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

**TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN**

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## APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

Magister.

Luz Mercedes Castillo Cuesta.

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación Teachers and Students' Perceptions of Teaching English in Small Classes in Ecuador realizado por Irina Tatiana Martínez Romo, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, mayo 05 de 2015

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“Yo, Irina Tatiana Martínez Romo declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de titulación: Teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo la Magister Luz Mercedes Castillo directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posible 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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Irina Tatiana Martínez Romo

Autora

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## *DEDICATION*

*Dedicated to my powerful God, the essence of my life,  
who walks next to me and makes my dreams come true.*

*My beloved daughter and husband  
Who sacrifice their time to see me succeed; you two are  
my inspiration to grow in life, the reason to work  
harder.*

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**THE AUTHOR**

# Contents

Cover.....	i
Aprobación del Director del Trabajo de Fin de Titulación.....	ii
Declaración de Autoría y Sesión de Derechos.....	iii
Dedication .....	iv
Acknowledgment.....	v
Contents .....	vi
Abstract .....	1
Resumen .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Method .....	6
Discussion .....	
Literature Review.....	8
Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results .....	23
Conclusions .....	46
Recommendations.....	47
References.....	48
Annexes .....	50

## **ABSTRACT**

The topic of this research Teachers and students' perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador has the purpose to discover teachers and students' perceptions of teaching and learning English in small classes.

This study answered the questioning of how the number of students influence the learning process, the interaction, the strategies to be used, and the benefits teacher and students from small classes have in a private high school in Quito - Ecuador as a specific case. Surveys to teachers and students were applied, as well as observations of classes with a few students were carried out in the field research.

This analysis proved that a small English as a foreign language class could be beneficial and productive for teaching - learning process. This research enabled to show that a limited number of students in a class eases the teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language.

**Key words:** English language, perceptions, teaching, learning, small classes, classrooms.

## RESUMEN

El tema de esta tesis Percepciones de estudiantes y maestros de la enseñanza del inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes en Ecuador tiene como propósito descubrir la opinión de estudiantes y maestros sobre la enseñanza y aprendizaje del Inglés en clases con pocos estudiantes.

Esta investigación respondió al cuestionamiento de como el número de estudiantes tiene influencia en el proceso de aprendizaje, en la interacción, en las estrategias utilizadas, y en los beneficios que profesores y estudiantes de clases con pocos estudiantes tienen en un colegio privado en Quito – Ecuador como un caso específico. Encuestas a maestros y estudiantes fueron aplicadas, de la misma manera observaciones de clases con pocos estudiantes fueron llevadas a cabo en el área de investigación.

Este análisis probó que una clase de inglés como lengua extranjera con pocos estudiantes podría ser beneficiar y productiva para el aprendizaje de cada estudiante. Este proceso de investigación permitió mostrar que un número menor de estudiantes en una clase facilita el proceso educativo de enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera.

**Palabras claves:** Idioma Inglés, Percepción, Enseñanza, Aprendizaje, Pequeñas clases, Aula.



## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is the most spoken language in the world; teachers in almost all over the world schools are teaching English to kids from very early ages. In Ecuador, one of the meaningful areas in education is English. The government has proposed to improve the English teaching parameters due to its importance in the teaching – learning process; in spite of that, a polemic topic persists in relation to the number of students that a class should have. From this polemic, a question raises; how effective can be to have classes with a few students in the English teaching – learning process.

This study is about “teachers and students’ perceptions of teaching English in small classes in Ecuador” it is important since it has the intention to discover if teaching and learning English in small classes would have any benefit for students and teachers, and also how students and teachers feel about learning and teaching English in these small classes. Another purpose of this study is to discover which strategies and resources benefit the teaching of English in small classes, and if there are any limitations at the moment of teaching English in small classes.

Regarding previous research on the topic, one of the studies carried out by Education Bureau, T. G. (2009) had as a purpose to discover if pupils in small classes make better progress in attainment and improvement with respect to attitudes and motivation compared to pupils in normal size classes. One of the most important findings was that teachers experimented the use of different teaching approaches. While teachers in regular classes mostly used whole class instruction, teachers in small classes were asking more challenging questions, making use of pair and group work and engaging individual pupils in more sustained interactions. A limitation found along this process was about timetabling lessons, they are difficult to be managed in a 35-minute session;

this is too short to implement effective practices even though there were a few students in the class.

Another study, where it was found that small classes actually help students and teachers in the process of teaching and learning English, was carried out by Salaudeen, (2013). Some of the purposes established by this study were: to know if the number of students' population has any effect on their learning, to recognize how effective a teacher's method is in a large class and in a small class, and if the lesson objectives are achievable in a large class-size and in small class-size. The analysis from research affirm that students' population has an effect on their learning, 66.7% of students population stated that their teachers' methodology is not effective in an overpopulated class and a 100% of the teachers equally supported that a teaching method is effective in a class of fewer students. There was also found from the study that teachers' responses are used to determine the effectiveness of teaching methods in small classes. Based on the responses which state that 66.7% unanimously agreed that teaching in small classes is not tasking, it can be deduced that teachers will be able to explore varieties of teaching methods when teaching in a small class, which makes it easy for the teacher to evaluate their teaching methodology. 97.7% of these teachers also found that assessment in overpopulated class was stressful.

A very important study in the teaching field was Harfitt, (2013) in which the purpose was to find out how teachers work in large and small classes to compare academic ability and strategies that can be used in each class. It was observed that teachers did adopt different approaches in their small classes compared with their larger classes; more group work and pair work, different interaction patterns, greater use of open questions, more individualization, lengthier wait-times, different classroom rules and more humor were incorporated in small classes. In the interviews, teachers talked about a positive classroom

atmosphere where students and teachers are closer, where teachers can provide more frequent and more effective types of feedback and where students are willing to speak up more than their counterparts in the large classes. The author considered the sample size as a limitation since a larger cohort of teachers would clearly benefit this type of research. Another limitation was a matter of time, since it was also unable to examine if and how the good practices identified in this study lead to academic achievement in students. For that to happen, longitudinal studies must be undertaken examining multiple teachers working in large and small classes over a longer period.

This research intends to benefit teachers, students, policy makers, and the educational community so they can see clearly how the planned activities, the purposes and the real practice of English can be accomplished in classes with a few students; also how small classes can give a more effective English teaching-learning process, how comfortable teachers and students feel toward the activities done in small classes.

A limitation found within the investigation was the fact that classes should have been watched longer than they were since researchers could have gotten a closer and more accurate approach on the whole process of teaching; it means not just a class, but the whole process in a year.

## METHOD

### *Setting and Participants:*

This research was carried out in a private educative institution in Quito – Ecuador. The sample population included six teachers from different levels, five classes with twenty students or less from school and high school to be observed and polled.

### *Procedures:*

The first step to carry out this research was to find literature to support the purpose of this study. Many books, magazines, articles, essays and studies were read in order to find out what former studies and revisions had brought into this field, what they noticed about large and small class size, how helpful or harmful was to have a few students in a class to teach and learn English as a foreign language.

The general approach of this study is qualitative and quantitative. The collected data was explored, explained, described and analyzed it also generates a sense of understanding to the research question to this investigation. This research is also descriptive since the most important characteristics and details of this topic were specified as well as the perceptions of the polled group were described along this research.

The observations, survey and note taking were applied as techniques of investigation. These techniques helped the researcher know directly teachers' and students' perceptions from school and high-school who were object of study to further analysis and description of their answers.

The instrument of investigation included questionnaires, which were applied to the sample population. The compilation of data was carried out in a direct way from the classrooms in the institution. Subsequently, the information was analyzed and tabulated. Afterwards this data was presented in histograms and frequency distribution tables done

in excel with the corresponding analysis, which helped establish the pertinent conclusions and recommendations to the research topic.

## **Discussion**

English is the most commonly used language among foreign language speakers. Throughout the world, when people with different languages come together they commonly use English to communicate. English is also the language of the technology, the language of the conferences, the language of development, because of these reasons English has become indispensable in nowadays education. Education in the world has become one of the most important issues to deal with for governments. Authorities want to know how to improve education and how to make the English teaching meaningful. For improving English teaching, one of the most polemic topics about teaching English has to do with the size of classes and how this affects students to develop an actual learning of English, the way teachers manage English learning, the interaction among teachers – students and students – students, the techniques teachers can use to work with these small classes and how this affects the learning environment. (Edutopia, 2011)

Under those circumstances mentioned before; many factors have been affecting foreign language learning. Some academics assure that the way how English has been taught, others affirm that is a matter of mixing the four skills that have to be developed in English (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), but many knowledgeable academics have stated that the main issue is a class size matter. (Harfitt, 2012) During years and years education has been changing. Professionals, pedagogues, academics and policy makers have been trying to find out how to teach English in an effective way. There have been many discussed issues about teaching English in schools, high schools, universities and even institutes, but one of the most discussed topics is class size, and how this affects English second and foreign language learners.

An instance of this class size English teaching controversy can be clearly seen in Ecuador; Ecuadorians have been studying English almost half of their lives and their entire academic life. In Ecuador little kids from three years old start to be taught English; then, they grow up and go to schools, high schools and universities, and they keep studying English. To study English is a requisite during all our school life, and it is one of the requirements to graduate or get a degree; however, why these people who have been studying English all their academic life are not actually able to use this language. Why aren't they able to have an actual communication in this language? Does the fact that Ecuadorians have been studying in classes with forty to fifty students have something to do with this?

In the same way, there has been a widely reported debate over the educational consequences of class size differences. Opinions vary from those academics and policy makers who argue that class size reduction is not cost effective to those who argue that it should be a main feature of educational policy. In some countries policies have changed in favor of small classes, there have been hundreds of studies that have proved that class size is an important matter, and definitively it affects to the English teaching – learning process. (Locastro, 2003). As it was previously stated, it is imperative to resolve the issue of class size. It has been very helpful and useful to carry out a study to determine how convenient a small class can be. The study carried out here in Ecuador about small classes will benefit English education in our country. It will lay a pattern which will show educators which techniques would be best to use in these small classes and how this will modify teachers' management of the class as well as the relationship teacher – students and the relationship among students too.

### *Managing Learning:*

How to manage the class and how to teach English in an effective way are very important concerns in the means to be a teacher. Many experimented teachers aim to know the best way to follow to have a class with great results, but there are many authors assuring different methods to carry out classes to obtain good results. Some of them assure that teachers need to follow certain steps to teach English and to manage learning so they can have more effective results, but like it is stated (UNESCO, 2006) when teachers have small classes they are able to have all students participate in an established activity asking and answering questions, discussing issues, laughing humorously, but in a large class, teachers would have trouble persuading all students to talk in front of 60 or more of their classmates. To have that amount of students is actually tough to carry out an activity and have all students interested on the activity.

Additionally, what teachers need to do first is to feel lucky for having a classroom with such a small number of students since having less than twenty students per class is perfect to carry out teacher's objectives. For managing the class in a more effective way, it is necessary to follow some recommendations; for example, first of all teachers should attract students' attention, everyone has to be listening and watching, then the teacher needs to give instructions with sequential steps, and be sure students understand what the teacher is explaining. Also, the teacher has to let students know clearly when they have to start their assigned work, and a final but very important step is to give students a personal feedback. Giving feedback is one of the most important everyday jobs of a teacher; this is how teachers can help students evaluate their own achievement and evolution (Edutopia, 2011). There are many ways to give feedback besides the informal *well done*. There are some methods to give feedback like giving praise and



encouragement, correcting, setting regular tests, having discussions about how the group is doing, giving individual tutorials... (Gower, Phillips, & Walters, 2005).

Subsequently, the way teachers do positive feedback will completely affect students' development. Teachers can consider giving merit marks, small rewards or prizes for good work; this is going to be possible only if there are not too many students in the classroom. This means that if there are more than twenty students in a classroom; that would be really hard for a teacher to give the proper feedback since he or she wouldn't be able to reach all students to help them fulfill teachers' expectations on their English as a second language learning process.

An instance of these kinds of feedback was identified in four French classrooms with kids who were from ten to eleven years old, where English second language students learnt the target language via subject-matter instruction (Gower, Philips, 2005). They applied four different types of feedback in anytime a student's mistake occurred. One of these kinds of feedback was the explicit correction where teachers told the students that what the student had just said was incorrect and had the student repeat his or her utterance with the proper correction; it could be a grammar or pronunciation mistake. Another way to give feedback was with the recast method where teachers reformulate all or a part of student's exclamation except the error. A third kind of feedback was the clarification request where teachers had students repeat what he or she had just said because his or her utterance was not clear or it could have been misunderstood. The last type of feedback was the metalinguistic feedback in which teachers provide the grammatical terminology that refers to the nature of the error.

### *Teacher – student and student – student interaction*

In the hope of having effective results in small classrooms is important to consider that one of the real benefits of small group teaching is that students are strongly encouraged to learn from each other. Teachers become facilitators and guides; if a teacher is not present one of the activities students would do is to help each other and correct each other's mistakes; students would become learners but also teachers at the same time. It is important to have students help their colleagues since this involvement would develop more responsibilities in students, and this responsibility will make students have a better understanding of the second language, also much more practice, and they will become more fluent. (Exley & Dennick, 2004).

Another effective technique that teachers can have access to when they have small classes is the fact that they have the chance to encourage their students' participation in classroom discussions; teachers would have the time to welcome students' contributions, and motivate them by their practices. To have students participate and feel free of being part of the class is something that can only be given by small classes. Learning another language is a matter of participation, students wouldn't be able to learn a second language if they are not actually practicing this language. (Howarth, 2006) "You can't learn to play a musical instrument without actually picking up the instrument and similarly it is difficult to learn a language without engaging with that language." (Howarth, 2006) For this reason, the most important activity teachers must apply in their daily classes is to get students participate and use the second language all the time.

In the same way, teachers need to promote learners interaction in order to help students succeed. Interaction helps students develop the target language; in order to develop interaction teachers need to promote socialization. Socialization is not an easy

labor to do, since students may feel tense to participate, but one of the advantages that a teacher with a small class has is that the teacher can focus on each student and listen to each pupil in the classroom (Howarth, 2006). Meanwhile; theoretically, the more students there are in a class the more possibilities for interaction there should be, but this is not the case in the practice. The more learners there are in a class, it is more difficult to develop interaction since there are more people to monitor; therefore, more chances of problems. A large class can produce excessive noise, and this noise can mask bad behavior and the use of their native language and this would result that the use of their second language; in this case English would be less. (Howarth, 2006).

As it has been noticed, a good description of how ineffective can be having many students in a classroom. If a teacher has more than twenty students in his or her classroom, it would be difficult for the teacher to have all his/her students participate; and not only for the teacher, but also for the students to improve their language production. To have an interactive environment in the classroom is very important for ESL students, since only through practice students will be able to learn and to actually speak English, so maximizing interaction in the classroom is an important part of a teacher's role. Interaction will not always happen spontaneously or freely, but teachers need to consider this issue before they get into the classroom, this means they need to be aware of this limitation and be prepared with activities that promote students' participation and second language practice. (Exley & Dennick, 2004)

## *Class Size*

Large classes keep being a reality in many countries, and they pose many challenges. There are hundreds of schools with large classes around the world. This issue is being considered by authorities and policy makers. It has been observed how polemic this topic has been, and that is the reason why many studies have been carried out to prove how weak the education can be with a group of students with more than twenty people and the trouble grows even more with classroom where there are even forty to sixty students. Based on these studies, many educators have opened their minds to a new point of view and teachers are giving an opportunity to small classes. (Hernandez, 2008)

Besides, large classes are often perceived as one of the major obstacles to ensure quality education (Hernandez, 2008). Indeed, there are many research studies that point to the disadvantages of large classes and advocate small classes as a factor to ensure quality education. In spite of this, large classes are a reality in many schools and many countries, often as a direct result of inadequate funding and the absence of political motivation to provide a sufficient number of teachers and classrooms that would ensure a quality education. Providing tools to address the difficulty of teaching large classes is thus an important step towards realizing quality education for all in school settings. (UNESCO, 2006).

Furthermore, teachers also need to realize that having such large groups of students in a classroom is a scary challenge for tutors since the discipline cannot be managed successfully; it is tricky to see where the problem is actually coming from with that number of students. It is also difficult to know each student deeply; there are so many students that a teacher would not have the chance to share time with each one. When there are so many students, teachers cannot even know them or remember all their names or even more important to keep the track of their work and development in a way that

teachers could actually help students improve their abilities. It is evident that the limited material would be a problem the moment to apply a task since every student needs to have his own material, and it is difficult for a teacher to create material for that number of students. Classes with fifty to sixty students would not have all the material they actually need (Hernandez, 2008).

On the other hand, teachers who have the privilege of working with small groups can actually know their students, and the most important teachers can help students develop their abilities. Something very important that teachers can definitively do in small groups is to motivate students to talk and participate, share their experiences, opinions, ideas and all this helps them develop their language skills.

There is a consensus that the optimum size for a small group teaching is between five and eight per group, six is the best (Booth & Hyland, 1996). With a group of more than 15, it is difficult to give all the learners the chance to practice in the target language, interactions are certainly needed in promoting proficiency in the target language. (Locastro, 2003) Communication is the heart of a small group, it is definitively valuable the fact that students want to talk about their ideas and feelings. It is necessary to explain students the value of talking about what they are thinking, or feeling and what their opinions are, all this will help students develop their language skills. Small groups let students talk and discuss about their ideas and concepts with their peers and teachers. Lecturers can induce students into thinking applying challenging questions; this also will benefit students, and they would be able to develop a deeper understanding in professional key words, and students gain insights into their attitudes, bias and prejudices (Exley & Dennick, 2004).

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

One of the fundamental goals in small group teaching is to encourage students to talk, debate, to question and to engage in deep learning activities. Teachers become facilitators and no longer lecturers of passive students. (Exley & Dennick, 2004). There are some techniques that are specially applied to small groups, but also there are activities that are designed for large groups, and teachers can easily apply them to small classes too. Teachers can put on practice all those activities keeping in track of each situation, being sure of having all students participate and the most important to get all student speak English in the classroom.

Considering some techniques to carry out in small classrooms are the “choose an item” technique where the teacher gives different topics and students choose one and have to talk about this topic for a minute. “A buzz group” is another popular procedure applied in small group teaching where the teacher gives a topic and divides the class in two different positions and has the class discuss about the topic. Another method is the “role play”, this is an extremely powerful way of encouraging small group participants to explore their own behavior and the behavior of others in simulated situations. The “brainstorming” is a very useful and popular small group teaching activity used to stimulate groups to generate a range of ideas, options and creative suggestions in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Teachers can make use of “cut-ups cards” technique where students try to find out the sequence of the cards and tell the story or explain the polemic capture on the scenes. A useful practice to carry out with small groups is “pass the pen” activity where all students pass the pen and each one contributes to create a story, or gives characteristics or solutions to a situation (Exley & Dennick, 2004).

*Learning environment in small classes*

The environment in a classroom is very important to lead the class. It is essential to have a good open environment to have better results. There are many factors to make up the class environment. Teachers' attitude is an important factor to focus; the teacher is the person who would make the class filled with happiness, enthusiasm, joy or simply boringness, tediousness, or even stress (Blatchford, 2003). To have a good class evolution; teachers should have already built a good classroom environment. There are ten techniques to follow to have a good and effective environment in a classroom (Edutopia, 2011). These techniques will be effective either for large classes or small classes, although all these techniques would be better applied in a small classroom because of the number of students.

The first step to have a good environment is to build a community in the classroom, this means to build a caring environment where each one cares for one another including the teacher (Edutopia, 2011). The second technique is to design a safe and friendly environment where students feel they are part of that place. The third technique is all about including routines, rules, norms and consequences. Routines and norms are established by the teacher, but the rules and consequences are decided by both teacher and students. The fourth step is to create a variety of communication channels, this means having varied and reliable options for students to talk to the teacher, this will help keep the class going well. The fifth and very important tip is to be always calm, fair and consistent. It's important to remember that students don't respect reacting teachers; also, teachers need to have the same attitude and feeling toward all his or her students (Edutopia, 2011).

The sixth strategy is to know all students in the classroom, that's why it is important to have a small number of students so teachers can actually know them. The seventh tip is to resolve conflicts quickly and wisely. The ninth tip to keep a positive environment is

to integrate positive classroom rituals like having students say how they are feeling, or say something positive about others, give students a kiss when they are leaving, or maybe recall the good moments that happened that day or even the thing students learn about that day. The last strategy is to keep it real; this means choose topics about things students like including music, TV shows games, etc (Edutopia, 2011).

Equally important to produce an effective class environment is the number of students in the classroom; some of the benefits of having small classes are: the better coaching a teacher can give, professors will be able to focus attention on each pupil in the classroom, monitor their behavior, give students more opportunities to participate in class, correct students' mistakes on time, and give them feedback on the right time. Another advantage is that many activities are adapted to each student's need, teachers can also be more in touch with students' parents, so small groups are better known by the teacher. (Blatchford, 2003).

As a matter of fact, students feel engaged to the material in small classes; also, the instructor can pose questions constantly, and learners are prepared to answer these questions because of the close attention teachers are posing to them. The educator can always arrange the classroom as it is necessary; a rounded circle where everyone is looking to one another would be the best way to have everyone connected. Pupils can work in pairs, in groups, with one another and with the teacher too; they are able to interact with the material, but also with the teacher (Center, 2008).

Furthermore, when teachers are managing the learning environment in a small class tutors can pay close attention to the time, the time can be distributed according to the number of students in the class. The space is another important matter teachers can work on small classes; the teacher can make the decision if the work will be for the whole class, pair work, team work or maybe individual according to the time and space. While students



are working it is important to monitor the class. If the teacher monitors the class, the teacher would be able to know how a kid works and how this kid learns. Teachers must develop the ability of *eye contact*, this means to use their eyes to see students into their eyes, and warn them that teachers are watching them out. (Wrag, 2001)

On the other hand, the learning environment in a large class is completely different from a small class. In a large class students prefer to be cut off the action in the classroom, they just aisle themselves. In this kind of classes students work on their own or in loosely network groups. Most of the work is done by pair work or even by themselves, work is not checked, there is not feedback, not help from the teacher; not because of the teacher, just because of the number of students. The environment is kind of dim; there is more noise, less active participation, and less engagement with the class and with the teacher's instruction. (Rashed & Robyn, 2013)

Many researchers have recognized the relevance of having small classes to improve the process of teaching and learning English as a second language. Thus, Salaudeen (2013) performed a study with the concern of five main issues. The first was to know if students' population has any effect on their learning, the second and third questions were to identify how effective a teacher's method of teaching is in a small class, as well as in a large class, the fourth question intended to find out if the objectives of the lesson are achievable in a large class, and the final question was about the level of students' participation in a large class.

In the view of the study; interviews, questionnaires were distributed to thirty-six teachers and three-hundred students from various schools in Ilorin. The data indicates that students' population affects students' learning; and it also indicates that teachers' methods for teaching in a large class are not effective, but teachers have managed the situation professionally; for the fourth question, results show clearly that students'

performance in a small class is better than students' performance in a large class, for question five, the responses were unanimous, 100% of the teachers agreed that teacher-student interactions increase in a small class.

From the results of the research, it is evident that class-size has great effects on the teaching and learning of English Language. Students of the large class suffer a lot in their acquisition of skills in English Language. They are subjected to lack of adequate materials and low dedication to the study of the language. The teachers of the large classes equally find it difficult to discharge their duties as a result of quantity of students.

In another interesting research study that was carried out by Education Bureau (2009); their aim was to explore the possibility that students make better progress in attained, and improved attitudes, and motivation in small classes compared to pupil in large size classes. This study was applied on small classes and in normal large ones on the same schools over the first three years of the pupils' primary schooling. The instruments and techniques applied included questionnaires, observation, and surveys.

The first strong evidence was that teachers in small classes experimented the use of different teaching approaches, they were asking more challenging questions, and using pair and group work and engaging individual pupils in more persistent interactions meanwhile teachers in regular classes were mostly using whole class instruction. The second evidence was a result of these teachers' improvements in small classes, teachers have been able to improve the pupils' whole performance whereas in regular classes improvements tend to be concentrated on the more capable group. Third, the evidence was that, smaller classes appeared to have particular benefits for children during the initial year of primary school. Fourth, teachers have felt more relaxed and enthusiastic when teaching a smaller class; and fifth, small class teaching was shown to work best when

Principals took an active part in curriculum development and in the teachers' professional development.

Equally important is the research carried out by Harfitt, (2012) in an urban area of Hong Kong where four English teachers accepted to be video-recorded during over one cycle of teaching in a high school. They were all responsible for teaching one small class and one large class. The research had clear results in favor of small classes regarding teachers' interaction with students and also the techniques used by teachers like more challenging questioning and feedback. In the interview, teachers and participants talked about a positive classroom atmosphere where students and teachers are closer, where teachers can provide more frequent and more effective types of feedback and where students are willing to speak up.

Another interesting research was the one developed by the same researcher Harfitt (2012) it shows how class size influences cultural values and learning style modalities. This study employed case studies in four high schools where teachers were teaching a small class and a large class of the same year grade and of the similar academic abilities.

The data was derived from multiple classroom observations and students' interviews, and it shows evidently that students in the smaller classes feel more confident than students in large classes. Students from small classes openly admitted that they could "speak up" more and that it had given them a lot of confidence when compared to their previous learning experience in larger classes. Humor also seemed more prevalent in the smaller classes as students enjoyed making spontaneous comments to their teacher and to each other. Crucially, student responses suggest that being in smaller classes helped them to feel less discomfort speaking in English when compared with their peers in larger classes. The students' acknowledged that they liked English more and were willing to speak up more as a result of being in a smaller class. To conclude it is important to notice

that students reported helping each other more in smaller classes and observations revealed that teachers adopted group work more often in their reduced-size classes. Another way of explaining the apparent reduced anxiety in the small classes is by looking at the way the teachers implemented their pedagogy in large and reduced size classrooms. In the smaller classes, students had more opportunities for participation through the teachers' use of open questioning techniques

### Description, Analysis And Interpretation Of Results

In this section, the results of the data analysis are presented. The data was collected and then processed and presented on this research report. Field observations and questionnaires were applied to 94 students and 6 teachers from different levels. Four

fundamental questions were analyzed to find out the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes, the strategies and resources that benefit the teaching of English in small classes, how students feel in classes with a few students, and which restriction teachers could find at the moment of teaching English in small classes.

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

To find out what the benefits of teaching English to small classes are, eight questions were established, ninety-four students and six teachers were polled, and six class observations were carried out.

Chart #1: Students' perceptions

No	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	The activities done help students apply what they are learning.	54	58%	35	37%	4	4%	1	1%	94	100 %
2	Students are attentive and participative in class activities.	15	16%	57	61%	18	19%	4	4%	94	100 %
3	Students can concentrate better since there is not much noise	35	37%	36	38%	14	15%	9	10%	94	100 %
4	The classroom space permits carrying out all the planned activities.	52	55%	33	35%	8	9%	1	1%	94	100 %
5	The teacher gives appropriate feedback.	51	54%	30	32%	13	14%	0	0%	94	100 %
6	There is interaction among students.	25	27%	28	30%	20	21%	21	22%	94	100 %
7	There is interaction between teacher and students.	48	52%	33	35%	7	7%	6	6%	94	100 %
8	The teacher remembers students' names	77	82%	11	12%	5	5%	1	1%	94	100 %

Chart #2: Teachers' perceptions

No.	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	It's easier for teacher to design activities that let students put into practice what they have learnt.	5	83%	1	17%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%

2	Students are attentive and participate in class activities.	2	33%	4	67%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
3	Students can concentrate better since there is not much noise in the classroom.	2	33%	4	67%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
4	The classroom space helps teachers develop the planned activities.	4	67%	2	33%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
5	Teachers can give an appropriate feedback.	4	67%	2	33%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
6	It is possible to do activities that help students interact with one another.	5	83%	1	17%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
7	There is more interaction between teacher and students.	5	83%	1	17%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
8	It's easier for the teacher to remember students' names.	4	67%	2	33%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%

Figure #1: Students' perceptions

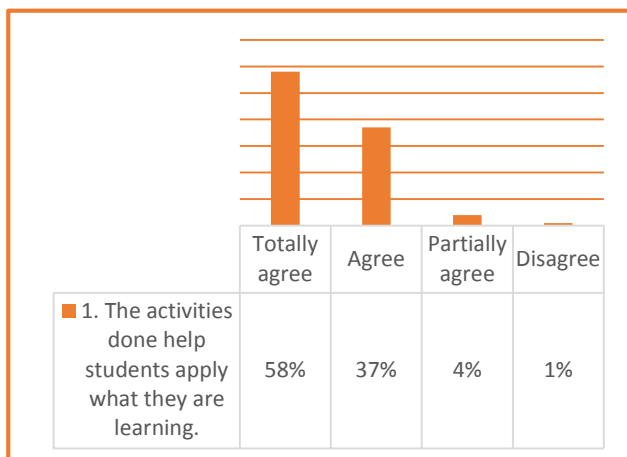
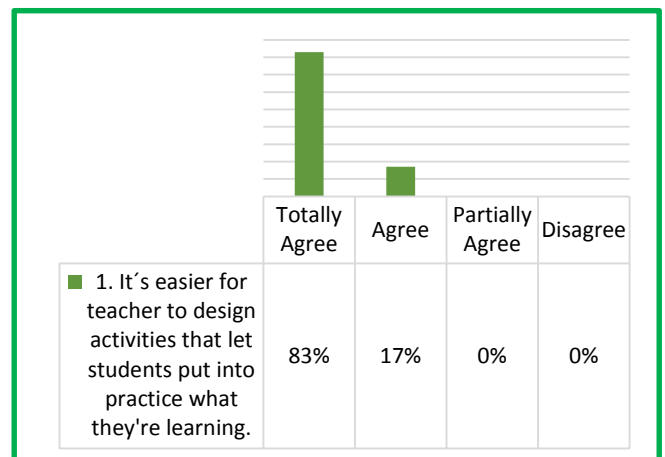


Figure #2: Teachers' perceptions



It was gleaned from table #1 that most of the students (58%) totally agree that the activities applied by their teachers in their small class group benefit them to strengthen their knowledge; additionally, 37% of this sample population agree with this. Regarding teachers' opinion, it is evident that 83% of teachers definitively agree with this, 17% of the population just agree; all this shows that most of the whole population reach agreement with respect to this aspect. In the same way, the observation results show clearly how the activities applied to the students helped them use this information in their daily life.

It is evident that students feel they can actually practice what they are learning because they have the benefit of being in a small class. As it was said by Howard, 2006

it is important to have students practice what they are learning, and small classes lead students to actually practice their foreign language.

Figure #3: Students' perceptions

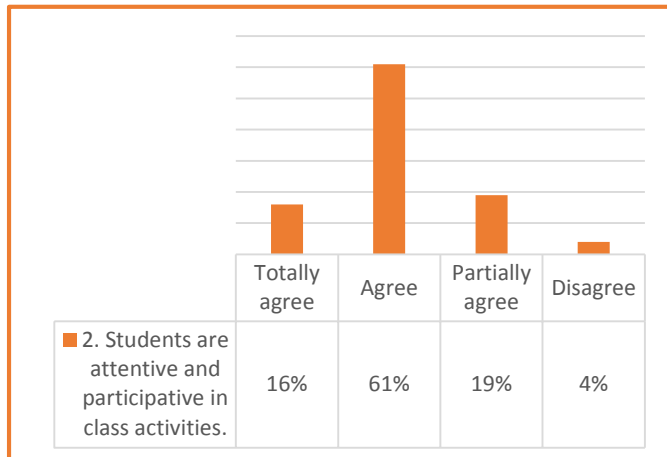
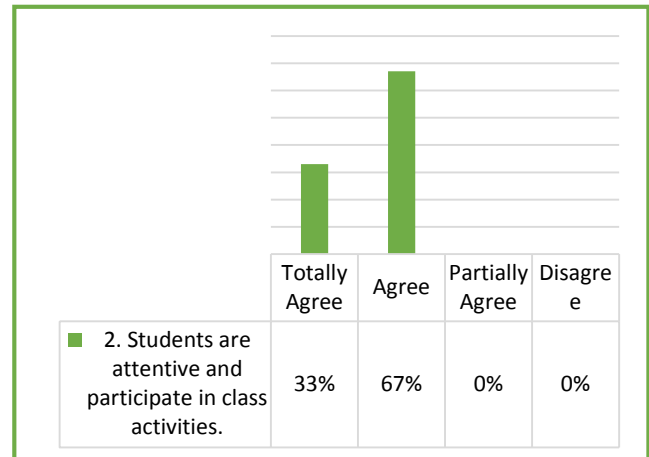


Figure #4: Teachers' perceptions



The aim of this second question is to find out how attentive and participative students are for the benefit of having a small class. As we can see in figures 3 and 4, there is a great number of participants who totally agree or only agree, 77% of the students, and all the teachers agree with the fact that having a small class benefits the process of paying attention and participating in the class activities.

When the observation was carried out, the results resembled the fact that most of the students were very attentive and participative to the teacher's lecture although some of them, less than the half, were doing something else. In two of the observed classes students were very participative, but in the other three classes students were quiet but not focused, some of them were into their own stuff.

For instance, it has been evidenced that even if a teacher has a small class; if the process of teaching is not right, students will not be focused or interested in learning, so teachers have to go in both ways; look for students' attention and also look for their interest.

One of the greatest tips given (Gower, Philips, & Walters, 2005) is the fact that teachers need to draw students' attention, teachers need to be sure that every student in class is listening and watching. Teachers can never give papers or handouts before the explanation since students will be distracted. Teachers have to ask students to clear the space over their desks before the lecture begins. Teachers need to break down the instruction specially when an activity requires a series of steps and check understanding as teacher develop the class. This would keep students not only quiet but focused.

Figure #5: Students' perceptions

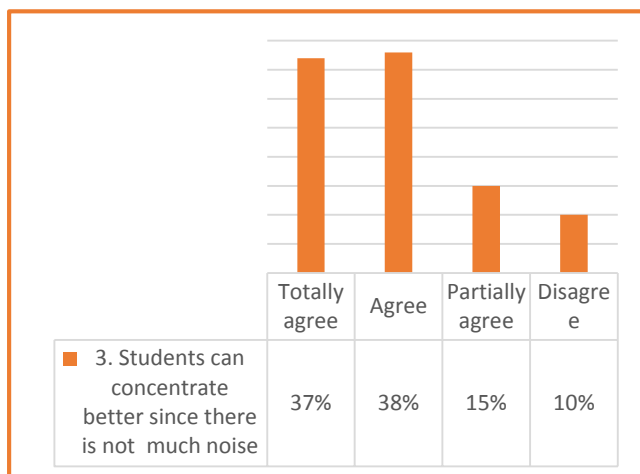
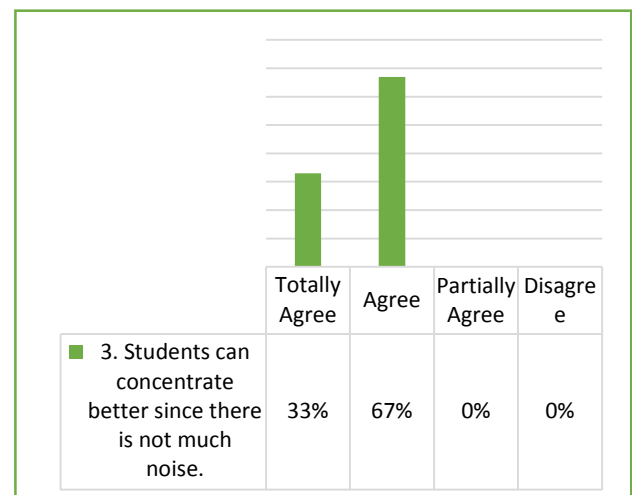


Figure #6: Teachers' perceptions



Regarding the second question, most of the students (75%) agree or totally agree with the fact that having a small class helps students concentrate better since there is not much noise. Similarly, teachers agree with this aspect. However, the observation demonstrated that although classes in highschool were quiet, classes in elementary school were extremely noisy eventhough there were eighteen or nineteen students per class.

Having an organized and quiet class will help teachers and students in the process of teaching and learning english, as it was stated in (Edutopia, 2011); teachers have to adress to conflict as soon as it happens, this means solving the problem or issue that is



going on, even the noise would be something that has to be fast resolved, it is also said that it is very important to design a safe, friendly, and well-managed classroom environment.

Figure #7: Students’ perceptions

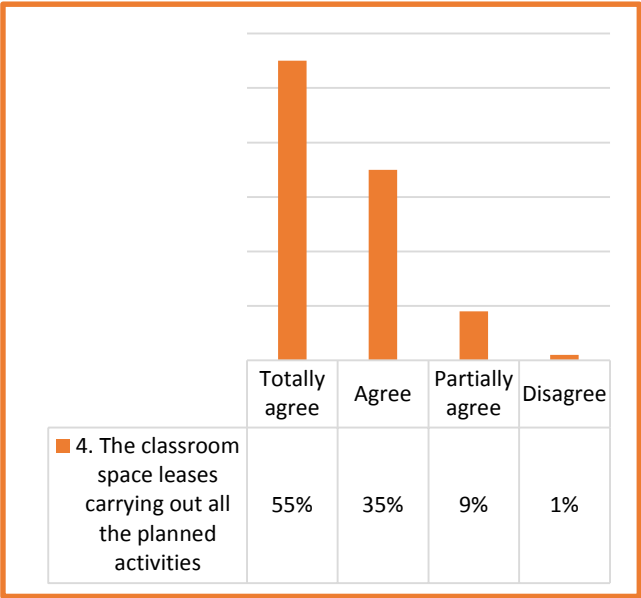
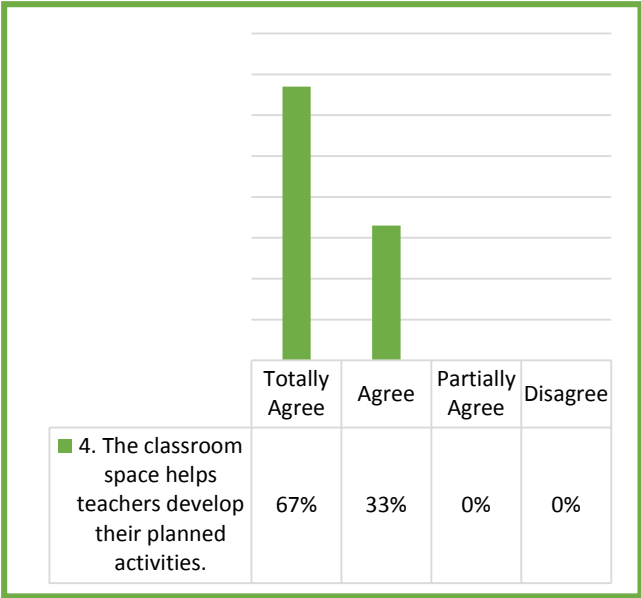


Figure #8: Teachers’ perceptions



Figures #7 and 8 display that 90% of students totally agree or agree with the fact that having a few students permits using the space in the classroom to carry out the different activities assigned by the teacher. Just as students, all the teachers concord that having a few students helps them carry out the activities planned for the clas. In the observation, it was noticeble that many activities were done in the class and the space was good enough to develop them; teachers were able to organize different activities and split them up in small groups, they assigned a task to each group, then put all the groups together to finish the activity, all of that was posible because of the quantity of people in a space, a small class leads to a much more organized class.

It is required to remember that interaction does not only promote language development but it also fosters the development of social skills that people need to operate succesfully in any culture (Howarth, 2006). To promote interaction in a class is part of a

teacher's work and a small class will give students the opportunity to participate. Additionally, a small class gives the teachers the opportunity to use the space in a proper way and to carry out teacher's planned activities.

Figure #9: Students' perceptions

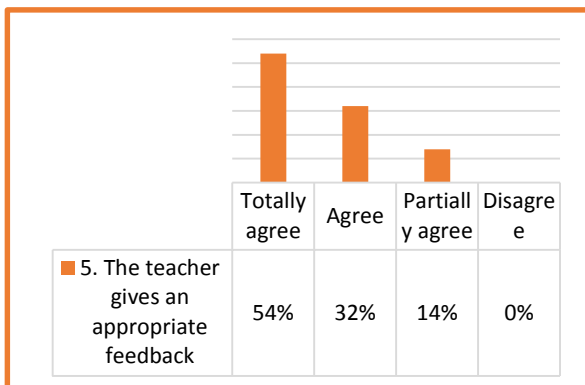
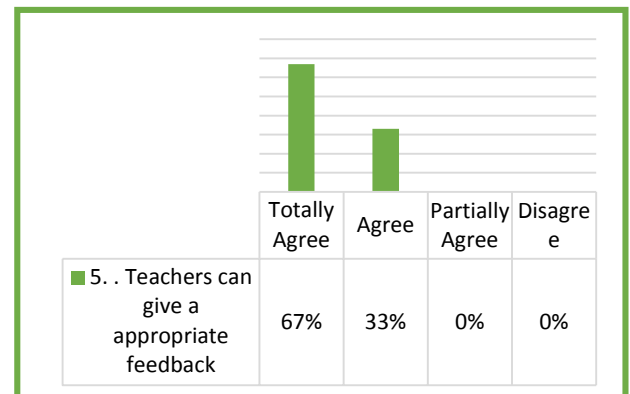


Figure #10: Teachers' perceptions



Teachers who monitor childrens' work effectively during class time have a clear picture about childrens' learning (Wrag, 2001). It is meaningful to know what individuals and groups are doing during the class time. When teachers walk around the class, they are going to be able to notice what mistakes students are making and they will have the opportunity to give an opportune time feedback to students. As it is seen in figures 9 and 10, 100% of the teachers and 86% of the students from the sample population strongly agree or just agree that having a small class gives teachers and students the opportunity to give and receive a proper feedback.

It was observed how four of the five teachers were able to walk around the class, check students' work, correct their mistakes, listen to students' doubts and answer them, and all of that was because of the small class size.

The aim of feedback is to bring selfawarness. Giving feedback is one of the most important responsibilities in the teachers' work since is the teacher who is going to lead students realize about their mistakes, their capacity to correct them up and the ability to

learn from them at the right moment when students are making the mistake (Gower, Philips, & Walters, Teaching practice a handbook for teachers in training, 2005), that is why to have a few students in a class is a great advantage for the teaching and learning process.

Figure #11: Students' perceptions

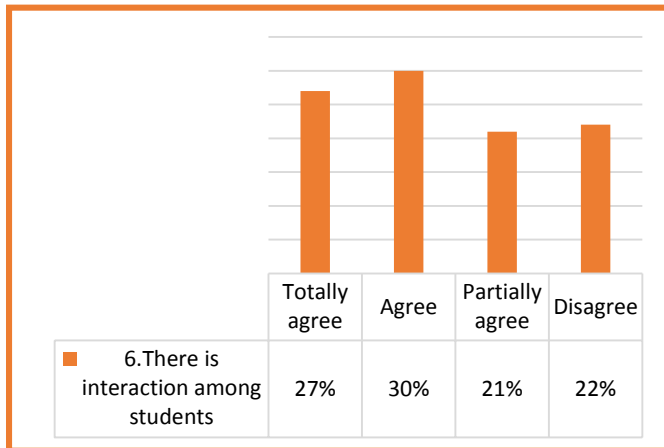


Figure #12: Teachers' perceptions

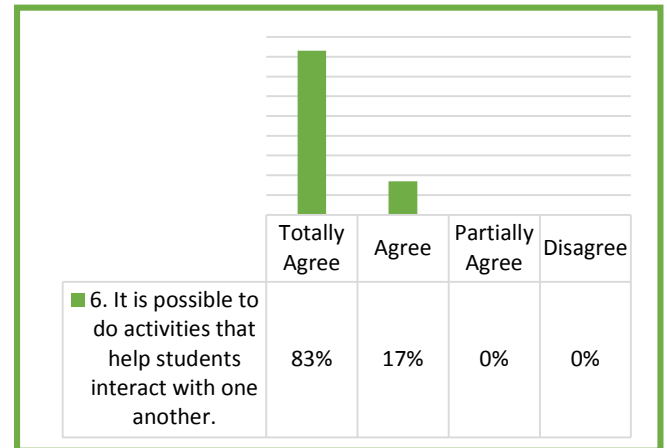


Figure 11 evidences that 57% of the students totally agree and agree that there is interaction among them because of the small number of students in class. It is notorious that it is not a great part of the student sample population since 43% of them partially agree or disagree with this idea.

On the other hand, according to the teachers' perception, 100% of the sample population percieve a small class as a great chance to have students interact with one another.

On the observation it was visible how students were directed and guided to interchange ideas and apply dialogues where they had to interact with one another. Five of the six observed classes showed that the directions students received, or activities where students had to interact with one another were applied effectively.

All this interaction would benefit students in their English second language learning process; in the same way, it is useful for teachers. A small group of students can be

encouraged to talk, think, and share much more cheerfully than a larger group. (Exley & Dennick, 2004). Participation is fundamental at the moment of learning something, it is necessary to practice the language to be engaged with the language (Howarth, 2006).

Figure #13: Students' perceptions

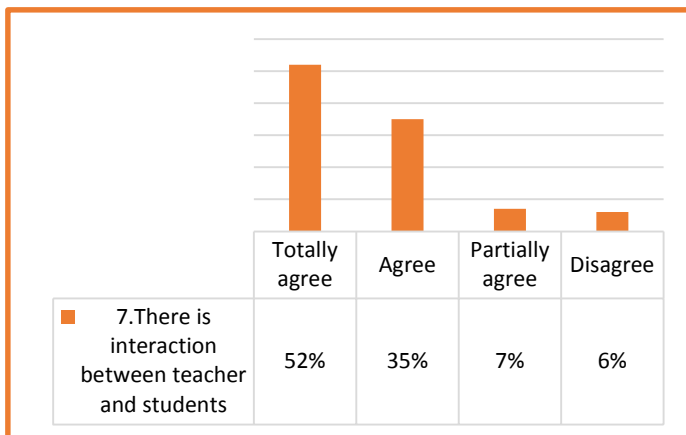
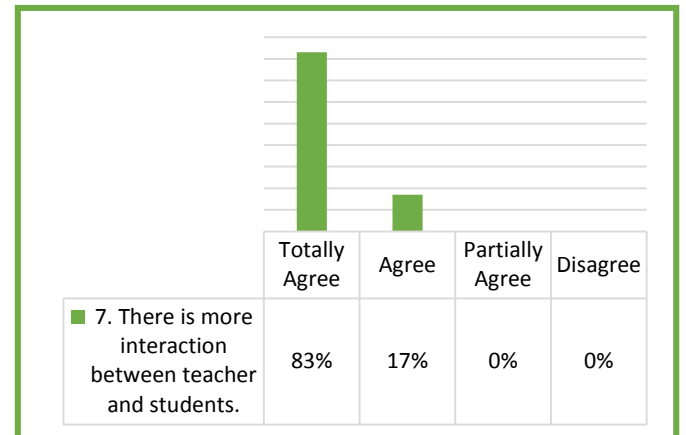


Figure #14: Teachers' perceptions



Figures 13 and 14 denote the high percentage of students (87%) and teachers (100%) who totally agree and only agree with the fact that having a small class size gives the teacher and the student the possibility to interact with each other. Teachers and students agree with the idea that having a small class gives the teacher and students the chance to keep in touch. It was already pointed by (Exley & Dennick, 2004) “small group teaching allows learners to discuss ideas and concepts with fellow learners and teachers.”

Figure #15: Students' perceptions

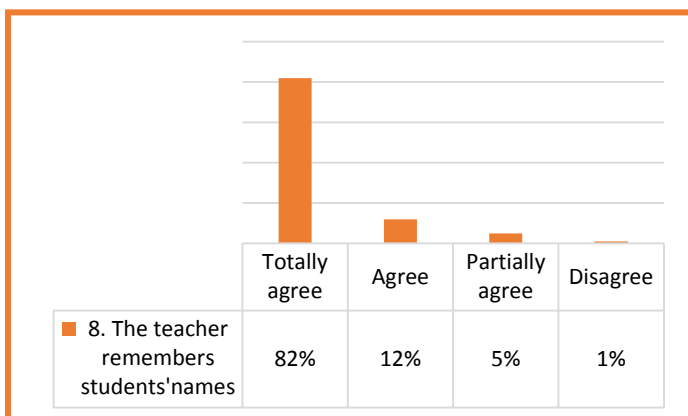
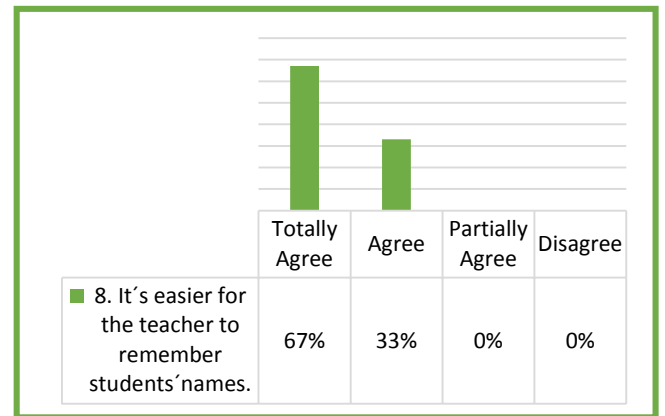


Figure #16: Teachers' perceptions



In the same way, teachers (94%) and students (100%) from the sample population agree and totally agree with the idea that teachers easily remember students' names in a small class. The interaction that occurs in small classes makes teachers learn the students' names and remember them easily. All this interaction and the process of remembering students' names make the route of teaching and learning significant (Edutopia, 2011).

In response to the first question of this research, the results and analysis demonstrate that there are many benefits students and teachers can have from the fact of having classes with a few students. It has been evidenced that students in small classes can be more attentive and they can concentrate better, and all these benefits teachers to design and apply activities that lead students to put what they have learned into practice. Furthermore, the results showed that teachers and students agree with the fact that being part of a small class benefits them to give and receive a proper feedback, and interaction is part of their daily activities in class.

*What strategies and resources are favorable for the process of teaching English in classes with a few students?*

**Chart #3 Students' perception**

No.	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
9	The performed activities help students practice the listening skills	40	43%	45	48%	9	9%	0	0%	94	100%
10	The performed activities help students practice the speaking skills	55	59%	22	23%	16	17%	1	1%	94	100%
11	The performed activities help students practice the reading skills	61	65%	23	24%	9	10%	1	1%	94	100%

12	The performed activities help students practice writing skills	57	61%	24	26%	11	12%	2	2%	94	100%
13	Group activities are applied	42	45%	23	24%	17	18%	12	13%	94	100%
14	Individual activities are applied	71	76%	20	21%	3	3%	0	0%	94	100%
15	The teachers use technological resources	23	24%	20	21%	28	30%	23	24%	94	100%
16	The teachers use didactic materials	12	13%	18	19%	43	46%	21	22%	94	100%

**Chart #4 Teachers' perception**

No.	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
9	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the listening skills	2	33%	4	67%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
10	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the speaking skills	3	50%	3	50%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
11	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the reading skills	3	50%	3	50%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
12	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the writing skills	4	67%	2	33%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
13	It's easier to design and apply group activities	3	50%	3	50%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
14	It's easier to design and apply individual activities	4	67%	2	33%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
15	It's easier to use technological resources	3	50%	3	50%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
16	It's easier to use didactic resources	2	33%	4	67%	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%

Figure #17: Teachers' perceptions

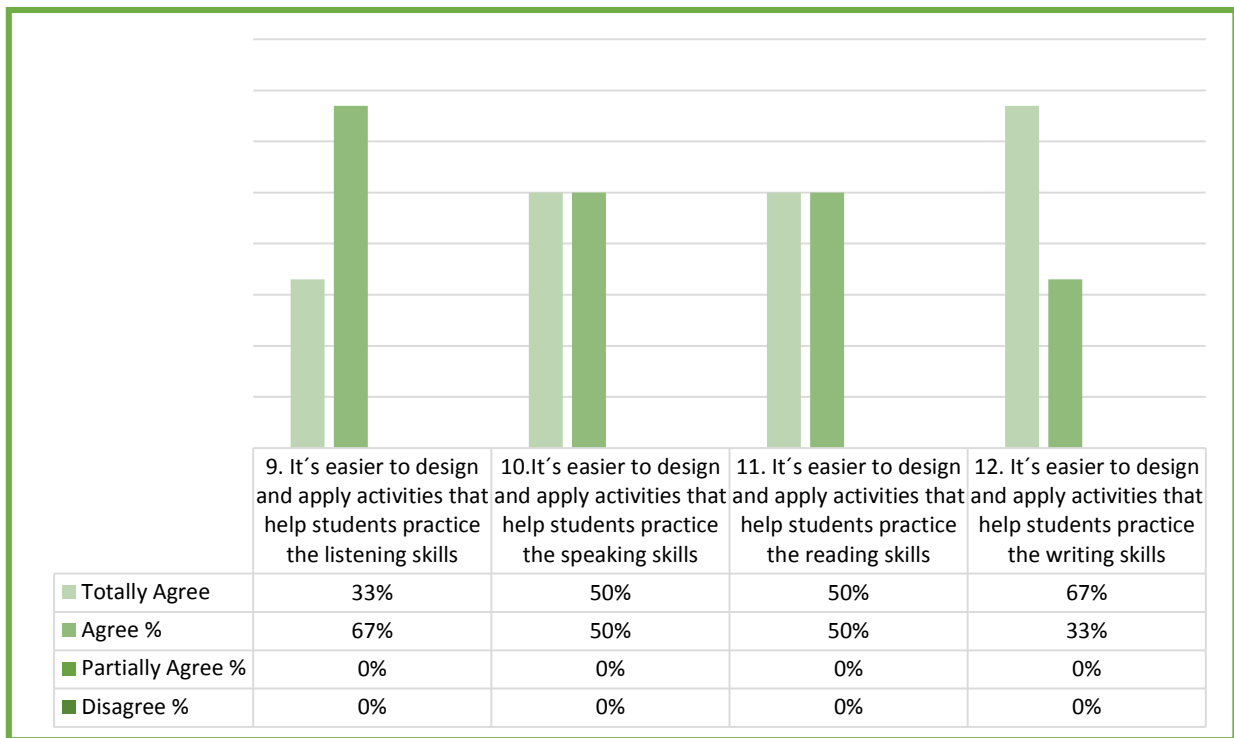
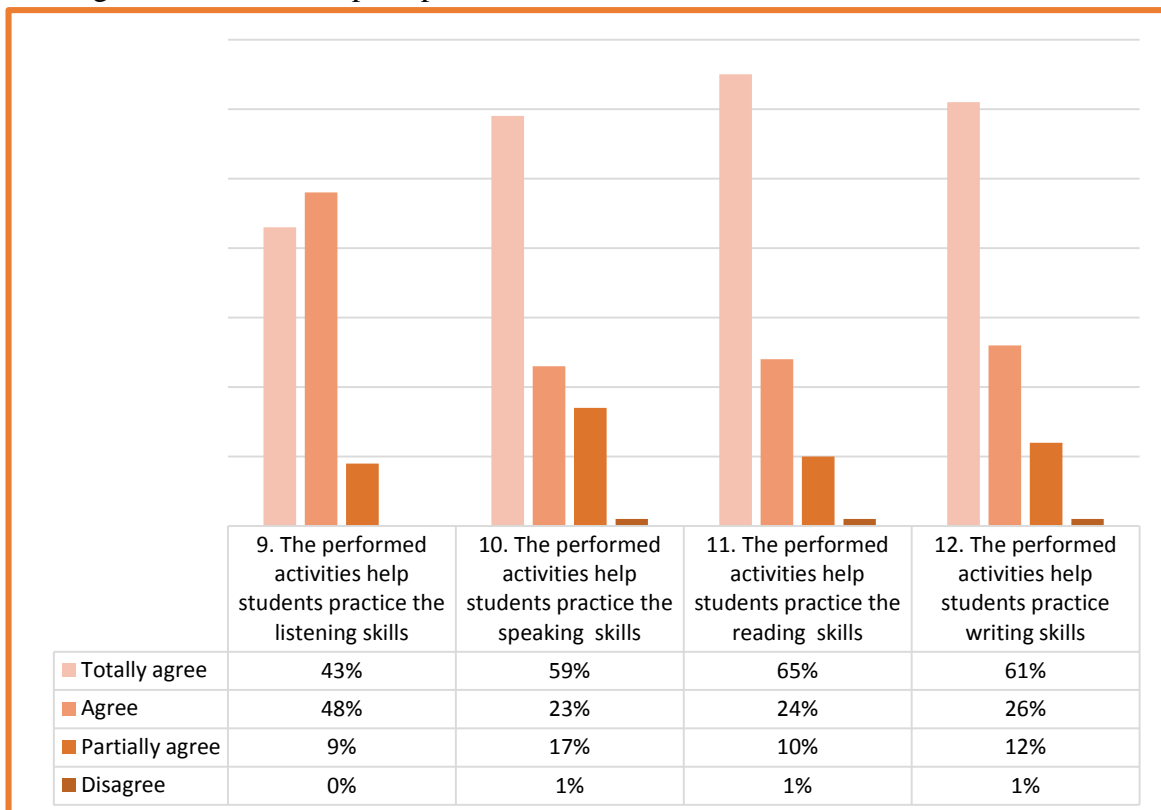


Figure #18: Students' perceptions



When we learn a language, there are four skills that we need to master for a complete communication. When we learn our native language, we usually learn to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and finally to write. These are called the four basic "language skills"

As it is seen in figure 17 and 18 for question number 9, from the questionnaires, it is evident that most of the students' population (91%) agree and totally agree with the fact that having a small class allows them practice the listening skill in their daily classes. The same happens with teachers; 100% of teachers agree or totally agree that having a small class helps them design and apply activities that make students practice the listening skill. As it was seen in the observation, in all of the classes visited, teachers were able to apply activities where students practiced the listening skill, this was possible because of the number of students. As it was stated by (Hernandez, 2008, pág. 108), "A real language learning is based on the practice of it, that is why having a small group enables teachers and students to carry out activities to strengthen the process of learning english as a second language."

Subsequently, it is evidenced that regarding question 10 from the teachers sample population, 100% of teachers totally agree or agree with the fact that having small classes allows teachers to design activities that help students practice the speaking skill; in addition, most of the students population (99%) totally agree, agree, or partially agree with this fact. Furthermore, the observation of the five classes revealed that having a small number of students allows them to participate and practice their speaking skill. It is a real benefit to have a small class at the moment of planning activities to teach English to foreign language speakers (Exley & Dennick, 2004).

With respect to the reading skill, it is perceived that 100% of the teachers population totally agree or agree that a small class lets them design activities which help



students practice the reading skill; meanwhile, from the sample students’ population, 89% of the students consider that being part of a small class allows them practice the reading skill. On the other hand, the observation demonstrated that students were partially able to apply activities to develop reading skills.

Regarding the activities that help students practice writing, 100% of teachers agree and totally agree that it is easier to create and carry out activities that benefit students practice the writing skill; meanwhile, most of the students (87%) affirm that being in a small class allows them to practice activities where they develop the writing skills. In the observed classes, the writing activities were applied in two of the five classes.

These four language skills are fundamental at the moment of learning a new language, and they require daily practice. Small calsses can give teachers the opportunity to develop these skills and give the students the chance to practice them (Harfitt, 2012)

Figure #20 Students’ perceptions

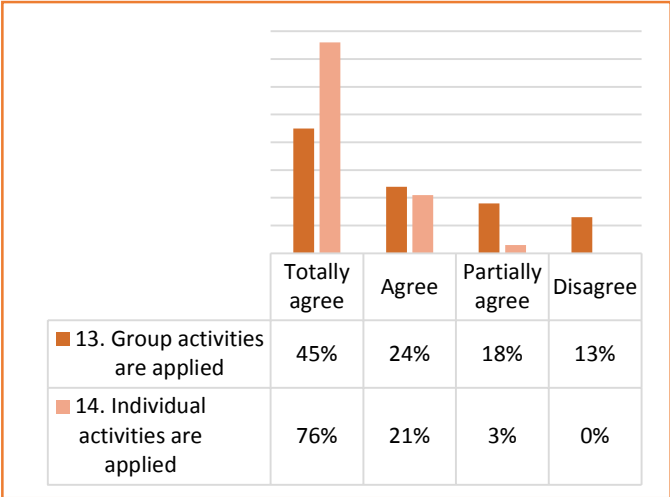


Figure #21Teachers’ perceptions

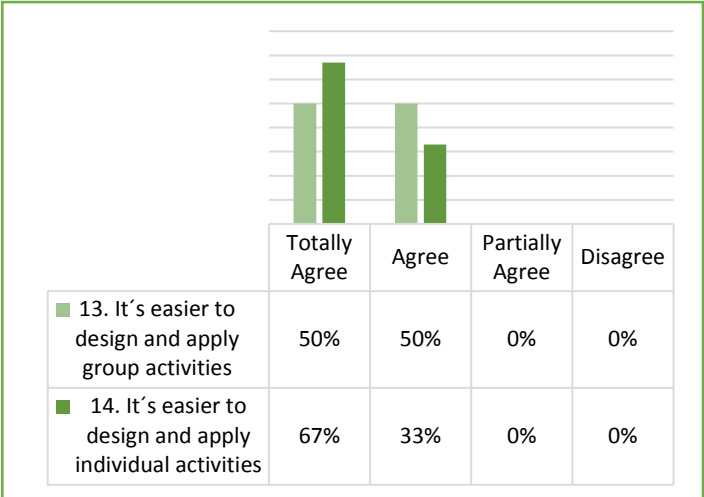


Figure #20 and 21 show that 69% of students polled totally agree or agree with the fact that group activities are applied in their classes and this happens because of the number of students in their classes. Similarly, 100% of teachers agree or totally agree that

having a few students in a class helps them apply group activities in order to teach English.

Regarding individual activities, they are necessary for teaching and learning english. From the students sample population, 97% of the students consider that individual activities are applied in their classes and 100% of the teachers consider a great privilege to have small classes where they can design and apply individual activities .

With regard to class activities, Wrag (2001) claims that one of the most important decisions teachers make about the management of a class is whether to use whole class, group work, individual work assignments or a combination of these three, but it is important to manage these three strategies in the teaching process.

Figure #22 Students' perceptions

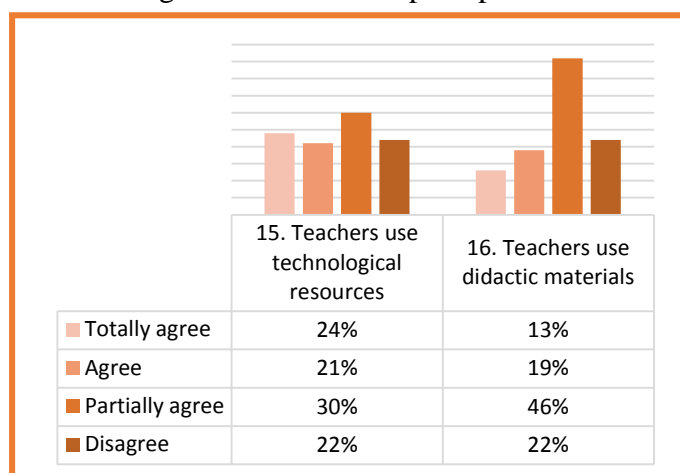
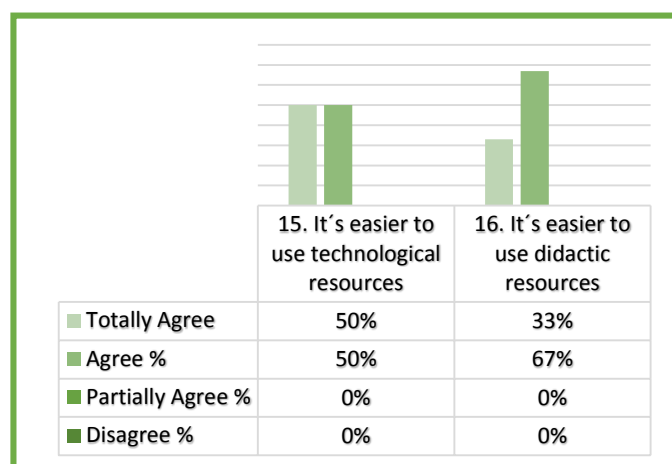


Figure #23 Teachers' perceptions



According to figure 22, it is observed that 75 % of students population partially agree, agree or totally agree that their teachers use technological resources in their small classes, and 78% of students also consider that their teachers use didactic materials in their classes.

On the other hand, all the teachers (100%) from the sample population recognize that it is easier for them to use technological resources, and didactic materials in their classes since the class is small.

In the observation, it was clearly evidenced how three of the five observed teachers were using didactic materials and all of them were using technological resources in their classes.

To use didactic materials or technological resources is completely indispensable at the moment of teaching English (Haager, Aceves, & Klingner, 2010) Didactic materials are considered as the conjunction of contents and instructional design used to guide learning and teaching processes in that way that teachers can reach their students and obtain a fruitful response.

Regarding the response to the second research question, the results demonstrated that some of the strategies and resources that benefit the teaching of English in small classes are activities that develop the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking like reading articles, writing essays, describing scenes, listening and completing gaps. Teachers have the possibility to use technological resources like projectors, laptops, tablets in order to carry out their planned activities, they are also able to develop all those activities in an individual work or group work, and all of this is possible because teachers are working with a few students and they can reach to all of them.

It is easier for teachers who work in small classes to plan and carry out activities that help students develop the four main skills in this foreign language.

*How do students feel toward learning in a class where there are a few students?*

How students feel toward their learning is meaningful at the moment of achieving new knowledge. This section presents how students feel toward participation in class, speaking in front of their classmates, and having a healthy competition in a class with a few students.

**Chart #5 Students' perception**

No.	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
17	I feel relaxed when I have to speak in front of my classmates	30	32%	41	44%	16	17%	7	7%	94	100%
18	I feel part of the class because I have the chance to participate in class	46	49%	35	37%	10	11%	3	3%	94	100%
19	I feel motivated to participate because we are a few classmates in the class	38	41%	37	39%	15	16%	4	4%	94	100%
20	I feel comfortable because I can have a healthy competition against the other students	39	42%	23	24%	21	22%	11	12%	94	100%

**Chart #6 Teachers' perception**

No.	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
17	Students feel relaxed when they have to speak in front of their classmates in class.	2	33%	3	50%	1	17%	0	0	6	100%
18	Students feel part of the class because they have more opportunities to participate in class.	3	50%	3	50%	0	0%	0	0	6	100%
19	Students feel more motivated to participate because there are a few students in class	3	50%	2	33%	1	17%	0	0	6	100%
20	Students feel comfortable because they can have a healthy competition against one another	4	66%	1	17%	1	17%	0	0	6	100%

Figure #24 Students' perceptions

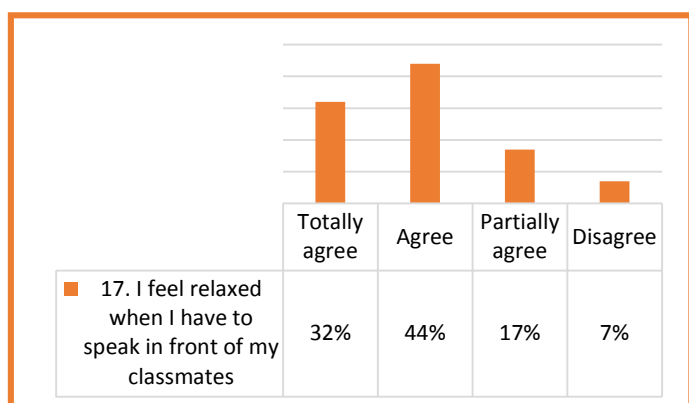
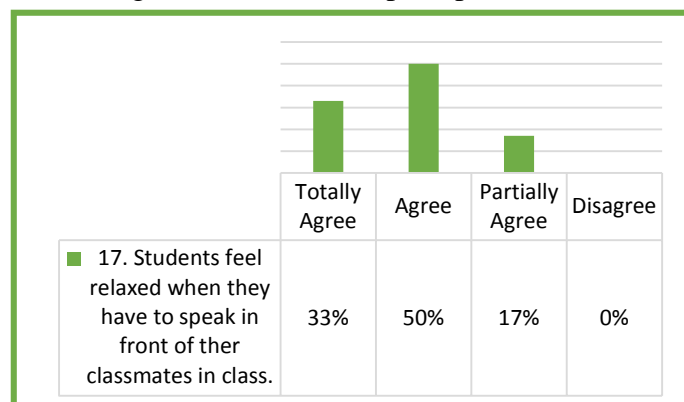


Figure #25 Teachers' perceptions



Figures 24 and 25 show how students feel toward speaking in front of their classmates. According to the students' sample population, 76% of students feel relaxed when they have to speak in front of their peers, and 17% partially agree with this fact.

On the other hand, 83% of the teachers from the sample population agree and totally agree with the fact that students feel relaxed when they have to speak in front of their classmates because there are a few students in their classes; similarly, in the observed classes it was noticeable that students feel confident at the moment of participating in front of their classmates.

It is necessary to have a friendly, safe and well managed classroom environment where students feel like being part of a family, where they can talk and listen to each other so they can feel confident of participating and giving their personal opinion. (Edutopia, 2011)

It is not that easy for teachers to create a relaxing and calm environment where students feel confident and relaxed, but one of the good odds to make this possible is the fact that there are a few students in a class and the teacher has the possibility to reach each of the students.

Figure #26 Students' perceptions

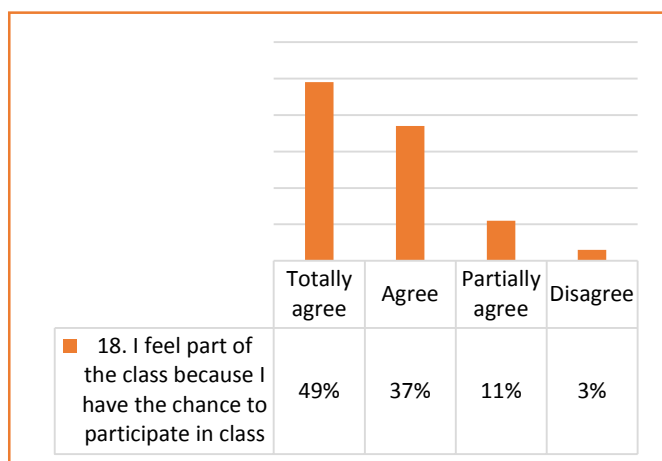
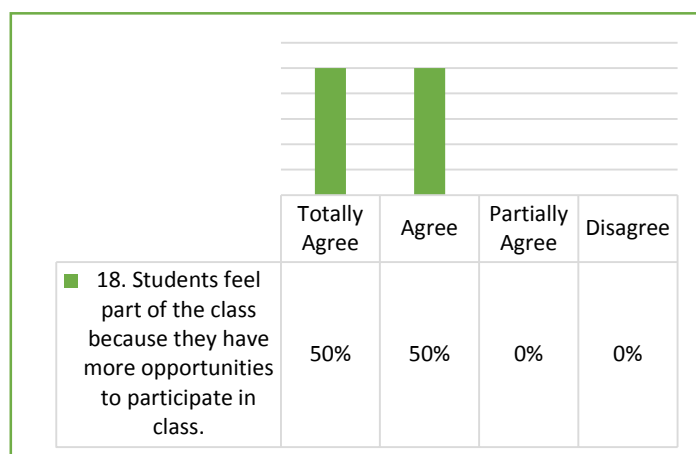


Figure #27 Teachers' perceptions



With respect to the statement 18 which refers to the fact that students feel part of the class because they have the chance to participate in class, 86% of students agree that they feel part of the class since they have the actual chance to participate and collaborate with ideas.

In addition to that, 100% of teachers agree and totally agree with the consideration that students feel part of the class because they have the opportunity to participate more often than they do in a large class.

Futhermore, it was observed in all the classes that all the students had the chance to participate including the ones who were not up to answer questions; teachers were able to persuade them to participate, and that was possible because of the fact that studetns were part of a small class.

Interaction benefits students to develop language learning and social skills; therefore, taking full advantage of interaction in the classroom is an important part of the teachers' role. Interaction not always happens spontaneously, but this is something teachers have to deal with every single day to persuade students participate (Howarth, 2006). Small classes give teachers the fortuity to have more engaged students.

Figure #28 Students' perceptions

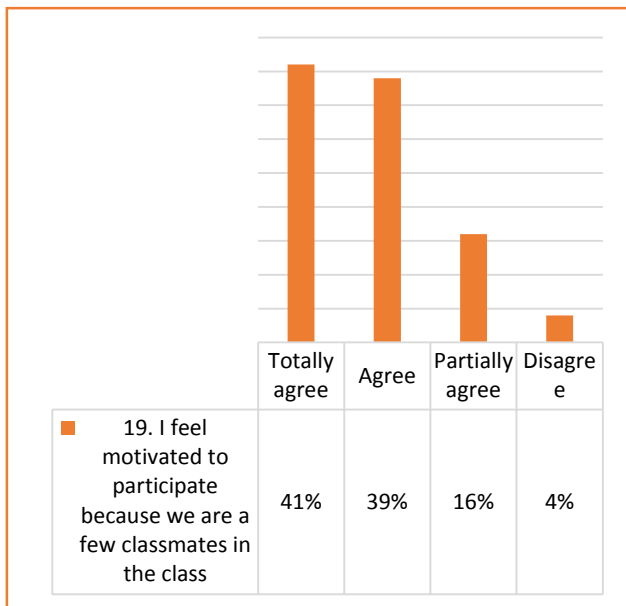
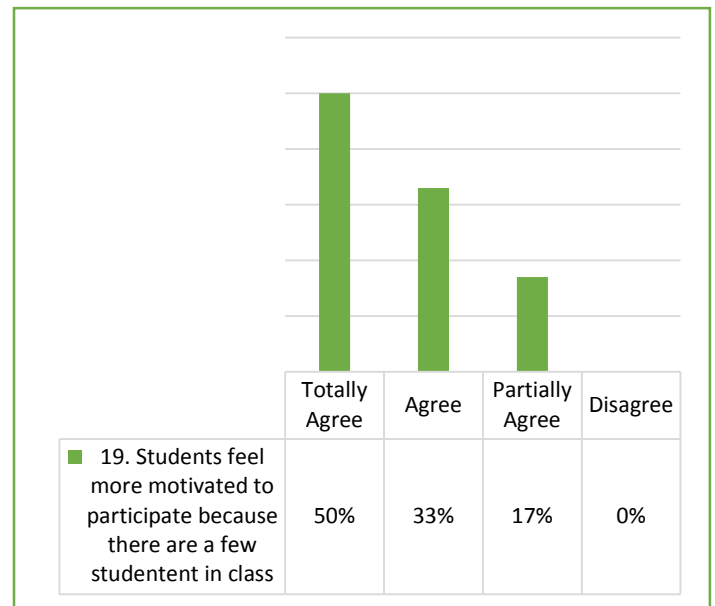


Figure #29 Teachers' perceptions



As it can be observed on figures 28 and 29, 96% of students sample population totally agree, agree or aptrially agree with the fact that they feel motivated to participate in class since there are a few students in the class, and 100% of the teachers agree, partially agree or totally agree with this. Although there was 4% of students who disagreed with the statement.

This kind of environment where students feel actually motivated to participate since there were a few students is exactly what it was evidenced in four of the five observed classes.

It is necessary that students feel motivated to learn, to listen and to participate in class in order to have a significant learning, teachers need to make students feel they are part of the class; when students feel part of the class, they will be willing to participate and this will help learning and teaching process (Haager, Aceves, & Klingner, 2010). Based on this statement, it is important to point out that having a few students will allow teachers to have a friendlier and more familiar environment.

Figure #30 Students' perceptions

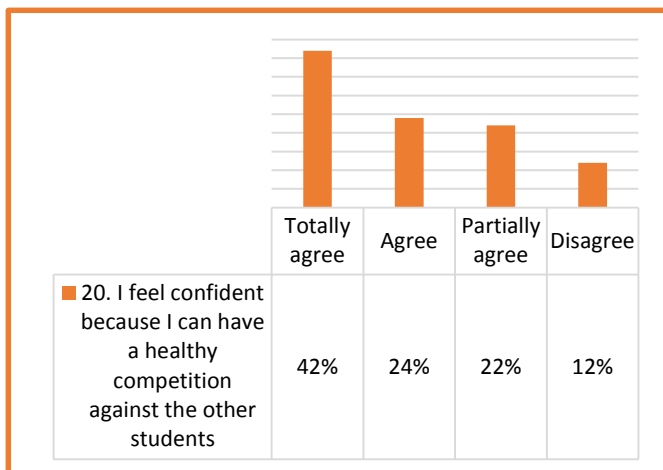
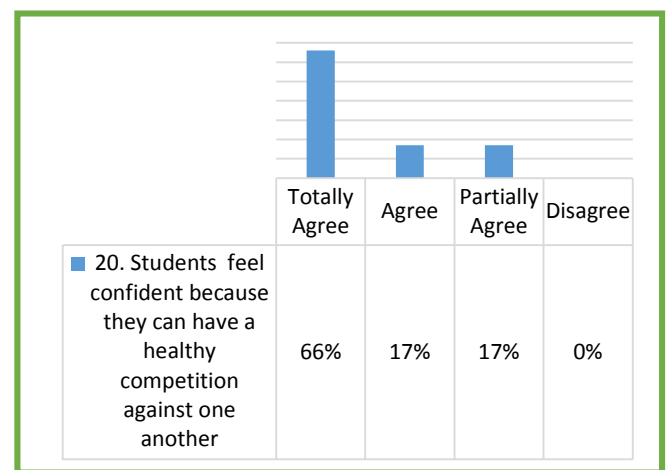


Figure #31 Teachers' perceptions



Evidently, 88% of students partially agree, agree or totally agree with the circumstance of feeling comfortable because they can have a healthy competition against one another in their small classes. Similarly, 100% of polled teachers consider that students do feel comfortable in classes with a few students because a healthy competition can take place. It is not easy to know what students are actually feeling, but in the five observed classes a healthy competitive environment was evidenced because of the fact of being in a small class.

Being part of a class is what matters the most at the moment of enjoying classmates competition (Edutopia, 2011). Having students feel free of participating and giving their opinion is a great step to have them form part of what is happening in the class, since students will not be nervous of mistaking; that's why it is essential to have a nice environment at the moment of teaching and learning a foreign language.

It is noticeable from the results that students feel relaxed and motivated at the moment of working and participating in classes, they also feel comfortable when they participate in front of the class since they feel part of the class, and this can happen because they are part of a small class where every student is important and where each student has had the opportunity to be asked, corrected and congratulated.



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

If people feel anxiety or stress, they may not learn in the same way, or as effectively as they would do it if they feel relaxed. It is important to recognize if there is any limitation when teaching English in a class with a few students.

**Chart #7 Students' perception**

No.	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
21	There is anxiety among students since there is more teacher's control	23	24%	31	33%	30	32%	10	11%	94	100%
22	It becomes difficult to develop the skills of speaking and listening	30	31%	25	27%	26	28%	13	14%	94	100%

**Chart #8 Teachers' perception**

No.	In small classes	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
21	There is anxiety among students since there is more teacher's control	0	0%	4	66%	1	17%	1	17%	6	100%
22	It becomes difficult to develop the skills of speaking and listening	2	33%	1	17%	1	17%	2	33%	6	100%

Figure #32 Students' perceptions

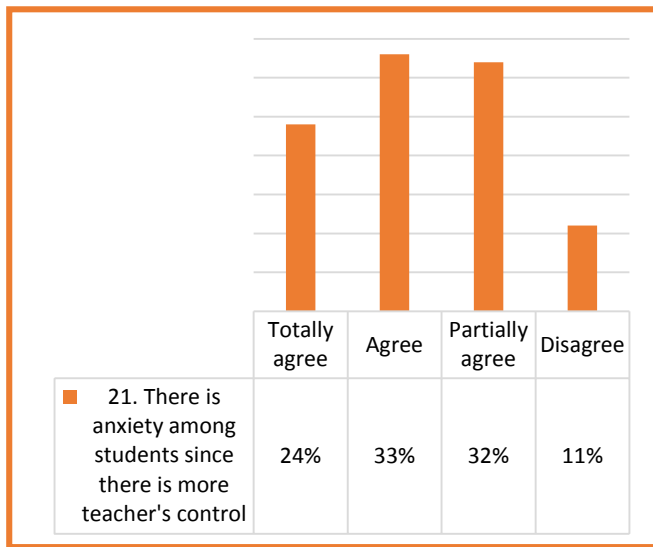


Figure #33 Teachers' perceptions

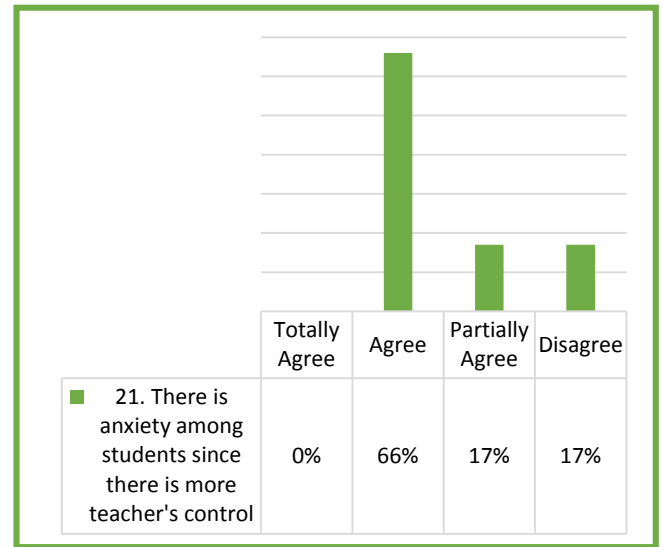


Figure 32 and 33 show that 89% of students totally agree, agree, or partially agree with the fact that there is more anxiety among students since there is more teacher control and this is because they are part of a small class in which teachers monitor their students in a closer manner; furthermore, 83% of polled teachers consider that there is some anxiety among students because of the fact of having closer teachers' control over the students, and this can happen because there a few people in the class.

Blatchford (2003) considers that having a small class is a good opportunity to have students under the eye, but this kind of control can be a benefit for students and teachers in the process of teaching-learning since teachers can see students' development in a closer way and students can have the chance to be corrected and have an almost personal education.

Figure #34 Students' perceptions

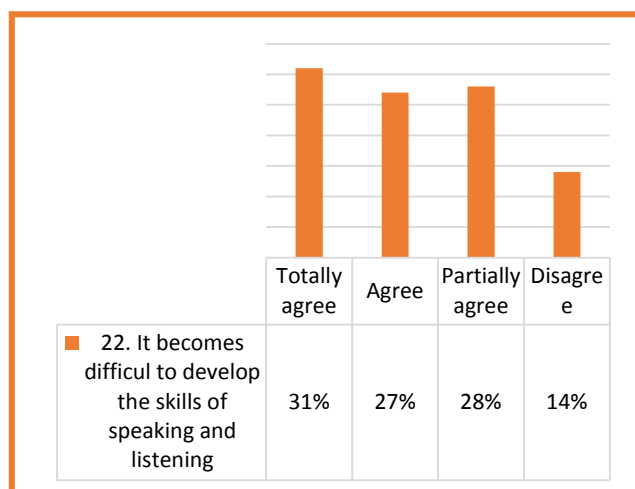
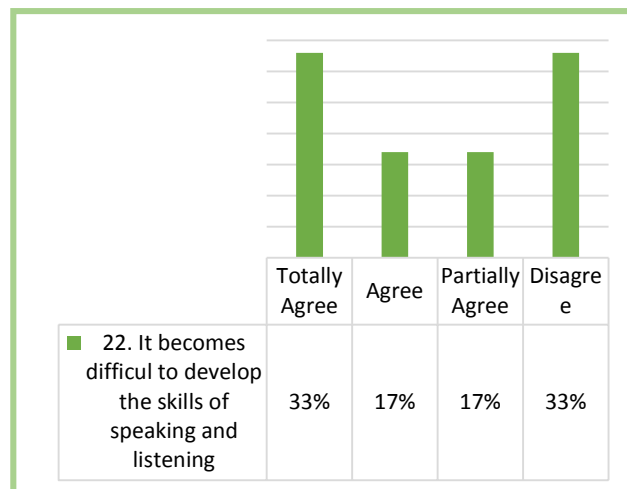


Figure #35 Teachers' perceptions



According to figures 34 and 35, 58% of students and 50% of teachers from the sample population agree or totally agree with the idea that it becomes difficult to develop the skill of speaking and listening in classes with a few students meanwhile 42% of students and a 50% of teachers disagree or partially agree with this fact. Although three of the five observed classes revealed a very participative environment where students could listen to and answer to different questions.

To have students participate and have them engaged with the class activities is one of the challenges every teacher on the world has to face with, but having a small class gives the teacher the opportunity to have all students participate and answer questions (Education Bureau, 2009). Having students participate is the best way to have them practice the foreign language.

According to the results, there are two slight limitations at the moment of working with small classes; one of them is that students feel some anxiety since they are under a closer teacher's control. Also, teachers and students consider that it is a small limitation to be part of a small class at the moment of practicing in listening and speaking activities in class.

## CONCLUSIONS

A small class helps teachers design activities and put them into practice to develop the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; in the same way, most of students feel they can actually practice what has been taught because they have the opportunity to develop the four basic language skills.

Students and teachers consider that being part of a small class helps teachers have a concentrated and active group; also, they have the opportunity to know his or her students better. Students come to the same point, they cogitate that they can be more engaged with the class and they can have more interaction with the teachers, and all this helps them have a more significant teaching and learning process.

Teachers are able to give an appropriate feedback to their students since they have the possibility to be around checking, correcting and explaining their students' mistakes; similarly, students consider they are helped and their mistakes are corrected on time, and all this helps to improve the teaching and learning process.

Most of research participants, including teachers and students considered that students feel anxiety and sometimes stress because teachers have the possibility to control their work and behaviour in a closer way, this is something that would not happen in a large class.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study, It is strongly recommend the idea of havig small classes, I mean fewer than twenty. It has been proved that having small classes helps the teachers, students and the educational community. It has also been proved that students have more possibilities to practice the target language and have a more interactive and effective process of learning English.

To have better teaching of English in our country, and to have more effective English learning, teachers need to be trained. The government needs to stablsh a fund for teachers to improve or even master the domain of English, so they can transmit a proper English teaching.

Another recommendation needed to be stablshed is the fact of using more technological resources and didactic materials. Teachers who count on a small class have the chance to exploit students' potential, but to do this, teachers need visual materials to have students engaged in the activities teachers are carrying out.

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# ANNEXES



Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja						
Titulación de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación						
Mención Inglés						
<b>TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS:</b>						
<i>A. What are the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes?</i>						
No.	In small classes	Totally Agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Total
1	It's easier for teachers to design activities that let students put into practice what they have learnt.					
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.					
3	Students can concentrate better since there is not much noise.					
4	The space in the classroom helps teachers develop the planned activities.					
5	Teachers can give appropriate feedback.					
6	It is possible to do activities that help students interact with one another.					
7	There is more interaction between teacher and students.					
8	It's easier for the teacher to remember students' names.					
<i>B. What teaching strategies and resources benefit the teaching of English in small classes?</i>						
No.	In small classes	Totally Agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Total
9	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the listening skills					
10	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the speaking skills					
11	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the reading skills					
12	It's easier to design and apply activities that help students practice the writing skills.					
13	It's easier to design and apply group activities.					
14	It's easier to design and apply individual activities.					
15	It's easier to use technological resources.					
16	It's easier to use didactic resources.					

C. How do students feel toward learning in a class where there are a few students?						
No.	In small classes	Totally Agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Total
17	Students feel relaxed when they have to speak in front of their classmates in class.					
18	Students feel part of the class because they have more opportunities to participate in class.					
19	Students feel more motivated to participate because there are a few students in class					
20	Students feel comfortable because they can have a healthy competition against one another					
D. Are there any limitations when teaching English to small classes?						
No.	In small classes	Totally Agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Total
21	There is anxiety among students since there is more teacher's control					
22	It becomes difficult to develop the skills of speaking and listening					

Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja  
Titulación de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación  
Mención Inglés

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS:**

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

No.	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	total
1	The activities done help apply what students are learning.					
2	The students are attentive and participative in class activities					
3	Students can concentrate better since there is not much noise					
4	The classroom space permits carrying out all the planned activities					
5	The teacher gives appropriate feedback					
6	There is interaction among students					
7	There is interaction between teacher and students					
8	The teacher remembers students' names					

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

No.	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	total
9	9. The performed activities help students practice the listening skills					
10	The performed activities help students practice the speaking skills					
11	The performed activities help students practice the reading skills					
12	The performed activities help students practice writing skills					

13	Group activities are applied					
14	Individual activities are applied					
15	The teacher uses technological resources					
16	The teacher uses didactic materials					

*C. How do students feel toward learning in a class where there are a few students?*

No.	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	total
17	I feel relaxed when I have to speak in front of my classmates					
18	I feel part of the class because I have the chance to participate in class					
19	I feel motivated to participate because we are a few classmates in the class					
20	I feel comfortable because I can have a healthy competition against the other students					

*D. Are there any limitations when teaching English to small classes?*

No.	In small classes	Totally agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	total
21	There is anxiety among students since there is more teacher's control					
22	It becomes difficult to develop the skills of speaking and listening					

# Titulación de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación

## Mención Inglés

### **OBSERVATION**

No.	In small classes	YES		NO		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	It's more practical to apply activities that let students to put into practice what they have learnt.						
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.						
3	The space in the classroom benefits teachers develop the planned activities						
4	Teachers can give appropriate feedback since there are a few students in the class						
5	There is interaction among students						
6	There is interaction between teacher and students.						
7	The teacher remembers students' names.						
8	Activities that help students practice the listening skills are carried out.						
9	Activities that help students practice the speaking skills are carried out.						
10	Activities that help students practice the reading skills are carried out.						
11	Activities that help students practice the writing skills are carried out.						
12	Group activities are carried out.						
13	Individual activities are carried out.						

14	Technological resources are used.						
15	Didactic materials are used.						
16	Students seem relaxed when they have to speak in front of their classmates in class.						
17	Students have more opportunities to participate in class.						
18	Students are motivated to participate because there are a few students in class						
19	Students can have a healthy competition against one another						
20	Students seem relaxed because there is not noise in class						
21	Students seem tense because there is not much more control from the teachers.						
22	It turns difficult to carry out activities to develop the speaking and listening skills						