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Teachers and students' perceptions of teaching English in small classes in  
Ecuador

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

AUTOR: Grossenbacher, André Cosmos

DIRECTOR: Vargas Saritama, Alba Bitalina, Mgs

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APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

Magister.

Alba Bitalina Vargas Saritama

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 Grossenbacher André Cosmos, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, Abril de 2015

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Mgs. Alba Bitalina Vargas Saritama

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“Yo, Grossenbacher André Cosmos declaro ser autor del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: ”Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small clases in Ecuador” de la titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Alba Bitalina Vargas Saritama 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.

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Grossenbacher André Cosmos

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, especially to my wife Bachi and our two beautiful girls, whose love and care supported me throughout this process and gave me the strength to finish it successfully. I also dedicate this research to my mother and mother-in-law who did whatever was needed so I was able to fully focus on this paper.

André Grossenbacher

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I thank the teachers and staff at the institution that allowed me to conduct this research. In addition, I must send a heart-felt “Thank you” for the patience and unerring guidance of Mgs. Alba Vargas.

André

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## ABSTRACT

This research addressed the topic “Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador”. This study was initiated to investigate the benefits, strategies, resources, sentiments and limitations found within small Ecuadorian English classes according to teachers, students and observations.

The samples taken in this research were from an English language institute located in Loja, Ecuador. The sample population was comprised of 63 students ranging in age from 13 to 23 and 5 English teachers throughout 5 different classes. The pupils and instructors were surveyed using a questionnaire containing 22 statements divided into four sections (8 items focusing on benefits of small classes, 8 items focusing on strategies and resources used in small classes, 4 items of sentiment and 2 items addressing limitations in small classes).

The obtained results were analyzed using the quantitative and qualitative methods. It was concluded that students in small classes are able to effectively practice the English language through the implementation of various activities.

**KEY WORDS:** English teaching, small classes, teachers’ and students’ perceptions.

## RESUMEN

Este proyecto de investigación abordó el tema "Las percepciones que existen entre estudiantes y maestros en la enseñanza del idioma inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes en Ecuador". El proyecto fue iniciado para investigar los beneficios, estrategias, recursos, sentimientos y limitaciones encontradas en clases de inglés con pocos estudiantes en colegios ecuatorianos según los maestros, estudiantes y observaciones realizadas.

Las muestras tomadas fueron de un Instituto de Inglés ubicado en Loja, Ecuador. La muestra fue compuesta por 63 estudiantes que van en edades de 13 a 23 años, 5 profesores de inglés a lo largo de 5 clases diferentes. Los alumnos y profesores tomaron un cuestionario que contiene 22 interrogantes divididas en cuatro secciones (8 interrogantes centrándose en los beneficios de las clases pequeñas, 8 interrogantes centrándose en las estrategias y los recursos utilizados en clases pequeñas, 4 interrogantes acerca de lo que sienten y 2 abordan las limitaciones de las clases pequeñas).

Los resultados se analizaron utilizando los métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos. Llegando a la conclusión que los estudiantes en clases pequeñas son capaces de practicar eficazmente el idioma inglés a través de la implementación de diversas actividades.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Enseñanza de Inglés, clases pequeñas, percepciones de profesores y estudiantes.



## INTRODUCTION

Education in Ecuador has experienced a turbulent ascent over the centuries. Originally in the 1800's the Catholic Church was responsible for the educational system in Ecuador but many changes have taken place in part to people like Vicente Rocafuerte, Juan Leon Mera and Belasco Ibarra. There have been constitutional amendments and legislative movements executed with the purpose of improving the educational system and allowing everyone regardless of race, sex or disability to receive an education. Knowing that education is a complex entity, the Ecuadorian government has accepted the technical advice of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), OEA (Organizacion de Estados Americanos), USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and the World Bank to improve the level of education.

Today we find ourselves living in an era of globalization where the unifying language is English and those not able to communicate with it are being left behind. Once again the Ecuadorian government is acting proactively to improve the next generation by teaming up with the University of Mississippi to implement the "Go Teacher" program which is allowing numerous Ecuadorian English teachers to receive additional training and scholarships to go to the United States to become better teachers. The public Ecuadorian school system is seeing a helping hand from the Peace Corps volunteers who are teaching English on two year rotations and the Fulbright Scholarship is being offered to English teachers. Regardless of how much has been done to improve the educational system, especially the level of English, students are leaving the secondary national school system with 65% in English according to SENESCYT (National Secretariat for Higher Education, Science and Technology).

To fully understand the complexity of this issue many facets must be investigated. This paper addresses issues of learning and teaching in small Ecuadorian English classes. The purpose of this

research is to better understand if small classes are more beneficial than larger classes according to students and teachers. The investigation was isolated into four areas: benefits of small classes in respect to teaching and learning, beneficial strategies and resources used during the instruction process of small English classes, student sentiments of the learning process in small classes and limitations of teaching and learning in small English classes. The relevance of this research will reveal new data of not only how students view the small class environment but also the teachers viewpoints of teaching in small classes.

There has been previous research into class size before which relates to this study. Harfitt (2012) set out to explore the differences in learning process between small and large classes in Hong Kong high schools. The driving idea was that if there was a reduction in the number of students in a class, there would be a reduction in learning stress. It was concluded that small classes provided the appropriate learning environment that created high quality learning more often than large classes. This study was limited by only focusing on four cases (four teachers and eight classes) and any conclusions made were tentative at best.

Sanogo & Gilman (1994) compared data obtained from the Tennessee's STAR and Indiana's Prime Time Projects in order to further understand if there was a direct correlation between student achievement and class size. The results of this investigation conclusively determined that small classes were advantageous over larger classes in respect to resulting standardized tests.

Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein & Clare (2003) conducted research in the United Kingdom to determine if class size had an effect upon students' academic achievement. Approximately 10,000 primary aged children took part in the research with the results showing that large groups were less effective in the educational environment.

The above mentioned studies justify the importance of discovering the perceptions of the teachers and students during the process of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador.

The beneficiaries of this research are mainly the students, however teachers will also benefit from data obtained. The resulting data will contribute new information about small class limitations and students sentiments of small classes. This research has opened the way for further investigation into small class limitations and students emotional status in small classes vs. big classes.

The research was limited by the fact that only 63 students and 5 teachers were surveyed. Even though the resulting information was consistent, it remains a small sample and in future investigations the sample population should be broadened.

## METHOD

### *Setting and Participants*

This investigation was conducted at a private language institute located in Loja, Ecuador. The population sample consisted of 63 students ranging in age from 13 to 23 and their level of study was a B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language. In addition there were 5 English teachers surveyed, 4 of whom were native English speakers.

### *Procedures*

The initial step was to research previous literature related to this study. There were two different sources that the literature was derived from which were books and journal articles. The information was found on the Internet, Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) physical and virtual libraries. In particular Google Books and databases were exceptionally helpful, like ERIC and dspace.

The instrument used to gather field information was a questionnaire see Annex A) that included 22 statements. It was divided into four sections: 8 statements about benefits of small classes, 8 statements about strategies and resources in small classes, 4 statements about feelings in small classes and 2 statements about limitations of small classes. To apply this questionnaire, first authorization was granted from the administration of an English language institute located in Loja, Ecuador and then it was arranged for a convenient day with the teacher of each class. After arriving at the class, the instructions were given in Spanish so there was no misunderstanding about what was expected from the students. The investigator read each of the questions and allowed enough time for pupils to respond to them. The same questionnaire was also given to the teachers (see Annex B) with similar instructions. Finally, during the class observations the researcher filled out observation sheets (see

Annex C) and took notes for later review. The methods used for this research were quantitative and qualitative.

After completing the questionnaires the information was calculated manually and entered into a spreadsheet. At this point the data was converted into percentages for analysis of the four sections queried. Results were double checked for accuracy before the analysis began.

Before and during the analysis of the information gathered from the surveys and observations there were different aspects that were kept in mind. The first aspect to remember was the purpose of the study while maintaining objectivity. The second aspect was to isolate each of the four sections being analyzed (benefits, resources, emotions and limitations). Thirdly, the results from the Likert scale ranging from “totally agree” to “disagree” were interpreted in respect to the question and analyzed using percentages to identify trends resulting in the researcher arriving at conclusions and recommendations. Finally, large variations or conflicting data needed to be analyzed with scrutiny to understand its correlation to the whole.

## DISSCUSSION

### Literature Review

The global language has been set as English resulting in 25% of the worlds' population having the ability to communicate with it usefully according to Tsedal Neeley from Harvard Business School. With the understanding that Ecuador is no longer in a state of economic crisis but in reality is a flourishing emerging market in South America, it is logical that the administrative bodies are strongly encouraging the implementation of English upon pupils to make sure that not only this generation fares well but so does the country. In fact as of early 2014 there were 5 American universities entered into agreements with the Ecuadorian government to train Ecuadorian teachers in the field of English reported by Jaclyn Ambrecht who is associated with the Borgen Project.

More than two decades have passed since the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education made English a mandatory subject in secondary schools, however pupils are still leaving high school with inadequate English skills. Regardless of the new educational reforms, teacher training and international programs the students are not producing at the appropriate level.

The factors of the teaching-learning process vary wildly, however one variable that this research is going to investigate is small classes and the impact perceived by those involved.

#### *Managing Learning*

The learning process is often referred to as a natural cycle that we are all exposed to from day to day activities since early childhood. However, the flipside to this natural occurring phenomenon is the more structured learning that we find in the classroom environment. In order to teach effectively many aspects must be considered, but a focus on instructions, feedback and timing are paramount. There is a skill set that must be acquired by instructors in order to effectively manage the learning

process and in the following paragraphs some of these issues will be discussed. The skills that compose learning management are truly the foundation of any teachers' success.

Both Ridnour (2006) and Ur (1991) agree that instructions must be made clear from the beginning of class in order to avoid confusion. Ridnour (2006) elaborated upon this idea by claiming that instructions given poorly are a major source of problems in the teaching environment. By giving a class clear instructions from the beginning the teacher is essentially eliminating an immediate problem and saving time. In addition Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) claim that if teachers do not give students handouts or other material before explaining the task, the instructions are more likely to be followed accurately.

Students need to understand their errors in order to improve, and this is done through evaluating the situation and giving constructive feedback. Harmer (2007) speaks about a variety of techniques on how to give feedback to students where it does not impede the students' production of the language. Feedback is categorized as either explicit or implicit according to Harmer (2007). Depending on the situation, the teacher may stop and correct the student in the moment ensuring they know that a mistake has been made (explicit feedback). This form of feedback depends on the judgment of the teacher to determine whether the error is relevant or not. Implicit feedback may take the form of note taking by the teacher but no immediate response to the student is given. This is often done during speaking activities because the interruption by the teacher would be counter productive. Additionally, Brookmart (2008) states that one of the most powerful teaching tools available is feedback. One of the obstacles for teachers is mastering how to properly assess feedback in a productive manner. Gower, Philips & Walters (1995) delve deeper into the issue of feedback and focus their attention on accuracy and fluency. It is important to decide and plan activities with the expectation of students becoming as fluent as possible or using the language accurately.

Another important skill for class management is timing. It is an important skill that teachers must obtain as classes are planned out and organized on this unit of measurement in the daily, weekly and yearly lesson plans. Santrock (2010) points out that time management allows the teaching process to be more productive with positive results by following a timed plan. This approach will reduce stress upon the teacher and students as well. Gower, Philips & Walters (1995) have identified that surprisingly much less teaching takes place in the average classroom due to punctuality, disruptions, topic transition, late starts etc. The resulting objective is to overcome the amount of unused time and broaden the amount of minutes disposable for learning which is referred to as allocated time. The next step is to effectively use the time allocated to address the specific tasks to be learned. Proper time allocation is only one of the many responsibilities that teachers must understand and master in order to successfully manage academic learning.

*Teacher-student, and student-student interaction*

Both Harmer (1998) and Carrillo (2011) maintain that the teacher-student interaction is important in the classroom. Establishing a teacher-student rapport is one of the first obstacles in establishing a class and this will allow for a harmonious atmosphere. Harmer (1998) makes an emphasis on using the students in a process known as “peer help”. The driving force behind this theory is that the teacher pairs or groups strong students with weak ones where the students explain the ideas to the others rather than the teacher repeating the material, thereby reducing stress upon the teacher-student relationship. This is a method that must be executed with great care as to not alienate the students who do not understand the material and to not empower the knowledgeable students to the point of an oppressive role. There is a fine balance where the teacher is slightly removed yet ensuring the students are interacting in a productive manner. Harmer (1998) continues the idea of student-teacher interaction by claiming that organizing pupils to do a variety of activities is one of the



most important aspects a teacher must perform. The true emphasis is placed on students being able to learn as much as possible from any given activity. This means that teachers must make the objective of every activity clear because if the students do not understand what they are supposed to do, it is just a waste of time which may lead to chaos. Even if the instructions are understood, it is still the responsibility of the instructor to motivate students to engage and participate. The overall view is that teachers must organize activities so that students understand the objectives, are engaged and are prepared to use the new information in a rewarding and enjoyable exercise.

Gower, Philips, Walter ( 2005) are also in agreement with Harmer (1998) and Carrillo (2011), however they have gone on to identify a different issue which is using the communicative approach in the classroom with authentic language. It is important that pupils avoid using their first language and focus on the use of the target language. This teacher-student interaction revolves around the use of authentic language with the teacher as the source. The key is that students should react naturally to what the teacher says and this is done by the students picking up the expressions and everyday language that is spoken by the teacher. This creates a bond between teacher and student where they are communicating in a foreign language. This bond is the base where a good relationship is built and students desire to continue the learning process because the interaction is rewarding. In these situations we are acknowledging that teacher talk is required for learning a language inductively. Useful expressions, calling on students by name and praising students is a wonderful way of injecting natural useful language that can be learned and repeated by students. This type of interaction between student and teacher results in a better relationship and a functional use of the language. A supplementary idea is to have students listen to real listening and have them react to it with the L2 reasonably. Injecting anecdotes or jokes will also bring humor and fun to the classroom while students widen their lexical range.

Carrillo (2011) brings a very human aspect to the teacher-student relationship demanding that teachers must be experts on students and understanding their development in the basic dimensions: cognitive, physical, emotional and social. It is paramount that active teachers have a working understanding of what to look for in respect to students that are either achieving above average or those that are being left behind. In addition, the teacher must know how to meet the demands of the exceptional learners' needs as well as those with learning disabilities such as ADD and other communicative disorders. The teachers must work with specialists to afford all students the ability to be successful.

### *Class size*

The theme of class size has been the issue of much research which has focused on the controversial issue of large classes vs. small classes. The size of a class is defined by the number of students actively attending the course. The historic argument has been that large classes have more drawbacks than small classes do and as a result students do not receive as good an education in large classes.

Byram (2004) investigated what is considered to be large classes and consequently came to the realization that the size of a class does not automatically translate to a poorer quality of teaching and learning. Instead of focusing immediate negative attention on the number of students, Byram (2004) gave attention to the components of the class such as teaching methods, organizing interactions, individual attention and feedback. In essence, the quality of education is not unconditionally tied to the number of students but is strongly influenced by the teachers themselves. If the perception of the teacher is that the class is too large, this negative focus will be realized with a teacher that cannot or will not use correct methodology to control and teach a class. It has been hinted at that a combination of methodologies is necessary to maintain classes containing a large

number of students. It is important that the teachers do not become overwhelmed with having to correct the students' work, so activities must be organized where the instructor may assess students quickly and efficiently. He continued to point out that what is considered "large" is open to interpretation as this varies from country to country. For example in the UK a large class could be defined as 30-40 students whereas in China a normal class is composed of 50 -60 students. Class size is relative to what one is accustomed to. Byram (2004) does not overtly state that large classes are a wonderful idea but that all sizes of classes can be managed successfully and this idea has been supported by several studies in China.

Ballantine & Spade (2008) have concluded that classes containing less than 20 students are beneficial in the early grades and extra gains are immediately realized. Small classes have more of an impact in the primary education but the advantages carry on through high school. Their results applied equally to boys and girls. The research specifically stated that the classes were well planned and adequately funded which relates to Byram's (2004) research that implied a large influence of success depends on the teacher.

Scrivener (2005) shares similar results as Byram (2004) and Ballantine & Spade (2008) in respect to the objectivity of class size. Scrivener (2005) states that some teachers must work with an excess of 100 students in one class setting which is not an unusual statement but he offers up why a numerous class is difficult to manage. He claims that with large classes it is found that neither students nor teachers have the ability to easily move about the classroom making it nearly impossible to rearrange the seating of students for different activities. In addition, personal contact is lost and the primary reason put forth is that eye contact is limited or lost with the inability to equally give attention to each pupil resulting in a less unified classroom environment. This type of large class environment attracts students who have no interest to learn to hide away in the back while the people

in the front receive the attention of the instructor. The teacher is left with only one option, which is to lecture, adding to the monotony of an uneventful class.

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

It has been established that there are many fundamental differences between small classes and large classes. Due to the amount of pupils in different classes, teachers have adjusted their teaching techniques, strategies and activities for smaller classes to become more effective.

Lewis & Hill (1997) suggest to use teacher-to-teacher (T-T), teacher-to-class (T-C), teacher-to-student (T-S), student-to-teacher (S-T) and student-to-student (S-S) activities to learn the new material. It is implied that in a small class it is easier to change activities quickly and keep the attention of the class. The majority of all activities put forth by the authors, requires using the material in context first, teaching the material and then using the new material in an activity. Another strategy to use with small classes, is to use the seating arrangement to the teachers' advantage. For example, when giving a lesson have the students in orderly rows but when doing group activities have the students physically move the seating arrangement as to effectively facilitate the teaching-learning process. In small classes re-arranging the class can be done quickly and in a timely manner to afford efficiency to the learning process.

Herrell & Jordan (2012) explain in detail how to maintain small classes. Dealing with smaller classes presents a variety of positive and negative aspects that teachers must address. In order for teachers to cope with smaller classes the authors presented a check list of things to have ready. Often in reduced size classes activities and lessons finish quicker than in larger classes. In case this happens it is suggested to have ready "fillers" such as games or puzzles. It is helpful to choose activities that do not need materials or complicated instructions, for example: 20 questions, can't say yes or no, fact or fiction, chain fairytale, draw the picture etc. Most of these activities can be adapted

to reinforce any grammar or vocabulary exercise. For instance if the class was learning new vocabulary about the body, the teacher could try a game of hangman. All that would be needed is a marker and a whiteboard. It is a fun way to practice what has been learned, promotes competition among students and fills in the rest of the class. Another simple yet effective “filler” is to review often. In this instance it is more academic rather than a fun activity. Once again the materials needed would be the material recently taught and students’ material such as their books and notebooks. By reviewing often the students will be better prepared for exams and experience less test stress. Other ways of changing the small class environment is to exchange some students with other classes. By inviting students from other classrooms in, the class dynamic can be changed which can increase the motivation for students to learn or review. It was suggested to pair higher level students with lower level students in order to give students the opportunity to teach. The small class will benefit greatly from asking for feedback from the students. The idea of a suggestion box creates anonymity and opportunity for teachers to improve different aspects of the class. In addition to the above mentioned ways to cope with small classes there were several activities suggested for small classes such as: using English newspapers in class, playing English music in class, storytelling, chain writing, role-playing, board games, online lessons, films, class excursions and guest speakers. Using English newspapers (or printed online articles) about recent events allows for a wide range of new vocabulary to be learned and known grammar to be read in context. The use of popular English music played in class is a good way to end a lesson by teaching pronunciation, intonation, introduce expressions and to enjoy a few minutes with the students. Regardless of what is being taught, it is suggested that teachers keep a variety of interesting activities on hand to help reinforce students’ knowledge and use every minute of class time.

*Learning environment in small classes*

Harmer (1998) specifies that smaller classes benefit from different seating arrangements such as circles or horseshoes. The environment is different in this setting because it breaks away from the standard rows of desks and places the students around the teacher. This form of seating arrangement is beneficial for games, a variety of activities or any kind of open space that is required in the middle of the room. In addition it creates a more personal atmosphere where students and teachers are able to build better relationships while sharing and learning. In both the horseshoe and circle arrangements the board, overhead projector or whatever other type of presentation can still be made and seen by all in the room. One of the underlying ideas behind this is that by breaking out of a normal routine the students will remain engaged and interested in the class.

Ballentine & Spade (2008) mention similar seating situations in their works as did Harmer (1998), but have gone on to focus specifically on the conduct of the students in both large and small classrooms instead of the teacher. Poor discipline combined with classroom management problems, are key areas that hinder instruction. The authors theorize that these problems still exist in smaller classrooms but are less obvious due to the size of the class. After comparing the large and small classrooms it was deduced that teachers in reduced size classes experience less stress. This results with the teachers being able to give pupils more attention during the learning experience. It is noted that small instructional groups within the class can also create an ambiance where learning is not as competitive and pupils are emboldened to form supportive relationships with one another. The most important detail coming from Ballentine & Spade (2008) is that the environment in the small classroom is structurally different from the large class environment. In the reduced size classes there is a significantly reduced amount of time dedicated to classroom management and more time focused on instruction. This resulted in pupils working at higher levels, teachers are able to give more support and students have better relationships with each other.

The perception that small classes are superior to large classes is a long standing controversy. For decades there have been intellectuals researching the inner workings of classrooms of various sizes. Both students and teachers have been interviewed and observed in order to better understand the dynamics of a class but specifically that of the small class. Prior investigations into this debate have been executed by several different researchers and it is important to review these studies in order to have a better understanding of the situation.

Harfitt (2012) conducted research on a small scale in Hong Kong to determine if and how it could be possible to ease or pacify the stress felt by students acquiring foreign language skills by reducing the number of students in the classroom.

The methodology in this case sample is unique in the sense that it did not just randomly pick teachers instructing large classes and small classes, however, specifically isolated a teacher in a large classroom environment and a small one. Data was collected by interviewing the same teacher on a variety of occasions (total of 4 teachers) and individual interviews with all 231 students. In all, 78 lessons were observed in both environments.

The students reported results in a mature and confident manner about their experiences in small classes claiming that it produced a sense of security within the community of the classroom. In addition, pupils' fears of negative peer-evaluation seemed to diminish as well as that of teacher criticism. Confidence was boosted in respect to participating in class and these reports were verified by the observers' notes.

In conclusion, this study hints at valuable insights into language learning can being provided by the students own voice. The research data shows that the students' anxiety can be diminished in a reduced size class setting.

Harfitt (2012) executed a research study of secondary schools in Hong Kong to understand the perceptions of English teachers when presented with large and small classes conducted at the same grade level. In addition, it was sought out to determine the differences between practices and perceptions of the same teacher, in the same grade.

The methodology was conducted using the qualitative method to collect data from 22 semi-structured interviews stemming from three different female teachers located at three different schools. In addition there were 48 lessons observed. This was a multiple case study approach directed at expanding upon theories of class size. In this study a “case” was comprised of one teacher instructing a large and a small class of similar abilities.

The teachers all responded in a positive manner revealing that the benefits included less classroom management problems, a better understanding of students and genuinely more opportunities to teach the class. Surprisingly two of the three teachers did not change their pedagogy from large to small classes. By using the same techniques in similar classes and not changing how they operated the results were still more positive than in the larger classes.

In summary, further longitudinal studies are needed in order to understand the reality and details of the classroom. These types of studies would permit investigators to record important moments from instructors to move them into a better understanding of their teaching practices. These further studies would also allow researchers to distinguish the fine differences of successful small classes and larger less successful classes.

Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein & Clare (2003) undertook a two-step study where they attempted to verify if the students’ academic achievement was affected by the class size and secondly to investigate the relationship between processes inside the classroom and class size. The method used to gain data from this research was to follow the same 10,000 primary students for three years.



Random selection of schools were chosen through the local school system and yet all the children enrolled were included in the study. The schools were comprised of a wide variety of social backgrounds located in urban, suburban and rural areas.

The resulting data indicated that the size of a class and the size of groups within classes were connected. With classes in excess of 25 students there was a greater chance of a student ending up in a group of students of 7-10. Qualitative analysis demonstrated that the educational environment was less effective in larger groups. The resulting large classes had large groups which left teachers with the perceptions that larger groups with children of this age had a negative effect on the quality of teaching the students received. Some teachers reported that it was group size rather than class size that had a more direct impact on teaching and classroom management. Most commonly the results are grade oriented where in this study it was made abundantly clear that consideration should be given to the management of in class groupings.

In conclusion, the first years of schooling are impressively impacted by the class size. These results have been similar to that seen in the STAR project and confirmed by both experimental and non-experimental research designs.

Konstantopoulo & Sun (2013) designed a research project with the purpose of determining if reducing class size is simply enough to result in a positive change in student results. This idea again amplified to magnify the question, is merely changing the amount of students in a class enough to improve achievement scores.

Another purpose of the study was to focus on how teachers modify their teaching. The method used to gather data was to first identify how many classes there were which was done by tabulating the number of schools with however many classes there were and then sorting by small and regular size classes. The classes were monitored and given a standardized test at the end of the year call the SAT

(Stanford Achievement Test). Finally the results were separated by large and small classes to determine differences.

The results indicated that throughout all grades there was a systematic evidence of effective teaching in smaller classes. Both reading and math skills were noticeably better achieved in smaller classes

In conclusion, an overwhelming amount of data indicates that teacher effects in early grades are significant in both reading and mathematical achievement. The teachers' effects were more pronounced in smaller classes rather than regular sized classes. There were indicators that some teachers changed their teaching approach in the classroom when dealing with small classes but this was not the case with all teachers creating an additional variability in the outcome of student achievement.

Din (1999) research provocatively approached the subject of class size with four purposes in mind. The first factor addressed the question of what type of factor is class size? Secondly searching out the benefits of having small classes in schools. Thirdly, identify the role that teachers and students play in large classes to make teaching effective. Finally, to understand the perception of how Chinese school teachers view these issues.

The method that was used in this research was the analytic method using a random survey in a rural Chinese school district composed of 132 schools and 41,200 students. This research identifies a class with more than 50 students as large, a class with 30 or fewer students as small.

The resulting data was collected from surveys sent out to rural Chinese teachers. Unfortunately the return rate was only 55%. The teachers perceived a class with 45 to 50 students as a small class and anything larger than 50 students to be a large class. 54 of the 55 teachers who

participated in the study indicated that they preferred to teach small classes and the 55<sup>th</sup> teacher said “It does not matter to me.”

The research concluded that Chinese teachers in rural areas do not acknowledge a relationship between student achievement and class size. However, these same teachers did believe that smaller classes allowed for easier classroom management, better student-teacher interaction, individualized attention to students and a reduction in the overall workload. There is a strong belief that competition promotes learning in large classes among the students.

Sanogo & Gilman (1994) conducted comparative research using the Tennessee’s STAR program and Indiana’s Prime Time projects as the selected data. These two projects were some of the first major studies to investigate the results of large and small classes. Sanogo & Gilman (1994) set out to determine if there were any contradictions between the STAR and Prime Time research work to further the insight into class size issues.

The method employed to compare the above mentioned programs was to read the articles and reports for background information and gather any other data that was relevant. The design and methodologies of the programs were discussed, examined and interpreted in order to validate hypotheses, make conclusions and offer recommendations. No other computation was done.

Sanogo & Gilman (1994) concluded that the methodologies and designs were very similar. The primary contradiction encountered with the two projects was that the Department of Education in Indiana did not include the entire state in the project whereas the Tennessee Association of Education did do a state-wide investigation. In respect to the STAR program it was discovered that the experimental group knew the objectives of the investigation and it is theorized that the subjects may have responded to the inquest in such a way as to sway the results knowing that smaller classes would

be implemented because of it. To sum up, neither project was implemented with a scientific attitude and therefore became useless as the study was biased.

Alghamdi & Gillies ( 2013) conducted research with three objectives in mind. They desired to understand the outcome of cooperative learning methodology compared to normal small group learning against the success of reading, grammar and writing skills of EFL learners.

The methodology applied to this research began by having both the experimental and control groups take a test assess their basic language skills. The same test was presented to the same groups at the end of the study in order to measure progress. The exams were graded by an independent third party that had no association with the study.

The concluding data indicated that there was a significant difference with both the experimental and control groups while using the cooperative learning method rather than traditional teaching. However, all small groups that were tested did improve at a satisfactory rate.

## Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

Due to the high demand for EFL classes in Ecuador, English teachers have many different obstacles to deal with. One such obstacle is the size of the class they must teach. This makes it necessary for administrators to look at new ways of improving education and one of those options is by reducing class size. This research dealt with four components of small classes: benefits, strategies, sentiment and limitations. The analysis of these variables will tell us more about the teachers' and students' perception in small classes.

### *Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis*

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

Table 1

#### Teachers' Perceptions

In classes with a small number of students:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	The activities carried out allow you to practice what you've learned.	4	80,00%	1	20,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
2	Students are attentive and take part in class activities.	3	60,00%	2	40,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
3	Students concentrate better because there is no noise in the classroom	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
4	Class space allows to adequately develop the activities assigned by the teacher.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
5	The teacher provides adequate feedback	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
6	There is interaction among the students.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
7	There is interaction between the teacher and students.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
8	The teacher remembers the name of students.	4	80,00%	0	0,00%	1	20,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%

Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher.

Source: Teachers Questionnaire.

Table 2

Students' Perceptions

In classes with a small number of students:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn.	37	58,73%	21	33,33%	5	7,94%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.	26	41,27%	34	53,97%	3	4,76%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
3	Students concentrate better because there is no noise in the classroom	42	66,67%	17	26,98%	4	6,35%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
4	Class space allows to adequately develop the activities assigned by the teacher.	45	71,43%	18	28,57%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
5	The teacher provides adequate feedback	44	69,84%	17	26,98%	2	3,17%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
6	There is interaction among the students.	45	71,43%	14	22,22%	4	6,35%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
7	There is interaction between the teacher and students.	51	80,95%	12	19,05%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
8	The teacher remembers the name of students.	49	77,78%	13	20,63%	1	1,59%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%

Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

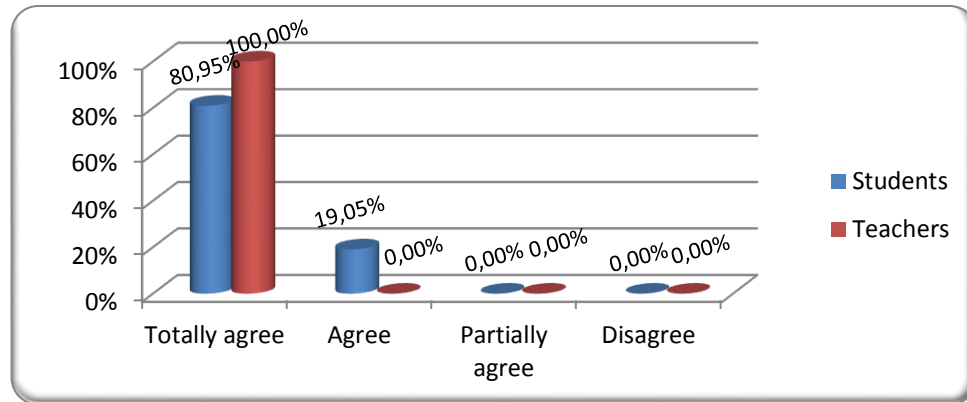
Source: Students' Questionnaire.

To better comprehend the benefits in small classes, a questionnaire was given to students and teachers, eight different aspects were evaluated and scored based on students and teachers level of agreement.

There was a strong positive attitude reflected by the students in respect to the benefits of small classes which is reflected with the highest percentage of those surveyed marking the “totally agree” column. The overwhelming majority does feel that there are noteworthy benefits to the small class environment which is evident with the varying degrees of agreement as seen in the above chart.

Graph 1

Interaction exists between the teacher and students.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

As illustrated in graph 1 this statement received the highest positive ratings found in this survey.

The premise of teacher and student interaction received 80.95% in total agreement with the rest of the students being in agreement with this statement. In addition, 100% of the teachers were in agreement.

This statement is unique as it carries the highest percentage of people in complete agreement and no negative feedback. Considering that there were 63 students and 5 teachers polled in this questionnaire that means there were a total of 68 people, 100% of all surveyed, that felt the strongest benefit experienced in small classes was that there was teacher student interaction.

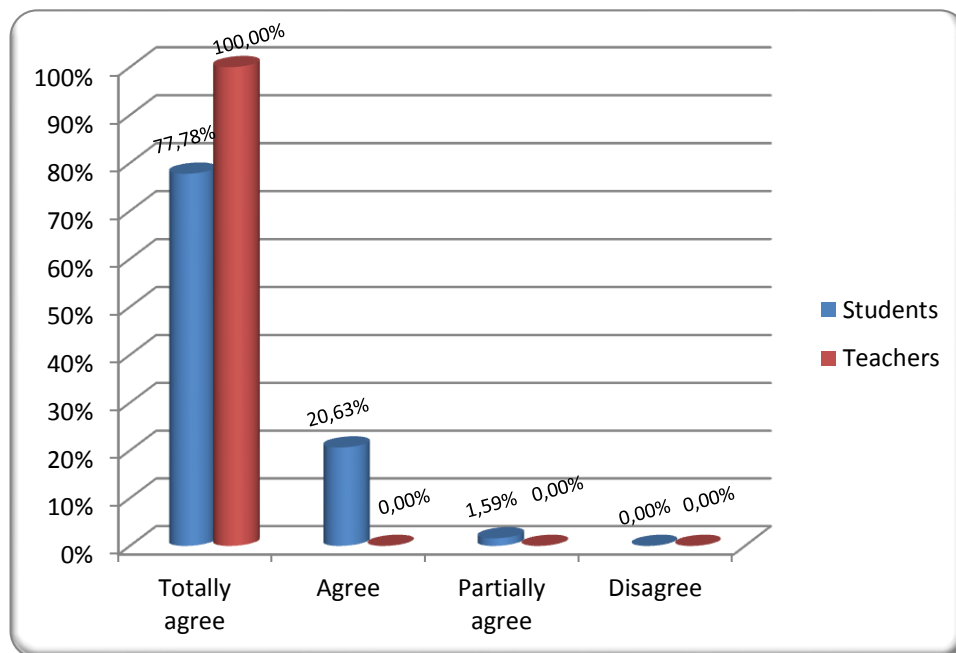
These sentiments are supported by Harmer (1998) who believes that establishing teacher-student rapport is one of the greatest obstacles to overcome in creating a harmonious class. It has been interpreted that the interaction students are referring to is the individualized attention one is expected to receive in small classes. Since the students polled were actually taking part in small classes this is not theory but truly the resulting perceptions of high level English students

experiencing the benefits of being able to interact more profoundly in a one-on-one setting . The teachers´ responses reflect their attitudes toward having the opportunity to clearly communicate class objectives with students and resolve any questions that remained.

During the researchers´ time in the 5 classes it was clear that teachers took their time with each student and students took advantage of the opportunity to ask for clarity when needed. This resulted in a more peaceful class and the class appeared to cover more material than a larger size class. Carrillo (2011) emphasizes that by teachers being able to understand students basic dimensions (cognitive, physical, emotional and social) the teacher-student relationship would improve and so would student achievement.

Graph 2

The teacher remembers the names of the students.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers´ Questionnaire and Students´ Questionnaire

Graph 2 shows that there is an overwhelming amount of support for the idea that the teacher is able to remember the names of students in small classes. There was no negative feedback for this

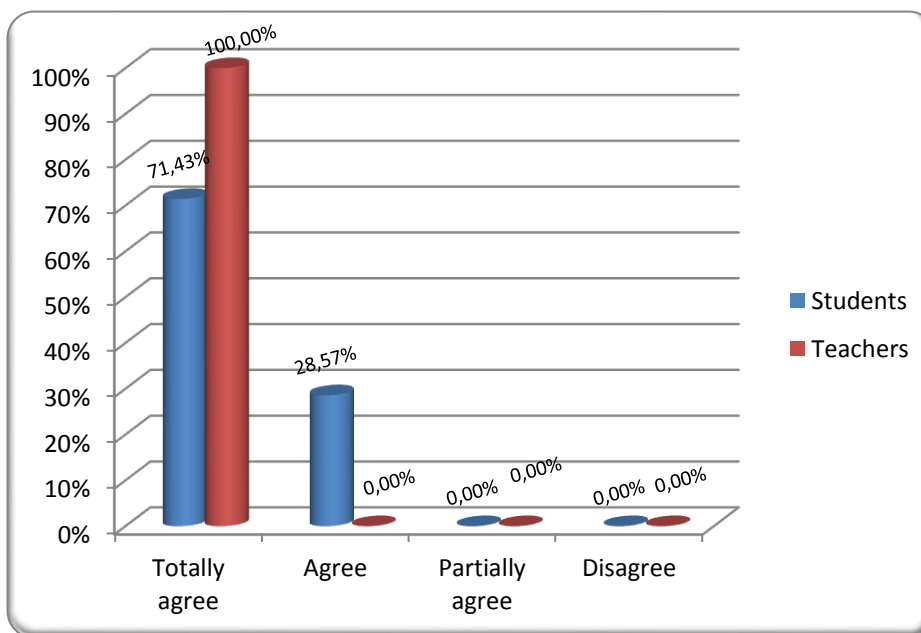


statement. The idea that the teacher was able to remember the students' names in a smaller class ranked as the second highest scoring statement in respect to beneficial attributes of small classes. There was a resulting 77.78% in complete agreement, with only 1.59% (1 person) that partially agreed and the rest of the students were in agreement with this concept. The analysis of this data points to fewer students makes it easier for the teacher to remember their names.

The resulting data strongly indicates that both students and teachers see this as one of the primary benefits of a small class and during the researchers observations it was noted that speaking to students by name added to the intimacy of the classroom setting. The observer also reflected upon the fact that 4 out of the 5 teachers were native English speakers who sometimes had to pronounce and remember names that were foreign to them. This may be the reason for the one student who only partially agreed with this benefit.

Graph 3

The class space allows you to properly complete the activities assigned.



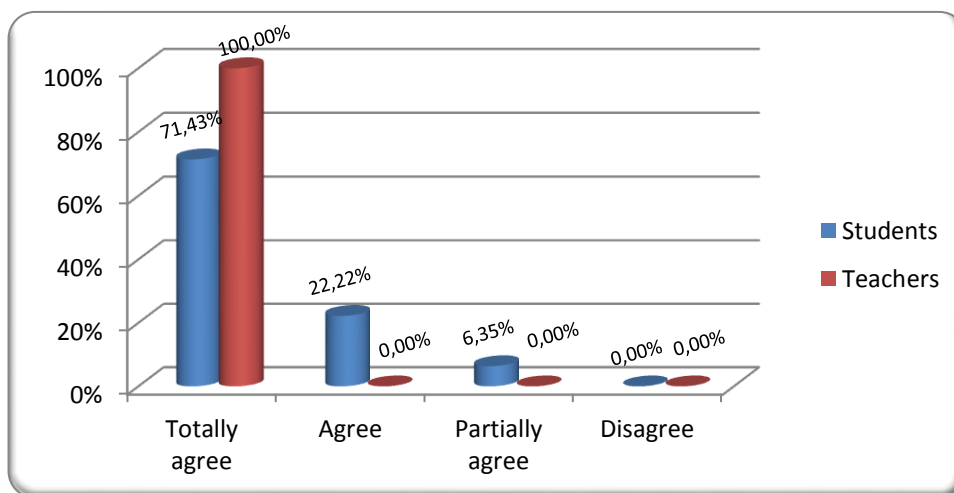
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

Again it is demonstrated that both students and teachers surveyed are in strong agreement that there is enough space within the small class environment to complete given activities as shown in graph 3. Resulting with no negative opinions, it may be assumed that space in the classroom is adequate, 71.43% were found to be in total agreement while the remaining 28.57% of those surveyed agreed with no negative responses. It is easy to understand why this is considered a benefit of any class, however even more so in the classes that were observed because they were two hour intensive classes that used a variety of group and individual activities to complete the teaching-learning cycle. The teachers responded with 100% totally agreeing that the space was adequate for activities. The researchers' notes revealed that there were varying sized classrooms that allowed students to work and allow space for the teacher to move about the room checking on the progression of the work.

Graph 4

Interaction exists between students.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

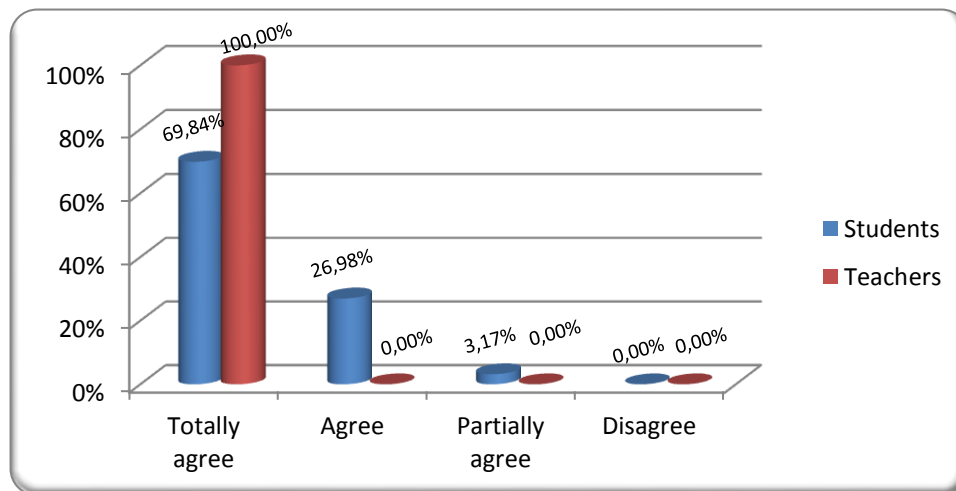
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

As graph 4 illustrates, teachers and students strongly agree that there is interaction among students. The benefit of students interacting with one another was reported back as having 71.43% in complete agreement, 22.22% in agreement and 6.35% in partial agreement. The students have

reported that they interact with each other in a positive fashion and can be assumed that this is considered academic interaction. Lewis & Hill (1997) claim that student-to-student (S-S) activities allow the class to learn new material quickly and keep the attention of the class which supports the premise of the original question. Having 93.65% in some form of positive agreement and only 6.35% only partially agreeing with the original statement exemplifies the fact that students feel they have appropriate academic interaction with one another. Teachers responded to this statement with 100% in complete agreement. It seems that both students and teachers find there is enough student to student interaction to satisfy an educational requirement. The researcher noted that during the two-hour class there were a minimum of two activities where students were required to work with each other using the English language. This left the impression of a well-balanced class as teachers were able to move from one activity to another with relative ease incorporating student interactive work.

Graph 5

The teacher provides adequate feedback.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

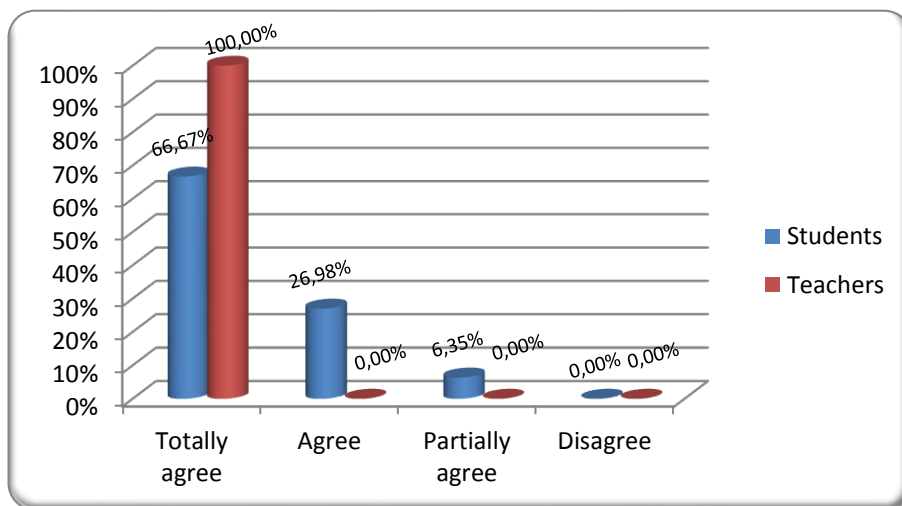
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

The results returned, shown in graph 5, evidence that both parties totally agree that there is adequate feedback in the small class environment, indicating that small classes allow the teacher to

provide appropriate feedback. Feedback, as a benefit, was tallied as 69.84% in complete agreement, 26.98% in agreement and 3.17% in partial agreement. Feedback is understood to be information given back to students to improve the use of the English language. Once again it is seen that the majority of students agree that in small classes there are many benefits. It seems that the small class environment is a good breeding ground for appropriate feedback according to the students and teachers. Brookmart (2008) asserts that feedback is one of the most powerful teaching tools available, the difficulty is mastering how to properly address a student that needs constructive feedback. The teachers' response was once again 100% in complete agreement that they are providing feedback. This is the only area of dispute the researcher has seen in respect to benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes. During the five observation classes that the researcher observed there was very little feedback given from the teachers to the students. All too often teachers were trying to make sure they were on time, on task and keeping control of the class to give feedback.

Graph 6

Students are able to concentrate better because there is no noise in the class.



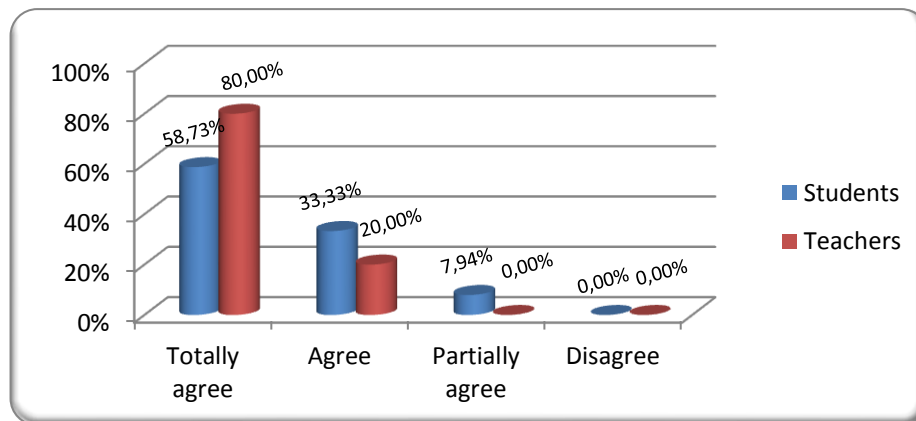
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

A landslide vote by pupils and instructors that there is less noise in smaller classes is evident in graph 6. The statement pertaining to students having better ability to concentrate because there was no noise in class was met with 66.67% in complete agreement, 26.98% in agreement and 6.35% in partial agreement. The analysis of this statement has become difficult to decipher as the idea of no noise in a classroom seems impossible and the varying degrees to which the students understood the term “noise”. For all intents and purposes the author has analyzed the information by means of any noise that would create such a distraction as to lose concentration on said project. The teachers responded 100% in full agreement that the students concentrate better with no noise. The observer found these results to be accurate as during the observations there were brief moments of intruding laughter and off topic discussions which would have created a distraction for others. However, the small class environment did allow the teacher to regain control and get the students back to the intended focal point.

Graph 7

The activities done in class help to apply what students have learned.



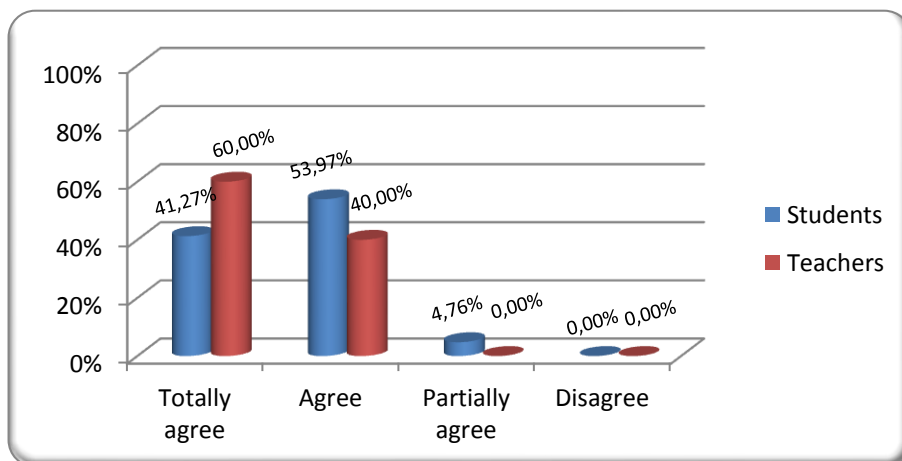
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

It can be seen in graph 7 that both the majority of teachers and students totally agree that there are activities which allow students to put into practice their English knowledge. One of the lowest scoring statements had to do with how the activities in class allowed students to practice what they have learned. Students reported that only 58.73% were in complete agreement, 33.33% agreed and 7.94% partially agreed. Surprisingly the teachers reported 80% in full agreement and 20% in agreement for the same question. The analysis of the data was influenced upon the teachers' results more than the students. The teachers were in control of the activities that were created and implemented yet they only 80% fully agreed. If the teachers cannot be in full agreement with something of their own design it is to reason that the students rated this as low as they did. In contrast to the data found from the questionnaire the researcher found that the observation classes flowed smoothly allowing the students to practice or review what had been taught at the beginning of the hour. The end result was that students and teachers still showed a positive outlook upon the activities in class, however, not as strong as some of the other benefits previously mentioned.

Graph 8

The students are attentive and take part in class.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

Even though not in complete agreement, both teachers and students agree that students are attentive and take part in class activities, as illustrated in graph 8. The benefit that received the smallest amount of complete agreement was the statement that students were attentive and participated in classroom activities. The students reported 41.27% were in total agreement, 53.97% were in agreement and 4.76% were in partial agreement. The teachers marked this with 60% in total agreement and 40% in agreement. To analyze these results we need to look no further than the question itself. The attention span and participation are tied to the students' energy level after they have been in school all day and then are obligated to participate in an intensive two hour foreign language class five days a week. The actual results are not as poor as anticipated by the researcher and the in class observations showed that students were attentive and participated to varying degrees. The researcher attributes the higher than expected results to the small classes themselves.

The benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes can be easily summed up as all the options put forth in the questionnaire are beneficial. There is no doubt that both students and teachers alike feel that all eight areas are beneficial in small classes. However, when the observers' notes are incorporated into the question, the answers can be more precisely answered. In the small class environment the relationship between teacher and students is evident in the interaction reported by the students and the fact that the teacher is able to more easily remember the students' names creating a more personalized environment. In addition, the students were able to interact with each other further reinforcing the material and all of this is made easier when there is sufficient room in the class to carry out activities pertaining to the assigned lesson. Hoffman (2006) offers supporting information in respect to the seating arrangement. Having plenty of room in the class allows the teacher to effectively facilitate the teaching-learning process. In the students' opinion, the small class provided enough room and did not create too much noise as so they could concentrate. In summary,

the benefits of a small class include an improved teacher-student relationship with plenty of physical room and teacher time to carry out activities which produce less noise allowing the teacher adequate time and opportunity for feedback. Therefore, the results from this section can be generalized as very positive.

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

Table 3

Teachers' Perceptions

In small classes:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
9	The activities done allow students to practice listening skills.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
10	The activities done allow students to practice speaking skills.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
11	The activities done allow students to practice reading skills.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
12	The activities done allow students to practice writing skills.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
13	Group activities are used.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
14	Individual activities are used.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
15	Technological resources are used.	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
16	Didactic materials are used.	4	80,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	20,00%	5	100,00%

Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher.

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire.

Table 4

Students' Perceptions

In small classes:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
9	The activities done allow students to practice listening skills.	48	76,19%	15	23,81%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
10	The activities done allow students to practice speaking skills.	45	71,43%	17	26,98%	1	1,59%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
11	The activities done allow students to practice reading skills.	46	73,02%	17	26,98%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
12	The activities done allow students to practice writing skills.	43	68,25%	17	26,98%	3	4,76%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
13	Group activities are used.	35	55,56%	19	30,16%	5	7,94%	4	6,35%	63	100,00%
14	Individual activities are used.	48	76,19%	13	20,63%	2	3,17%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
15	Technological resources are used.	45	71,43%	16	25,40%	2	3,17%	0	0,00%	63	100,00%
16	Didactic materials are used.	36	57,14%	17	26,98%	9	14,29%	1	1,59%	63	100,00%

Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

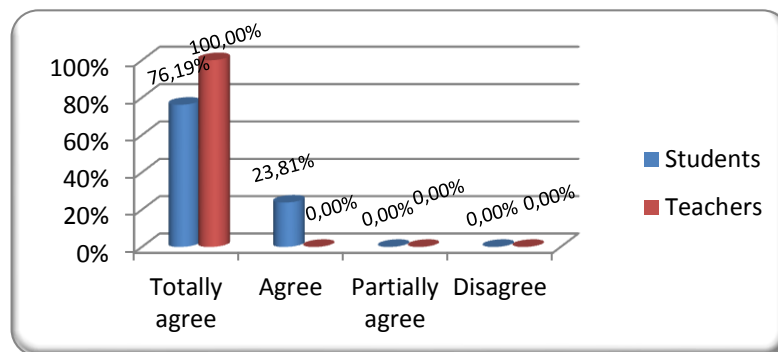
Source: Students' Questionnaire.



In section B of the questionnaire the students and teachers rated the teaching strategies and resources that benefit the teaching of English in small classes. This section was comprised of eight questions that both teachers and students responded to. Due to the similarity of questions 9-12, the analysis is presented after graph 12.

Graph 9

The activities done allow students to practice listening skills



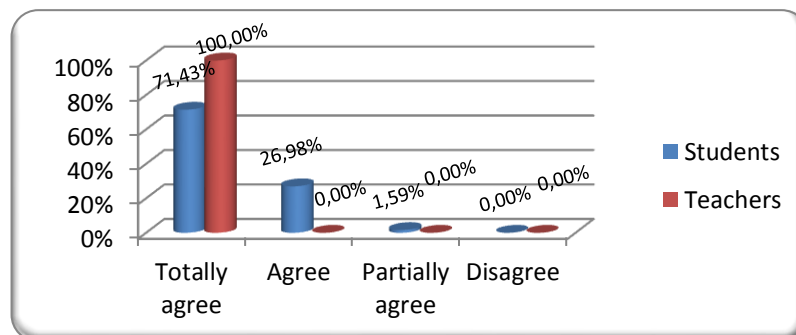
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

Every sample, from both teachers and students, resulted in a form of agreement in respect to the idea that listening skills are practiced in class which is illustrated in graph 9.

Graph 10

The activities done allow students to practice speaking skills.



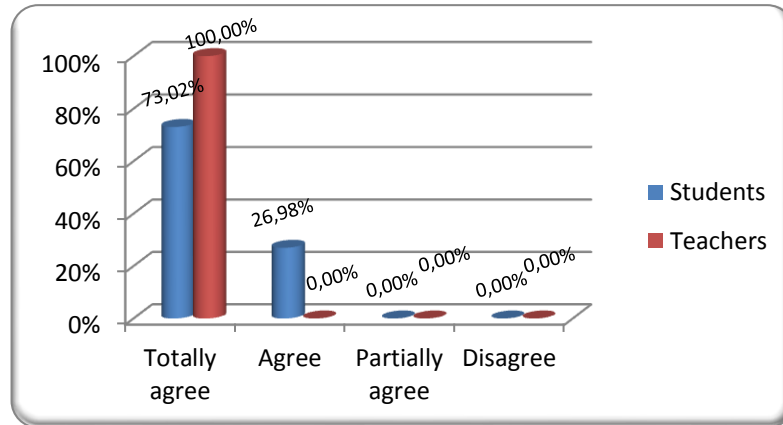
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

Results indicate that both teachers and students agree there are sufficient activities practiced in class to reinforce speaking skills shown in graph 10.

Graph 11

The activities done allow students to practice reading skills.



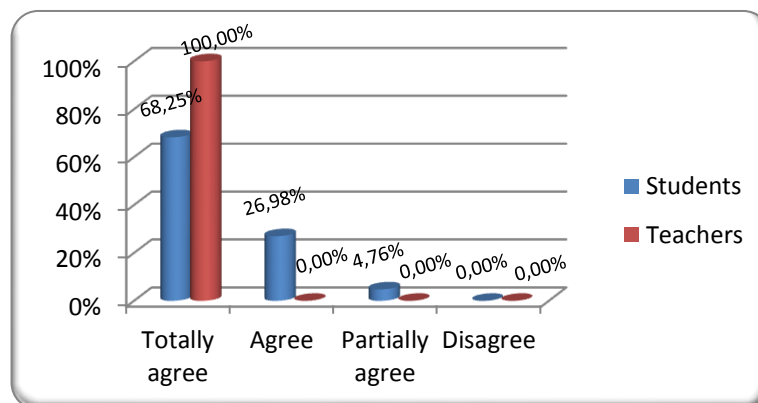
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

Participants strongly agree that there are activities in class promoting reading skills as can be seen in graph 11..

Graph 12

The activities done allow students to practice writing skills.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

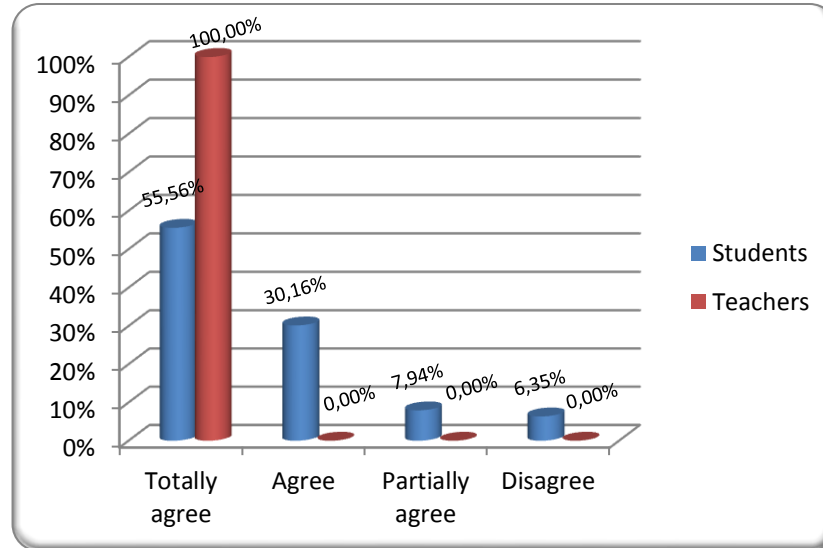
The overwhelming majority of the sample population responded in total agreement with the idea of writing skills being used in activities which is represented in graph 12. The first four questions in this section, statements 9-12, were about the activities that allowed the students to practice the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The general overview of these four questions was remarkably positive feedback that was almost the same for each question. Harfitt (2012) reported that experiences in small classes produced a sense of security within the classroom community making it easier to excel in activities given and boost student confidence.

Students reported the following for activities for listening, which can be found in graph 9, as 76.19% in total agreement with 23.81 in agreement. Activities for speaking, which can be found in graph 10, were reported as 71.43% in total agreement and 26.98% in agreement and 1.59% in partial agreement. Activities for reading (graph 11) were reported as 73.02% in total agreement and 26.98% in agreement. Activities for writing (graph 12) were reported as 68.25% in total agreement, 26.98% in agreement and 4.76% in partial agreement.

The students all had positive feelings about the use of activities in class to practice the four language skills. During the observer's time in the classes it was noted that there were a variety of activities drawing on the base information but being produced using the four language skills. It seemed as though the two hour classes allowed the teachers and students enough time to work on all the areas with the assigned material. The teachers reported 100% total agreement for all four language skills activities: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The resulting analysis of these four questions undoubtedly shows that the teaching strategies to improve the four language skills are working well and the researcher noted that classes flowed smoothly from one activity to another incorporating everything taught in practice.

Graph 13

Group activities are used.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

Data collected shows the majority of both pupils and instructors agreed that group activities are used as seen in graph 13. However, there are 7.94% in partial agreement and 6.35% of students that are not in complete agreement or disagree completely.

The most poorly scored statement had to do with the use of group activities. Students reported 55.56% were in complete agreement, 30.16% were in agreement, 7.94% were in partial agreement and 6.35% disagreed. Teachers stated that they used group activities by reporting 100% in agreement but there is an obvious conflict between teachers and students. No other strategy or resource scored as poorly as group activities did.

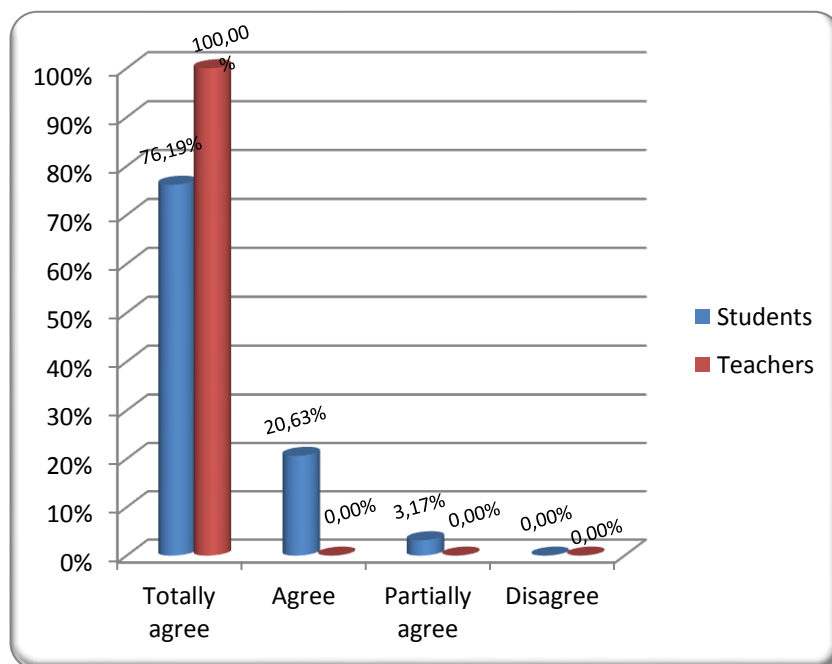
Harmer (1998) insists that “peer help” delves much deeper into group work by removing the teacher and allowing students to help other students. This may have helped the group work be more successful. The researcher observed that there were group activities used in 3 out of 5 classes.

However, the amount of time and interest given by the teachers was lackluster resulting in more of a

break for the teacher than a teaching activity. The interpretation of the results is that there are group activities used but not effectively and up to the standard that the students would like have implemented.

Graph 14

Individual activities are used.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

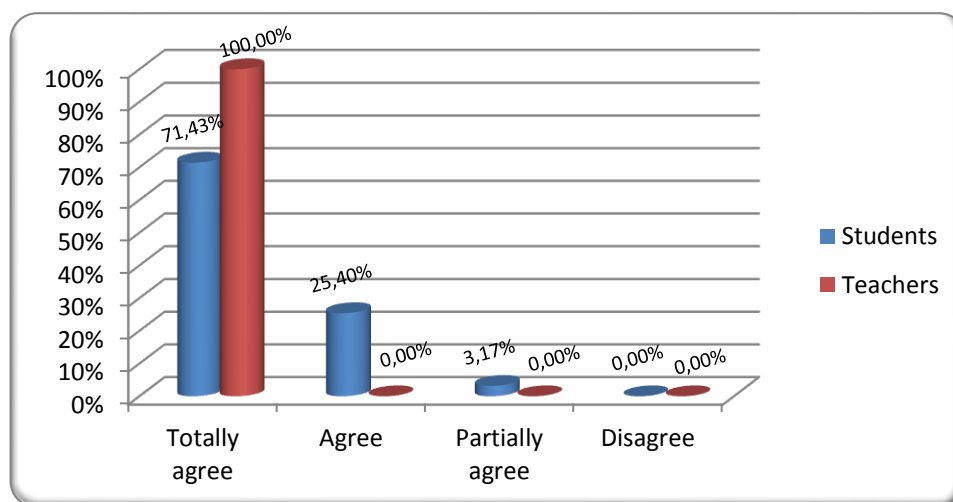
It is obvious from the results in graph 14 that individual activities are used in the small English classroom.

Contrary to group activities the use of individual activities are used commonly. Students responded to the statement of individual activities with 76.19% completely agreeing, 20.63% agreeing and 3.17% partially agreeing. Teachers reported a 100% complete agreement in respect to the use of individual activities. In addition, the researcher observed numerous individual activities to

support the claim of both the students and teachers. The results show that individual activities are being used to teach English in the institute.

Graph 15

Technological resources are used.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

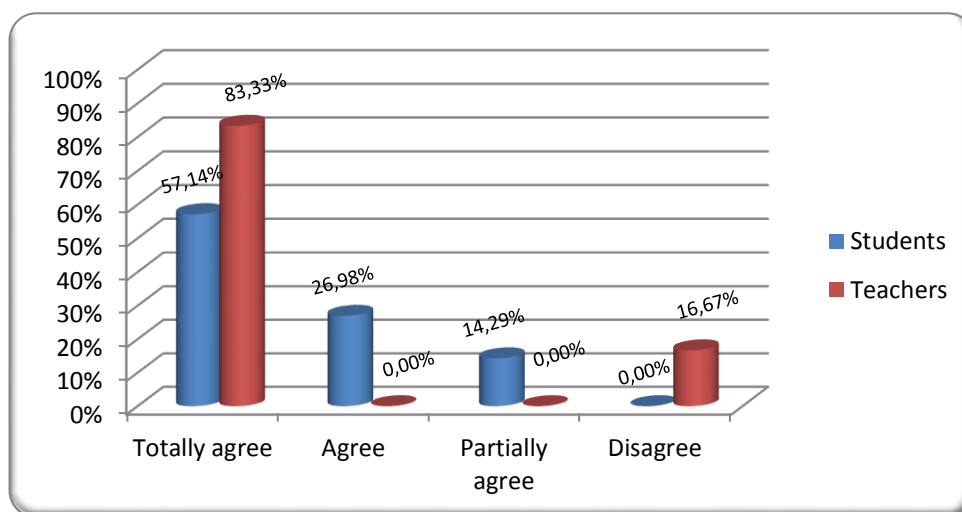
The data presented in graph 15 shows that everyone seemed to give some form of agreement that technological resources are used in the classroom, however it is important to note that most were in total agreement.

The use of technological resources used in class was reported by students as 71.43% in complete agreement, 25.40% in agreement and 3.17% in partial agreement. Teachers reported that technological resources were used in class by marking 100% in agreement with the original statement. The researcher's notes revealed that each of the classrooms were outfitted with digital projectors, speakers, equalizer, laptop connection and wireless internet. In addition to these technological resources available to the teacher there were interactive DVDs that accompanied the teaching material. It is interpreted that the students may have given low marks on the questionnaire

as they are expecting more cutting edge technology that can synchronize with their smart phones or social networks. The end result is that teachers in this English course are using technology and using a part of it to grade their students leaving the researcher with the opinion that technology is used but not to the standard of the students.

Graph 16

Educational materials are used.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

The information represented in graph 16 evidences most students and teachers agree that there are didactic materials used in class. It is note worth that this is the only section where a teacher has disagreed with anything during the section of small class benefits.

The resource that received the overall worst rating in respect to strategies and resources was the use of educational materials to benefit the teaching of English in small classes. Students responded to the use of educational materials in class with 57.14% in complete agreement, 26.98% in agreement, 14.29% in partial agreement and 1.89% in disagreement. The teachers rated the same question as 80% in complete agreement and 20% in disagreement. During the 5 classes observed the

researcher saw no additional educational material other than paperback novels. The researcher interprets the students responses as accurate.

What teaching strategies and resources benefit the teaching of English in small classes? It is clear from students, teachers and the researchers' notes that there were sufficient activities to practice the English language in the four basic skill sets: reading, writing, listening, speaking. In order to practice these four skills both group and individual activities were used, however it is believed that more individual activities are used. Technological resources seemed to be widely used but additional educational material was lacking

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

Table 5

Teachers' Perceptions

In class with a small number of students:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
17	They are relaxed when speaking in front of their classmates.	3	60,00%	2	40,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
18	They are taken into account by the teacher because they have more opportunities to participate in class.	4	80,00%	1	20,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
19	They are motivated to participate because of the small number of students	4	80,00%	1	20,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%
20	They are at ease because they can healthy compete with their classmates.	4	80,00%	1	20,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%

Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher.

Source: Teachers' questionnaire.



Table 6

Students' Perceptions

In classes with a small number of students:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
17	I am relaxed when speaking in front of my classmates.	16	25,40%	17	26,98%	7	11,11%	23	36,51%	63	100,00%
18	I am taken into account by the teacher because I have more opportunities to participate in class.	17	26,98%	17	26,98%	8	12,70%	21	33,33%	63	100,00%
19	I am motivated to participate because of the small number of classmates.	11	17,46%	22	34,92%	6	9,52%	24	38,10%	63	100,00%
20	I am at ease because I can healthy compete with my classmates.	17	26,98%	20	31,75%	3	4,76%	23	36,51%	63	100,00%

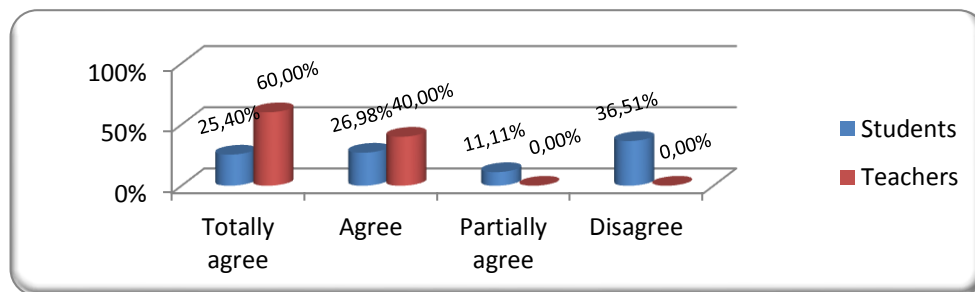
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Students' Questionnaire.

In section C of the questionnaire students were questioned in regards to how they felt about learning English in small classes. This section is comprised of four questions relating to emotional states. A generalization resulting from this section is that the students were clearly divided yet, for each question, the results are consistent.

Graph 17

I am relaxed when speaking in front of my classmates.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

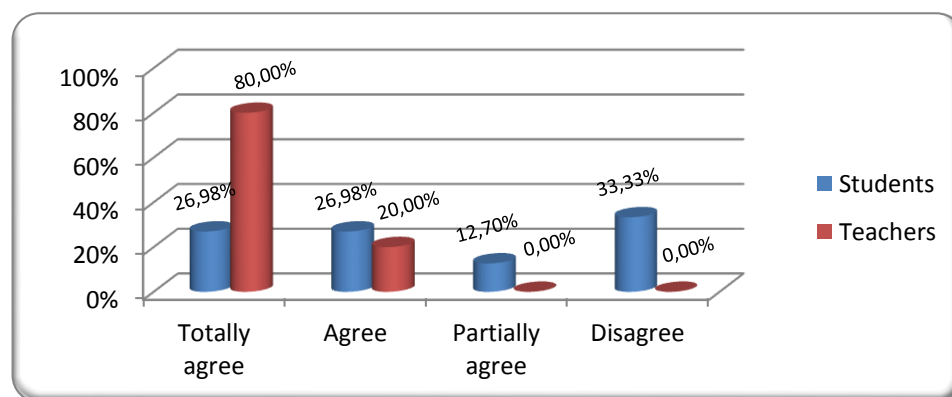
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

The teachers agreed that students were relaxed when speaking in front of others in small classes, yet the students were divided on the issue. More than one third of students polled responded negatively to feeling relaxed during oral discourse. These results can be seen in graph 17.

The first statement reads “I am relaxed when speaking in front of my classmates”. The students responded with 25.40% in total agreement, 26.98% in agreement, 11.11% in partial agreement and 36.51% in disagreement. The teachers reported back with 60% in total agreement and 40% in agreement. The observer did not view the students to have been in a stressful environment. Harfitt (2012) adds to the researchers’ observations by claiming that small classes usually eliminate fears of negative peer-evaluation and diminish the idea of teacher criticism. In fact, there was such a good rapport between the students and teachers that the results of the survey were found to be confusing to the researcher. Since these classes were not observed in a high school environment this adds to the confusion as to why the students did not feel more relaxed. It cannot be ignored that approximately one third of students polled found speaking stressful, but it must be remembered that these students are in high school all morning and two hours a day in the afternoon learning a foreign language all in the attempt to improve their lives and get an excellent education. It may be inferred that the lack of feeling relaxed is not only from the English class but all of the academic stresses that they are under to perform at a high level.

Graph 18

I am taken into account by the teacher because I have more opportunities to participate in class.



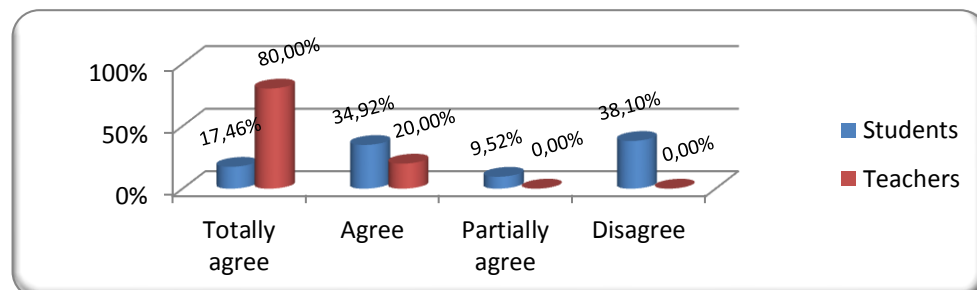
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher  
 Source: Teachers’ Questionnaire and Students’ Questionnaire

Results of the questionnaires indicate that students are divided on the issue of being considered by their teacher by being given opportunities to engage in class, which is illustrated in graph 18. There were varying degrees of agreeing with this idea and approximately one third disagreed with this notion.

In respect to the statement “I feel uncomfortable talking in front of my classmates”, the students responded to this statement with 26.98% in total agreement, 26.98% in agreement, 12.70% in partial agreement and 33.33% in disagreement. The teachers responded with 80% in total agreement and 20% in agreement. The researcher’s notes reflected that students were speaking freely to each other during group work, they responded to the teachers questions with ease and occasionally addressed the class. The only time there seemed to be any uncomfortable moments was when the students weren’t paying attention. It appeared that students had plenty of opportunities to participate in class. It is interpreted that the nearly one third negative response to this statement may be attributed to the fact that the sample population consisted mostly of teenagers. This age group may feel over sensitive at times resulting in the idea that the teacher does not consider them. Over all the teachers and students agree that the instructors do consider students by creating opportunities to participate in class.

Graph 19

I am motivated to participate because of the small number of classmates.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher  
 Source: Teachers’ Questionnaire and Students’ Questionnaire

As can be seen in graph 19 the majority of students and teachers polled agree that students are motivated due to the small class setting.

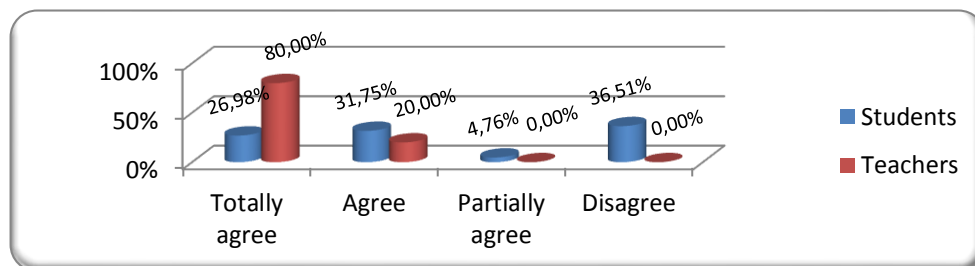
The third statement put forth in section C was translated as “I am motivated to participate because of the small number of classmates”. The students responded to this with 17.46% in total agreement, 34.92% in agreement, 9.52% in partial agreement and 38.10% in disagreement. The teachers responded to this question with 80% in total agreement and 20% in agreement.

The researcher observed that students were given ample opportunities in a variety of contexts to express themselves. The researcher and teachers are in agreement on this issue, however the students themselves have given a contrary opinion with well over one third of them feeling that the small class environment does not motivate them. There are many reasons to be motivated in the classroom, it is possible that the students polled experience other types of motivation for learning a second language. The researchers’ notes detailed how the students appeared to be motivated and participating.

It is interpreted that there were high levels of motivation , however the small number of classmates within the class setting does not seem to be the driving force for nearly one third of the students.

Graph 20

I am at ease because I can healthily compete with my classmates.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers’ Questionnaire and Students’ Questionnaire

Data in graph 20 indicates that most students feel at ease because there is a sense of healthy competition among students. However, there was a large group of students amounting to approximately one third of the sample population who disagreed with this idea. Students were reported as being 26.98% in total agreement, 31.75% in agreement, 4.76% in partial agreement and 36.51% in disagreement. The teachers responded to this question with 80% in total agreement and 20% in agreement. The researcher did not witness any form of competition in the classroom. The resulting information is interpreted as healthy competition in the classroom puts students at ease. The nearly one third of the student population who do not feel at ease may be nervous with any form of academic competition which is common in teenagers. It can be implied that students continue to feel uneasy in regards to competition in the small class environment.

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

Table 7

Teachers' Perceptions

In classes with a small number of students:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
21	There is anxiety among students because there is more control form the part of the teacher	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	20,00%	4	80,00%	5	100,00%
22	Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100,00%	5	100,00%

Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher.

Source: Teachers' questionnaire.

Table 8

Students' Perceptions

In classes with a small number of students:		Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
21	There is anxiety among students because there is more control on the part of the teacher	8	12,70%	15	23,81%	#	22,22%	26	41,27%	63	100,00%
22	Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.	5	7,94%	15	23,81%	9	14,29%	34	53,97%	63	100,00%

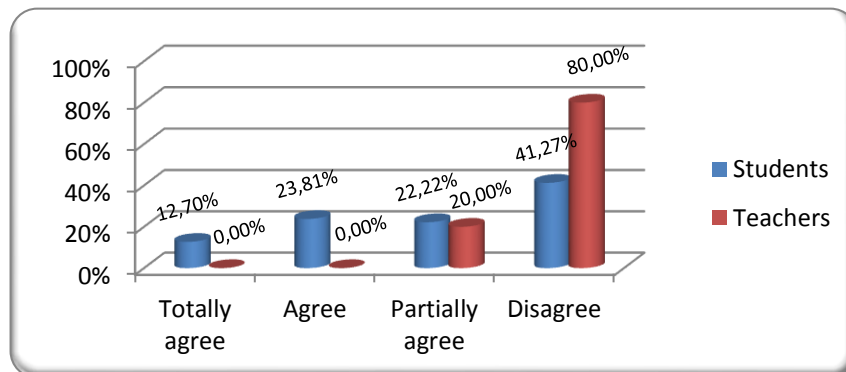
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher.

Source: Students' questionnaire.

In section D of the questionnaire the subjects were prompted to rate limitations faced when teaching English in a small class.

Graph 21

There is anxiety among students because there is greater control by the teacher.



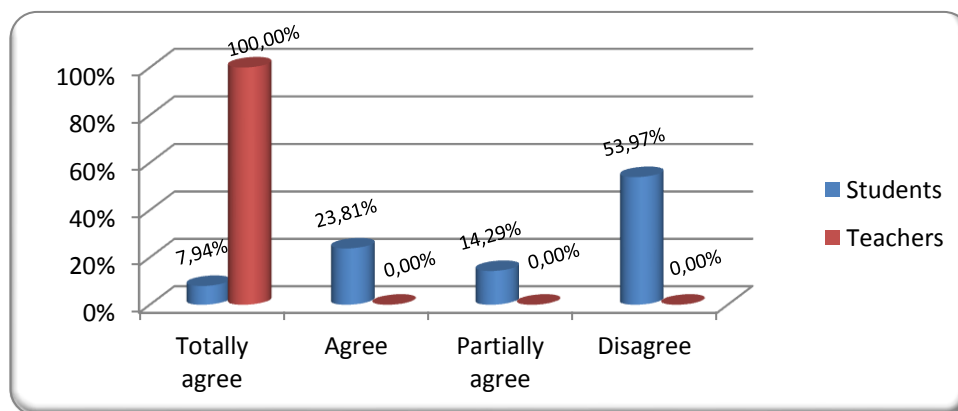
Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

Results reveal that there are moderate levels of anxiety among students due to the teachers' control which is shown above in graph 21. The limitation of anxiety felt by students due to the teacher having greater control of the class was posed to the participants. Students responded with 12.70% in total agreement, 23.81% in agreement, 22.22% in partial agreement and 41.27 in disagreement. The teachers rated this with 80% in disagreement and 20% in partial agreement. The researcher attended 5 classes and observed 63 students and during this time no overt anxiety was discernable. In view of the students opinion, it is obvious there is a fair amount of students that are feeling anxious due to fewer students in the class. The end result leaves us with nearly half the class disagreeing and the other half in agreement on the issue of anxiety. Consequently it must be assumed that anxiety is a partial limitation.

Graph 22

It is difficult to practice the skills of speaking and listening.



Author: Andre Cosmos Grossenbacher

Source: Teachers' Questionnaire and Students' Questionnaire

The majority of students did not find it difficult to practice speaking and listening, however there were moderate levels of difficulty perceived by some students, as graph 22 illustrates. Contrary to the students, the teachers reported collectively that it is difficult to practice listening and speaking.

The final question of the investigation ,in section D, explored the difficulty to practice the skills of speaking and listening. The majority of the students replied with 53.97% in disagreement, 14.29% in partial agreement, 23.81% in agreement and 7.94% in total agreement. The teachers unanimously responded in total agreement that it was difficult to practice listening and speaking skills. Blatchford (2003) stressed that in small classes the teachers really knew the strengths and weaknesses of the students and were able to work with them to correct mistakes which supports this last questions about listening and speaking. In a small class the teacher is able to really help and let the student work through the problems of listening and speaking. This limitation was discussed in section B where all students marked some form of agreement that there were activities to practice these skills. It is interpreted that the limitation is the personal level of difficulty, relating back to anxiety, stress, shyness or some other intrinsic emotional state. In conclusion, the obstacle of listening and speaking rates as a mild limitation for students but it is a challenge for the teachers.



## Conclusions

- Small classes promote more interaction between pupils and instructors.
- Evidence in this study shows that teachers are not implementing enough group activities even though there are more opportunities in the small class environment.
- Regardless class size, students are still afflicted by strong emotions which affect their participation in class.
- This research demonstrates that small classes are beneficial to both teacher and students by creating a more intimate setting where there is ample work space in a quieter environment
- Reduced size classes provide adequate space to carry out activities which reinforce the lesson.
- Evidence from this study suggests that the technological resources enhanced the teaching process by making the subject material more interesting and having the ability to cover the material more efficiently.

## Recommendations

- Teachers should receive mandatory workshops about the benefits of using didactic materials in small English classes. In addition, didactic materials should become a mandatory section of teachers' lesson plans.
- Additional research into the limitations of teaching English in small classes is needed as this study only superficially touched on this issue.
- More group activities should be used in classes.
- Technology that is being used by students should be incorporated into the teachers' resources.
- It is recommended to apply surveys to students in order to keep current with popular technology.
- Teachers should change activities more frequently in order to maintain the attention and participation of the students in class.
- Further investigation into the emotional state of the students regarding the small classroom being a stressful environment is needed in order to determine the origin of the stress so it can be properly addressed.

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ANNEXES

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.

	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>	<i>Totally agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Partially agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
1.	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn.				
2.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.				
3.	The students can better concentrate because there is less noise in the classroom.				
4.	The classroom space allows students to carry out the activities assigned by the teacher.				
5.	Students receive proper feedback from the teacher.				
6.	There is interaction between the students.				
7.	There is interaction between the teacher and students.				
8.	The teacher remembers the students' names.				

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

N°	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>	<i>Totally agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Partially agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
9.	The activities done allow students to practice listening skills.				
10.	The activities done allow students to practice speaking skills.				
11.	The activities done allow students to practice reading skills.				
12.	The activities done allow students to practice writing skills.				
13.	Group work activities are used.				
14.	Individual activities are used.				
15.	Technological tools are used.				
16.	Didactic materials are used.				

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

N°	<b>In classes with a small number of students,</b>	<i>Totally agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Partially agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
17.	I am relaxed when speaking in front of my classmates.				
18.	I am taken into account by the teacher because I have more opportunities to participate in class.				
19.	I am motivated to participate because of the small number of classmates.				
20.	I am at ease because I can healthy compete with my classmates.				

D. Limitations of learning English in small classes.

	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>	<i>Totally agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Partially agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
21.	There is anxiety among students because there is more control on the part of the teacher.				
22.	Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.				

Thank you.



**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.

<b>Totally agree</b>
<b>Agree</b>
<b>Partially agree</b>
<b>Disagree</b>

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

		<i>Totally agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Partially agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>				
1.	It is easier to design activities that help the students to apply what they have learned.				
2.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.				
3.	The students can better concentrate because there is less noise in the classroom.				
4.	Classroom space allows students to properly do the activities designed.				
5.	Appropriate feedback can be given.				
6.	Activities that allow more interaction among students are performed.				
7.	There is more interaction between the teacher and the students.				
8.	It is easier to remember students' names.				



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

N°	<b>In classes with a small number of students, it is easier to:</b>	<i>Totally agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Partially agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
9.	Design and apply activities that allow student to practice listening skills.				
10.	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice speaking skills.				
11.	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice reading skills.				
12.	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice writing skills.				
13.	Design and apply group work activities.				
14.	Design and apply individual activities.				
15.	Use technological tools				
16.	Use didactic materials.				

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

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

D. Limitations of learning English in small classes.

	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>	<i>Totally agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Partially agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
21.	There is anxiety among students because there is more control from the part of the teacher.				
22.	Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.				

Thank you.