same manner, the graphic for students' feedback, demonstrate the following responses: 38% totally agree and 51% agree, while only 11% partially agree for the account which mention if there are activities that allow to practice writing skills.

The agreeable response to this item, clearly shows the students' acceptance and achievement of the activities designed to perform writing skills, for example, in the class observation it was possible to verify that each student has the opportunity to write in their copybooks a summary of an important activity done on the last weekend, when the students finish the writing job, randomly each one read the job for the rest of classmates. According to Flynn & Hill (2006) student-student interaction might require developing "cooperative learning techniques" that can generate students' interaction, so they can work in groups to improve their writing skills.

This kind of activities are extremely important because allow the reinforcement of the four principal skills (listening, writing, reading and speaking), and are achievable especially in small classes.

Design and apply group work activities.

Group work activities are used.

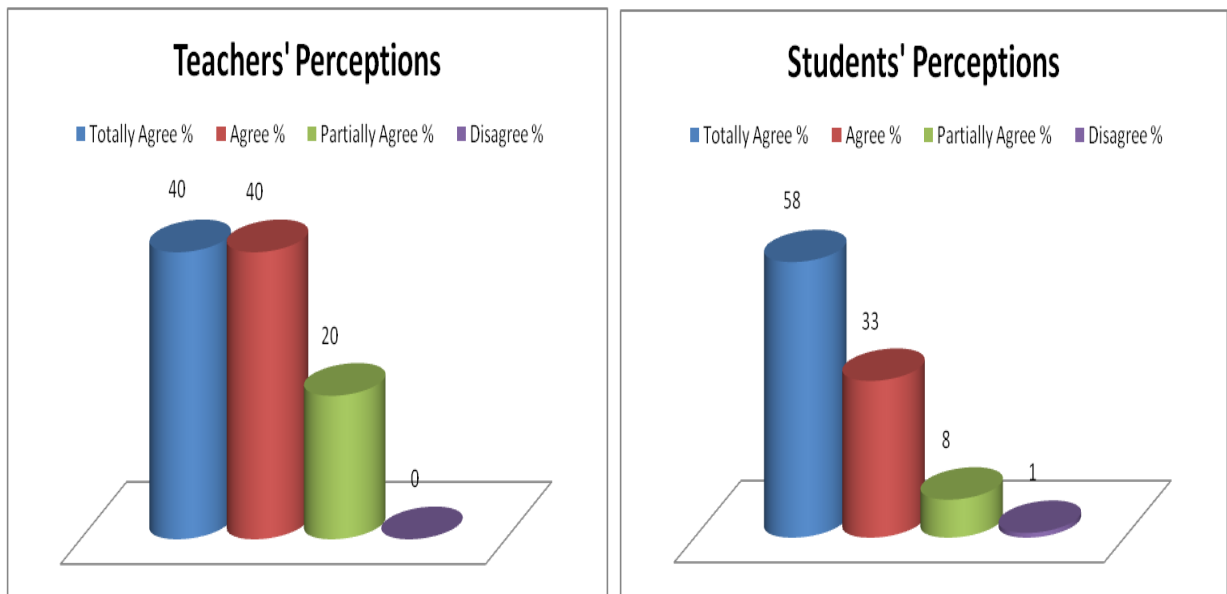


Item 12. Percentages in the chart above for this statement display for teachers' surveyed that 60% totally agree and 20% agree, in the other hand, only 20% partially agree. So, the majority of the teachers confirm that they design and implement group activities intensifying the teaching of English in small classes.

At the same time, 41% of students' responses totally agree and 43% agree; only 16% (combination of partially agree and disagree) are represented in the chart above. The students responded generously to the statement that mentions group activities in class. Of course, the responses were confirmed when the observation class took place. The students often design group activities to enhance the interactions among students, these group activities are accepted and enjoyed by them, and this acceptance is reflected in the pupils' English enrichment. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) state, that interaction patterns involve grouping students into the classroom using very different ways when they are working. The groups depend on the type of the activity.

Design and apply individual activities

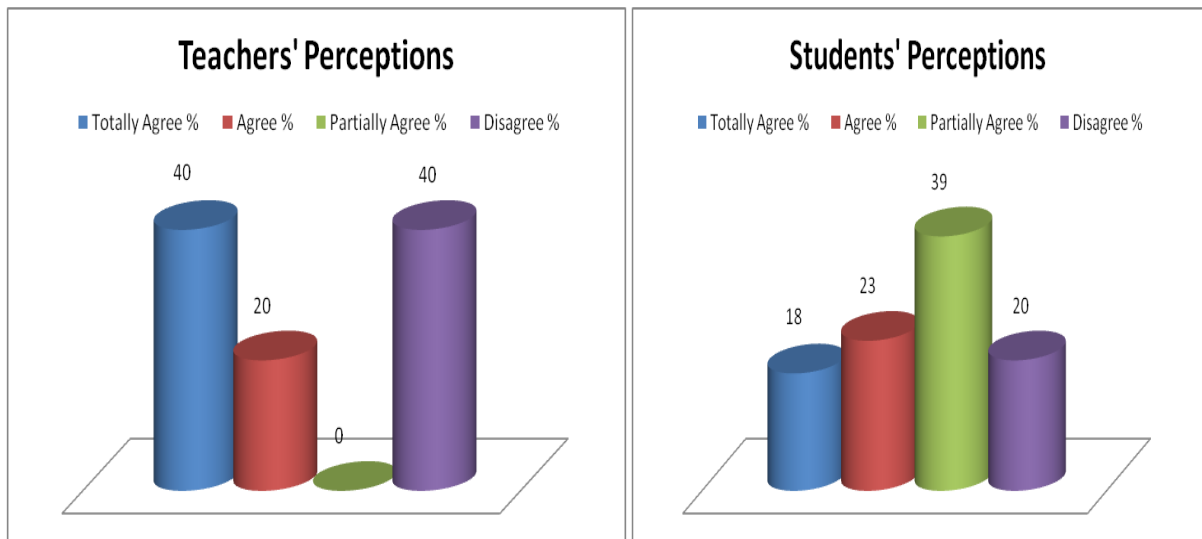
Individual activities are used.



Item 13. The graphics above for the statement regarding of individual activities, clearly show that the broad majority of responses in teachers' and students' perceptions, correspond to the first two columns. The evaluation is the following: 40% totally agree and 40% agree in teachers' survey. These results manifest that the teachers always design and implement individual activities in tasks like: filling in the spaces provided with the correct word, complete the statement with the correct form of the verb, or each student has to read part of the paragraph. The students respond almost in the same way, and as affirmative feedback we can see: 58 % totally agree and 33% agree; the responses for this evaluation are: 8% partially agree and 1% disagree. Although there are a few responses for this statement, the students and teachers agree with the perception that in small classes individual activities are performed. Fisher et al., (2003) mention that a good example of interdependence, could be each student collaborating with his/her knowledge to achieve their tasks and add more information to complete their project.

In the five classes observed it could be seen that small classes allowed teachers to carry out individual activities such as composing a short resume about their experiences in their past vacation.

Technological tools are used.



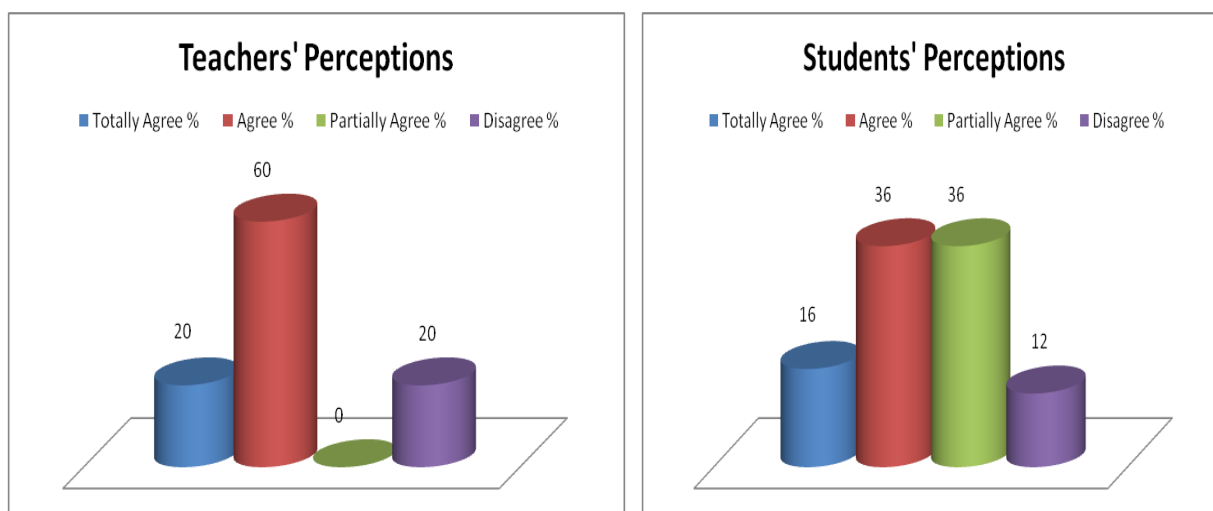
Item 14. This statement mentions the use of IT/technological resources. After the tabulation of the results as the graphics above illustrate, the teachers' responses reveal 60% (combination of totally agree and agree), while 40% disagree. Students' responses are close related: 41% (combination of totally agree and agree), and 59% (combination of partially agree with disagree) are presented. With this feedback it is possible to conclude that both teachers and students have the perception that they do not use efficiently the technological resources available in this high school.

Against to the responses and analysis mentioned, the observation shown that once a week, the students attend an audio visual session, in order to practice the four principal language skills by watching a movie or listening a song.

Brown (2007) suggested that the physical environment of the class for good learning is considered the easiest and simplest principle of classroom management, equipment is

considered one category among others, if your class has enough technology (radios, film, music), you will be surprised of the improvements shown by your students.

Didactic materials are used.



Item 15. This statement is related with the use of educational materials. The charts above clearly reflect differences in the perceptions. The teachers' responses show: 20% totally agree, 40% agree and 20% disagree, on the other hand, the students' evaluations demonstrate: 16% totally agree and 36% agree, otherwise 36% partially agree and 12% disagree.

Analyzing the percentages of the students' perceptions it is easy to understand that there is a clear division among them. Some teachers also think that it is difficult to find educational materials to be used in classroom. The observation done by the researcher demonstrated that in some subjects only the text book was used by the students.

However, the findings of this statement showed that students with higher proficiency levels in English used less didactic materials. On the contrary, students with lower proficiency level in English were required to use more didactic materials.

Brown (2007) suggested that the use of chalkboard and didactic materials, permits the teacher illustrate the class with visual input of words, charts, pictures and graphs.

Responding to the second question “What teaching strategies and resources benefit the teaching of English in small classes”, and taking account the responses to the surveys, small classes are very suitable to apply new strategies that benefit directly with the interaction and feedback among the students. Mills & Mills (1993) stated that social strategies are the most important issues because these result from a strong motivation to communicate and to learn English as a second language.

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

Table 5

Teachers’ Perceptions

N°	In classes with a small number of students,	<i>Totally agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Partially agree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
16	They are relaxed when speaking in front of their classmates.	1	20	2	40	1	20	1	20
17	They are taken into account by the teacher because they have more opportunities to participate in class.	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
18	They are motivated to participate because of the small number students.	1	20	3	60	1	20	0	0
19	They are at ease because they can healthy compete with their classmates.	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0

Author: Omar Ali Ramos Verdesoto

Source: “Letort Educational Unit”

Table 6

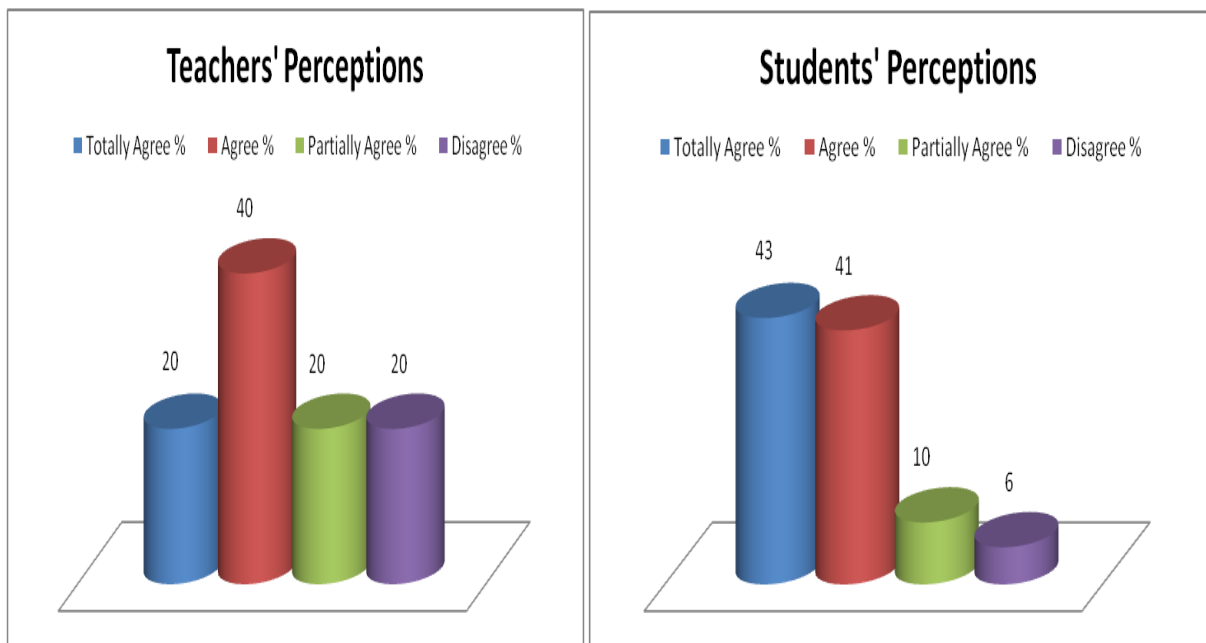
Students' Perceptions

N°	In classes with a small number of students,	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
16	I am relaxed when speaking in front of my classmates.	43	43	41	41	10	10	6	6
17	I am taken into account by the teacher because I have more opportunities to participate in class.	38	38	46	46	13	13	3	3
18	I am motivated to participate because of the small number of classmates..	29	29	44	44	24	24	3	3
19	I am at ease because I can healthy compete with my classmates.	28	28	53	53	11	11	8	8

Author: Omar Ali Ramos Verdesoto

Source: "Letort Educational Unit"

Students are relaxed when speaking in front of their classmates.



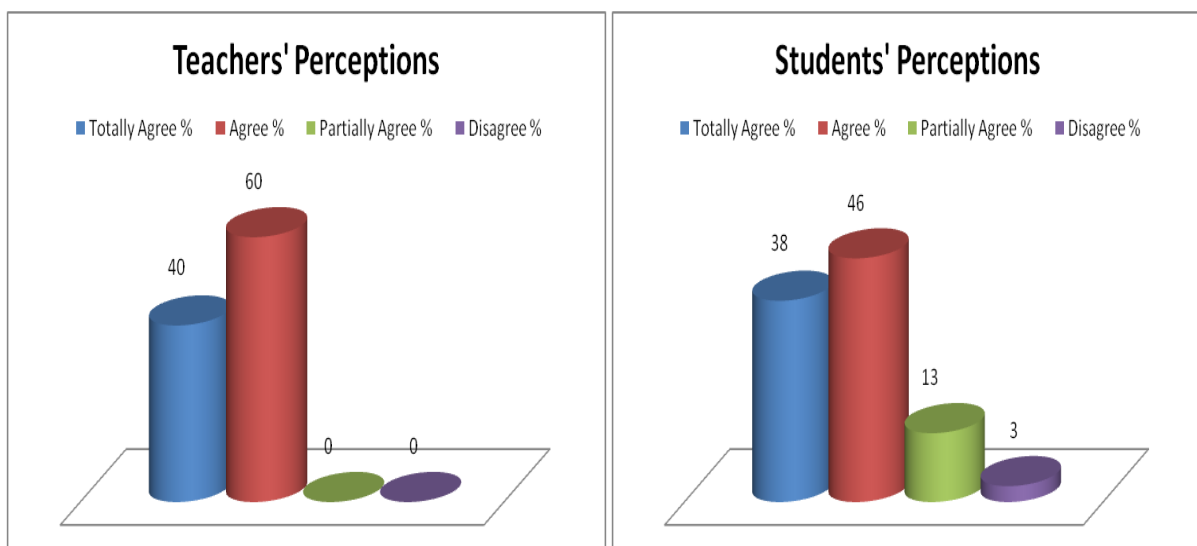
Item 16. About the statement that states if the students are relaxed when they have to talk in front of their classmates, the ample majority of the students responded in this way: 43% totally agree and 41% agree. The graphic for teachers' answers shows similarities

between positive and negative perceptions: 60% (combination of totally agree with agree) and 40% (combination of partially agree with disagree).

The students' responses can be interpreted by thinking that almost all of the students have a good level of confidence and feel very relaxed when they are interacting with the teacher or with their classmates. Small classes are always better to get confidence among students because they have a great opportunity to interact every time. These results are in accordance with Feng's study (1999), he stated that small classes are better for classroom management, perfect teacher-student, student-student interaction, more focal feedback from the teachers.

According to the class observations, it was common in the five classrooms that students felt relaxed when they were required to speak in front of the class when they had to make a presentation of the days' lesson.

Students are taken into account by the teacher because they have more opportunities to participate in class.

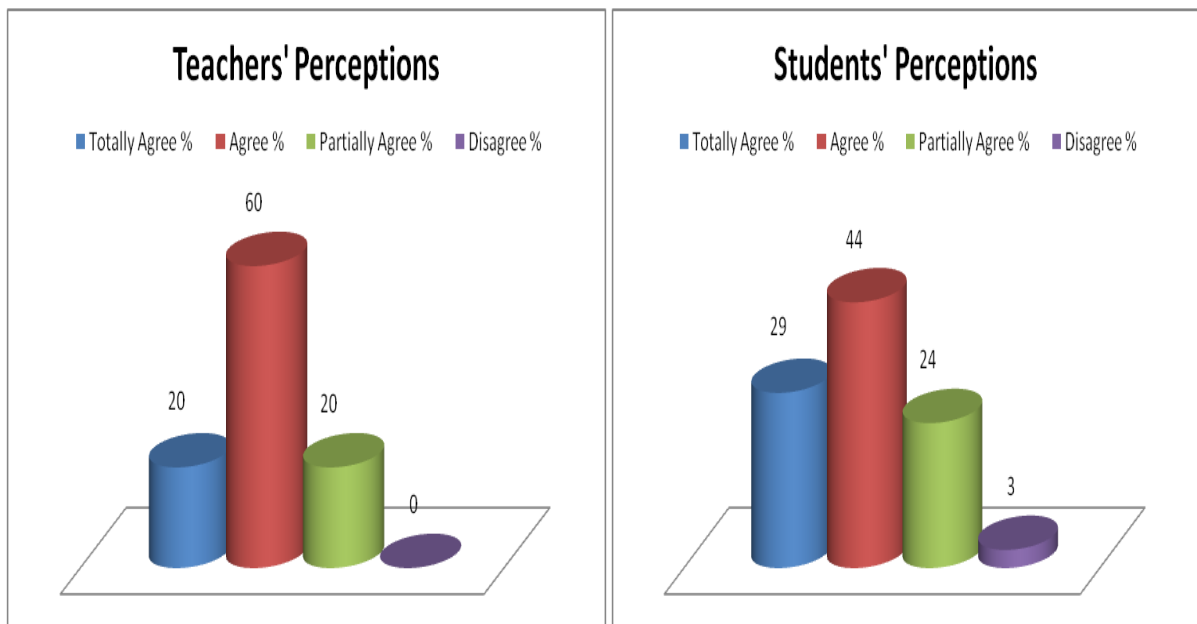


Item 17. The graphics above for the statement, which mention if the students have more opportunities to participate in class, evidence positive postures in questionnaires for

teachers and students. Teachers responded with 40% totally agree and 60% agree, testifying that the activities implemented by them in all classes, cause a great impact, encouraging the students to participate in classes. As well as the teachers' responses, the students have a similar perception about their participation in each hour class. The percentages show 38% totally agree and 46% agree; a few responses for partially agree and disagree (13% and 3% respectively) were found in this survey, but these answers do not affect the general perceptions.

The class observation confirms the findings of this study, as the students felt more confident in participating in the class when the teacher asked for, due to the small number of the student in the class. Feng (1999) states in his study that teachers prefer to teach in small classes, after all, small classes enhance the teaching and learning process and teachers' work fare, which warrants support from all educators.

They are motivated to participate because of the small number students..



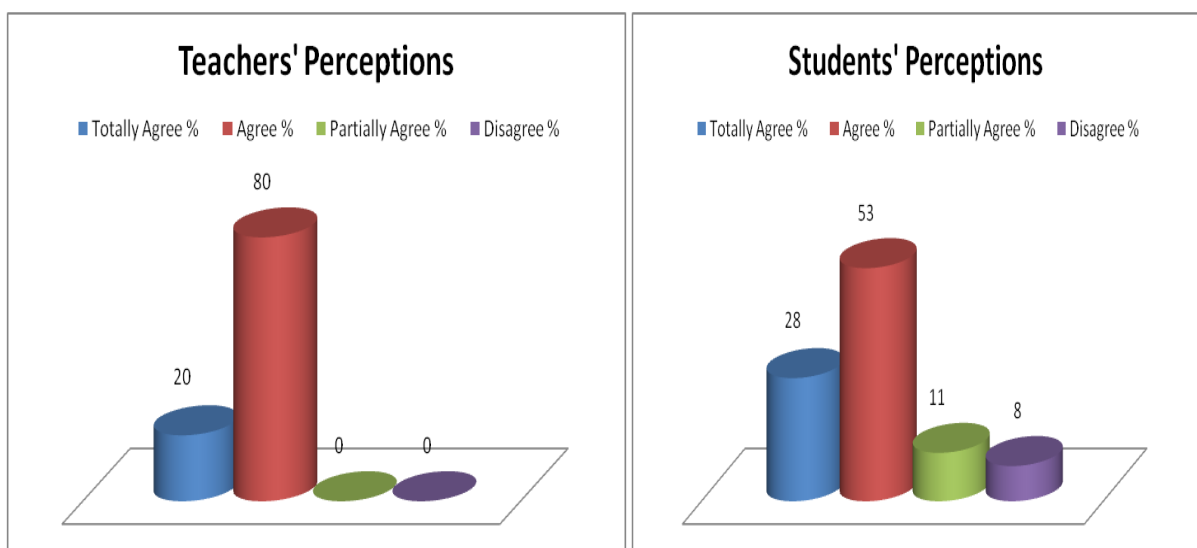
Item 18. This statement is related to the students' motivation to participate because there are a limited number of classmates per class. The graphics above again express

a great majority of positive feedback from teachers and students; teachers' table indicates 20% totally agree and 60% agree, besides 20% partially agree. Students' table shows 29% totally agree and 44% agree, in addition 27% (combination of partially agree with disagree). These results authenticate the job performed by the students in small classes when the researcher went to the school to run the qualitative approach. The observation shows us that the students have more opportunity to participate and interact with the teacher and the classmates. The pupils felt very confident and friendly with a few students in class. For this reason, their progress in ongoing classes was very evident.

Moreover, class size is an important factor which permits motivation and self-confidence in the students, less students more participating work, if the students are well motivated, they will improve their learning process.

Ballantine & Spade, (2008) mentioned that working with small classes can be advantageous, because the teacher can monitor students' performance one by one, this action creates a great students' motivation to participate in class.

They are at ease because they can healthy compete with their classmates.



Item 19. The representations above for this statement certainly show in teachers' survey that 20% totally agree and 80% agree. These results express greatly that the teachers

think that there is a fair competition in small classes. On the other hand, students' responses for the survey show: 28% totally agree and 53% agree, while 11% partially agree and 8% disagree. The results for students' survey also mean a fair competition because the students are treated equally by the teachers.

The observation demonstrated that the classes have well motivated personal, the competition between students were neat and healthy. This kind of competition improves the abilities and performances of the students.

Concluding with the question "How do students feel about learning English in small classes", it is important to mention that the students feel very comfortable in this kind of classes because they interact every time, receive a lot of feedback, and can have a clear competition with their partners. These actions are easy to get because the timetable class is enough for small classes.

D. Limitations of learning English in small classes.

Table 7

Teachers' Perceptions

N°	In classes with a small number of students:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20	There is anxiety among students because there is more control from the part of the teacher.	0	0	3	60	2	40	0	0
21	Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.	0	0	2	40	2	40	1	20

Author: Omar Ali Ramos Verdesoto

Source: "Letort Educational Unit"

Table 8

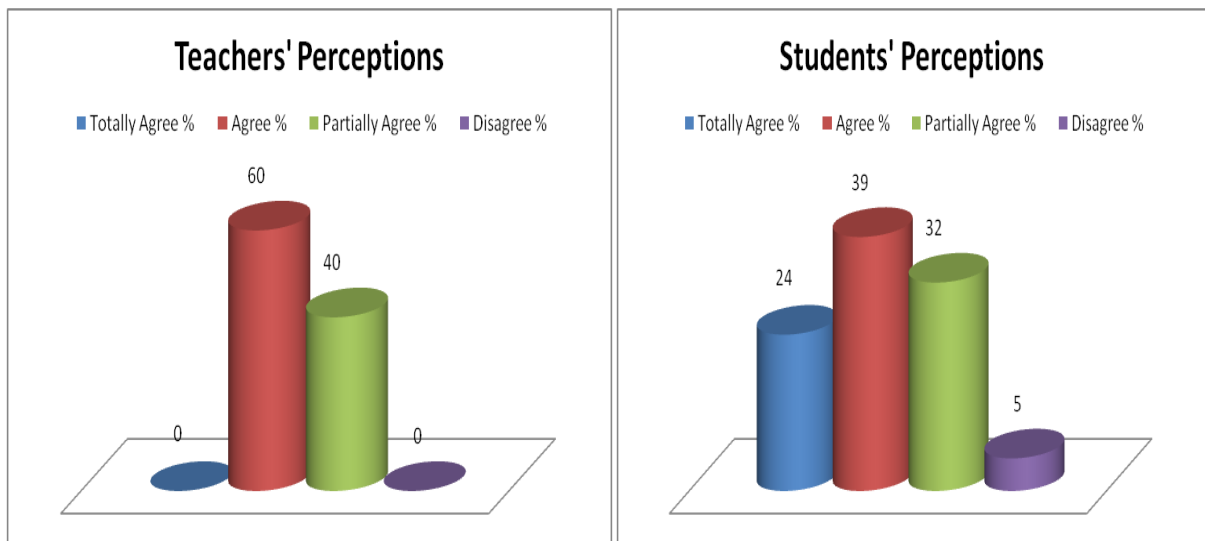
Students' Perceptions

N°	In classes with a small number of students:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20	There is anxiety among students because there is more control on the part of the teacher.	24	24	39	39	32	32	5	5
21	Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.	21	21	42	42	31	31	6	6

Author: Omar Ali Ramos Verdesoto

Source: "Letort Educational Unit"

There is anxiety among students because there is more control form the part of the teacher..



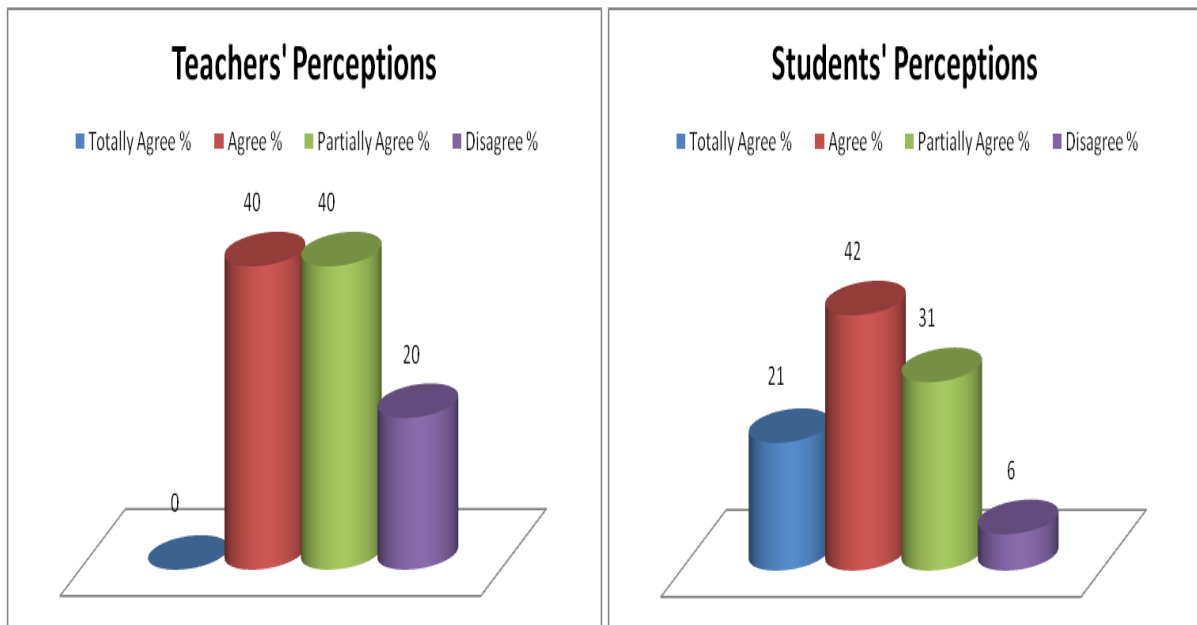
Item 20. This statement mentions whether there is anxiety among the students because of the strict control by the teachers. The graphic above for teachers' perceptions clearly indicate near division between 60% agree, and 40% partially agree. The students' perceptions are: 24% totally agree and 39% agree, on the other hand, 37% (combination of partially agree with disagree) were found.

As we can see in the graphics, both teachers and students divided their thoughts, expressing that the students feel a little bit anxiety when they are controlled by the teacher fundamentally when the pupils are taking an exam, of course, we all felt nervous at one time or another when we have to take an exam in front of the teacher

Although, the class observations demonstrated that the students felt very relaxed when they were interacting with the teacher, for example, when the students were receiving feedback, they were very attentive to receive assessment and correction. Ur (2005), mention in his study that feedback normally is given to improve the development of the students. Words like “yes”, “all right”, “perfect”, “very good”, will enhance the pupils’ confidence.

For this reason, the environment in small classes must be very relaxed and calm. Only with peaceful moments, the approach between teachers and students will encourage the pupils to do their best effort in the process of learning English.

Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.



Item 21. The purpose of this statement was to find out whether it is difficult to practice the speaking and listening skills. The graphics above show again clearly close division

between agree and partially agree. Teachers' thoughts indicate 40% agree and 40% partially agree, while students' perceptions state 42% agree and 31% partially agree.

The teachers and students responded favorably to this statement because they think in small classes with a good learning environment, it is possible to practice listening and speaking skills. The five observed classes allowed us to see that the majority of the students were able to put into practice their speaking and listening skills by reading a History book while the others were just listening. Of course, these issues depend on the activities programmed by the teacher in each session. Leo (2007), states that the time teachers monitor or interact with students makes the big difference between large and small classes.

In response to the last question research question "Are there any limitations when teaching English in small classes", the perceptions given by the students and teachers in this study respect classes with less than 20 pupils, concluded that there are a few limitations in the teaching-learning process because students responses indicate that in small classes the teacher is more able to control the whole class, leading students to feel anxious when they are asked to practice the speaking and listening skills.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that in small classes, the students' achievement is very satisfactory because there is a strong interaction between the teacher and the pupils. Students take advantage of the activities given by the teacher, moreover the students are very attentive and participate openly with their opinions and actions when the teacher requires some information.

The research demonstrates that small classes are easier to manage because it is possible to give clear instructions, and provide students with instant feedback when they require it. Also, it could be seen that in small classes interaction between teacher and students is highly increased.

This research establishes that, for small classes, the constant use of technological resources and didactic materials increase the four basic English skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Moreover, small classes allow the teacher to design group and individual activities.

In small classes, the students' sensation is that they are in a very comfortable place where it is possible to enhance the processes of learning second language, due basically to relaxed moments with classmates and teachers in an appropriate environment. In addition, they are very motivated and have self-confidence because the competition among students has high levels of proficiency gotten through pretty good feedback given by teachers.

This research confirms that the students do not feel high anxiety or fear when the classes are controlled by teachers because the activities are developed and flow calmly. For this reason, it was possible to observe good reinforcements in the main activities of the curricula like speaking and listening. The teachers understand that they must give feedback

each time when the students require. It is possible to achieve this task in small classes with less than 20 pupils.

This research indicates that small classes always have a healthy and fair learning environment conceived with perfect teacher-student and student-student interactions providing opportunities for transparent competition among students.

Recommendations

The teachers in this high school could have more training and professional development to apply more strategic linkages between the curriculum, pedagogy and classroom context. New activities can be done in small classes outside the classroom approaching the natural elements or other places around the school.

The findings of this study have shown that it is still necessary to improve the English learning/teaching process in Ecuador. For instance, it is highly recommended that teacher and school administrators are encouraged to introduce new technology resources into the classroom, such as the internet, which allows students to download musical videos. In this way they can improve their speaking and listening skills.

It is highly recommended that the students practice the four basic skills in each activity prepared by the teacher, so the school must provide to the teachers with the necessary materials and complementary resources, in order to prepare a fruitful class and suitable class according with the curricula.

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ANNEXES



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

Estimado estudiante:

Este cuestionario tiene como objetivo conocer su opinión en cuanto a la enseñanza del Inglés en clases con grupos de 20 estudiantes o menos.

La información que usted brindará a continuación se utilizará únicamente con fines académicos e investigativos.

Datos Informativos:

Nombre de la institución:			
Tipo de institución:	Pública () Privada ()		
	Escuela ()	Colegio ()	Instituto ()
Ciudad:			

Instrucción: Marque con una X según su criterio.

Estrategia: Luego de leer cada ítem, le rogamos contestar de acuerdo a la siguiente escala de referencia.

Muy Satisfactorio
Satisfactorio
Poco satisfactorio
Nada satisfactorio

A. Beneficios de enseñar y aprender Inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes.

	En clases con pocos estudiantes:	Muy Satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
1.	Las actividades que se realizan permiten practicar lo aprendido.				
2.	Los estudiantes están atentos y participan en las actividades desarrolladas en clase.				
3.	Los estudiantes se concentran mejor porque no hay mucho ruido en el salón de clase.				
4.	El espacio de la clase permite desarrollar adecuadamente las actividades asignadas por el profesor.				
5.	El profesor brinda una retroalimentación adecuada				
6.	Existe interacción entre los estudiantes.				

7.	Existe interacción entre el profesor y los estudiantes.				
8.	El profesor recuerda el nombre de los estudiantes.				

B. Estrategias y recursos que favorecen la enseñanza del Inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes.

Nº	En clases con pocos estudiantes:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
9.	Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de escucha.				
10.	Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades habla.				
11.	Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de lectura.				
12.	Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de escritura.				
13.	Se utilizan actividades grupales.				
14.	Se utilizan actividades individuales.				
15.	Se utilizan recursos tecnológicos.				
16.	Se utilizan materiales didácticos.				

C. Opinión acerca de cómo se siente al aprender Inglés en una clase donde hay pocos estudiantes.

Nº	En clases con pocos estudiantes me siento:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
17.	relajado al momento de hablar frente a mis compañeros.				
18.	tomado en cuenta porque tengo mayor oportunidad de participar en la clase.				
19.	motivado a participar porque somos pocos compañeros en la clase.				
20.	a gusto porque puedo competir sanamente con otros estudiantes.				

D. Limitaciones al aprender Inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes.

	En clases con pocos estudiantes:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
21.	Existe ansiedad entre los estudiantes debido a que hay mayor control por parte del profesor.				
22.	Se dificulta practicar las habilidades de habla y escucha.				

¡Gracias por su colaboración!

INSTRUMENTOS



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

Estimado docente:

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Ciudad:			

Instrucción: Marque con una X según su criterio.

Estrategia: Luego de leer cada ítem, le rogamos contestar de acuerdo a la siguiente escala de referencia.

Muy Satisfactorio
Satisfactorio
Poco satisfactorio
Nada satisfactorio

A. Beneficios de enseñar y aprender Inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes.

	En clases con pocos estudiantes:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
1.	Se facilita diseñar actividades que permitan al estudiante poner en práctica lo aprendido.				
2.	Los estudiantes están atentos y participan en las actividades desarrolladas en clase.				
3.	El espacio de la clase permite que las actividades diseñadas por usted se desarrollen adecuadamente.				
4.	Se puede brindar una retroalimentación adecuada.				
5.	Se realizan actividades que permitan mayor interacción entre los estudiantes.				
6.	Existe mayor interacción entre el profesor y los estudiantes.				
7.	Es fácil para usted recordar el nombre de los estudiantes.				

B. Estrategias y recursos que favorecen la enseñanza del Inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes.

N°	En clases con pocos estudiantes se facilita:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
23.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de escucha.				
24.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades habla.				
25.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de lectura.				
26.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de escritura.				
27.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades grupales.				
28.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades individuales.				
29.	Utilizar recursos tecnológicos.				
30.	Utilizar materiales didácticos.				

C. Opinión acerca de cómo se sienten sus estudiantes al aprender Inglés en una clase donde hay pocos estudiantes.

N°	En clases con pocos estudiantes los estudiantes se sienten:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
31.	Relajados al momento de hablar frente a sus compañeros.				
32.	Tomados en cuenta porque tienen mayor oportunidad de participar en la clase.				
33.	Motivados a participar porque son pocos compañeros en la clase.				
34.	A gusto porque pueden competir sanamente con otros estudiantes.				

D. Limitaciones al enseñar Inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes.

	En clases con pocos estudiantes:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
35.	Existe ansiedad entre los estudiantes debido a hay mayor control por parte del profesor				
36.	Se dificulta practicar las habilidades de habla y escucha.				

¡Gracias por su colaboración!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

HOJA DE OBSERVACIÓN

INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA:	
FECHA:	
CURSO/NIVEL:	

1. Se realizan actividades que permiten poner en práctica lo aprendido.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

2. Todos los estudiantes están atentos y participan en las actividades desarrolladas en clase.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

3. El espacio de la clase permite desarrollar adecuadamente las actividades asignadas por el profesor.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

4. El profesor brinda una retroalimentación adecuada debido al poco número de estudiantes en la clase.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

5. Existe interacción entre los estudiantes.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

6. Existe interacción entre el profesor y los estudiantes.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

7. El profesor recuerda el nombre de los estudiantes.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

8. Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar la habilidad de escucha.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

9. Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar la habilidad de habla.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

10. Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar la habilidad de lectura.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

11. Se realizan actividades que permiten practicar la habilidad de escritura.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

12. Se utilizan actividades grupales.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

13. Se utilizan actividades individuales.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

14. Se utilizan recursos tecnológicos.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

15. Se utilizan materiales didácticos.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

16. Los estudiantes se muestran relajados al momento de hablar frente a sus compañeros.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

17. Los estudiantes tienen mayor oportunidad de expresarse.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

18. Los estudiantes se muestran interesados en participar en las actividades realizadas en clase.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

19. Los estudiantes pueden competir sanamente con sus compañeros.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

20. Los estudiantes se muestran relajados porque no hay mucho ruido en el salón de clase.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

21. Los estudiantes se muestran tensos debido a que existe mayor control por parte del profesor.

SI () NO ()

Notas:

22. Se dificulta realizar habilidades de habla y escucha.

SI () NO ()

Notas: