



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

**ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA**

TITULO DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN  
MENCION INGLÉS

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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

AUTOR: García Almeida, Diana Clemencia

DIRECTOR: Solano Jaramillo, Lida Mercedes, Mgs.

CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO QUITO

2015



*Esta versión digital, ha sido acreditada bajo la licencia Creative Commons 4.0, CC BY-NY-SA: Reconocimiento-No comercial-Compartir igual; la cual permite copiar, distribuir y comunicar públicamente la obra, mientras se reconozca la autoría original, no se utilice con fines comerciales y se permiten obras derivadas, siempre que mantenga la misma licencia al ser divulgada. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.es>*

2015

## APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

Magister

Lida Mercedes Solano Jaramillo

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación: Teachers' and students' perceptions of teaching and learning English in small clases in Ecuador realizado por García Almeida Diana Clemencia, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, 2015

f) .....

## DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo, García Almeida Diana Clemencia declaro ser autor (a) del presente trabajo de titulación: Teachers’ and students’ perceptions of teaching and learning English in small clases in Ecuador, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo la Mgs. Lida Mercedes Solano Jaramillo director (a) del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

Adicionalmente, declaro conocer y aceptar la disposición del Art. 88 del Estatuto Orgánico vigente de la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja que en su parte pertinente textualmente dice: “(...) forman parte del patrimonio de la Universidad la propiedad intelectual de investigaciones, trabajos científicos o técnicos y tesis o trabajos de titulación que se realicen con el apoyo financiero, académico o constitucional (operativo) de la Universidad”.

f. ....  
García Almeida Diana Clemencia  
1705160370

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family for their support, understanding, and help during these years, which have led me to finish this career.

## Contents

COVER .....	i
APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN .....	ii
DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	1
RESUMEN .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	3
METHOD .....	6
DISCUSSION.....	8
Literature Review .....	8
Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results .....	21
Conclusions.....	52
Recommendations.....	53
REFERENCES .....	54
ANNEXES.....	56

## ABSTRACT

The present study intends to analyze the perceptions of teachers and students about teaching and learning English in small classes, since this is one of the factors influencing the teaching and learning process.

The purpose of this study is to know the possible teaching benefits, strategies, and resources used, as well as the students' feeling, and the probable limitations when teaching English in small classes. Qualitative method with observations made in classes, and quantitative method by the application of surveys were used for this analysis. The sample consisted on five teachers and seventy-five students from the ninth year of basic education to the third year of senior high school from a private high school of the city of Quito.

The results revealed that teaching and learning English in small classes ensure benefits for both teachers and students. Working in small classes allows the possibility of a better understanding of contents and tasks, improved interaction and interest in learning.

Key words: small classes, interaction, learning strategies, limitations.

## RESUMEN

El presente estudio tiene la intención de analizar la percepción de los profesores y estudiantes de la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés en clases pequeñas, ya que éste es uno de los factores que influye en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje.

El propósito de este estudio es conocer los posibles beneficios de la enseñanza, estrategias, recursos utilizados, como se sienten los estudiantes, y las probables limitaciones de la enseñanza en clases pequeñas. Para este análisis se utilizó el método cualitativo con observaciones realizadas en las clases y cuantitativo mediante la aplicación de encuestas. La muestra consistió de cinco profesores y setenta y cinco estudiantes de noveno año de educación básica al tercero de bachillerato de un colegio privado de la ciudad de Quito.

Los resultados revelaron que con grupos pequeños se dan resultados positivos, el progreso que reflejen los estudiantes se ve en el grado de interacción y el interés que demuestran en aprender inglés.

Palabras clave: clases pequeñas, interacción, estrategias de aprendizaje, limitaciones.



## INTRODUCTION

Due to the process of globalization together with the improvement and fast development of the technological aspects, English has become a worldwide spoken language all over the world. This fact marked the importance of understanding and being able to communicate in English effectively.

The current research wants to know about teachers and students' perceptions of teaching and learning English in small classes through the following questions:

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

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

How do students feel about learning English in small classes?

Are there any limitations when teaching English in small classes?

Previous studies about this topic have been carried out. An interesting study is the one conducted by Feng (1999), whose purpose was to obtain data on how Chinese school teachers perceive issues like class size, its benefits and effectiveness, and designed a study to investigate: (a) What kind of factor is class size? (b) What are the benefits for having small classes in schools? (c) What should teachers and students in large classes do to teach and learn effectively?

The findings of this study indicated that Chinese rural teachers perceived small classes as a beneficial factor in schools since they facilitate classroom management, more individualized help from teachers, teaching effectiveness, a better learning atmosphere, more student-teacher interactions, and reduced teachers' workloads, but all of these was not directly related to student achievement. They also believed in teachers creating and encouraging

competition and peer help among students, which they regarded as important for students in large classes to learn better. Some cultural differences were also found.

Another study is the one conducted by Harfitt (2012), whose purpose was to know how class size reduction might alleviate one key psychological aspect of learning in Hong Kong and Asia, namely language learning anxiety from the students' perspective.

Multiple case studies in four Hong Kong secondary schools were employed. One teacher teaching English language to first language Chinese students in a reduced-size class (where class size was between 21 and 25 students) and a large class (where class size was between 38 and 41 students) of the same year grade, and of similar academic ability constituted each case. The case studies data reveal that students' sense of anxiety can be reduced in smaller classes, class size reduction may assist in breaking down cultural barriers, also this study suggested that the student voice can provide insights into language learning classrooms.

Similarly, Blatchford, Moriarty and Martin (2005) carried out a study with the purpose of examining the effect of class size differences on teacher-pupil interactions, pupil engagement and pupil-pupil interaction. The two main conclusions obtained in this study were: 1) small classes students in the elementary grades are more engaged in learning behaviors, and they display less disruptive behavior than the students in larger classes do; and 2) that effects on processes appear to fade out by later grades and that class size seems to affect student engagement more than teaching, though there is some evidence that teachers interpersonal styles benefit from small class reductions.

The present research can be a guide for institutions which are willing to improve the English learning and teaching process. Besides, it will be useful for teachers in Ecuador who want to understand how the existence or absence of certain factors in the classroom

will determine the success or failure of the teaching and learning processes. It will also influence in future researches whose aim is related to the improvement of the educational system.

During the conduction of this research, teachers and students cooperated positively answering the questions stated. Since it was an institution with small classes, there was no limitations to obtain the results.

## METHOD

### *Setting and Participants*

This study was carried out in a private, bilingual high school located in the Province of Pichincha, in the city of Quito.

The sample selected consisted on five English teachers and seventy five students of middle class, from ninth year of basic education to the third year of senior high school, aged between 13 and 17 years old.

### *Procedures*

The background for this study was the information gathered from similar studies around the world and books on this research topic, as shown in the literature review section. The main factors that direct this research were the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes, the different teaching strategies and resources that benefit the teaching of English in small classes, the way students feel about learning English in small classes, and the possible limitations when teaching English in small classes.

The school's director allowed that a sort of the population of students and teachers were inquired into their perceptions to conclude whether they consider there are benefits of working in small classes that lead to the students' better results related to their academic achievement.

The qualitative (perceptions about class, students, teachers) and quantitative (calculate the answers in percentages) methods were used to carry out this research. The main instruments used were observation sheet and questionnaires. Five classes were observed and questionnaires were applied to five English teachers and seventy five students. The techniques used were note-taking and surveys.

The collected data was tabulated, classified, explored, analyzed, and described through tables for every aspect detailed in the questions proposed in the questionnaire. Aspects that were observed in each of the five classes were used to corroborate or contrast the teachers and students' answers as well as some information from the theoretical findings was considered to support the analysis.

All the questions followed the same process making a general sum to obtain the percentage at the end. Conclusions and recommendations based on the results obtained were stated.

## DISCUSSION

### Literature Review

In this era of globalization, English has become the great international language that has impacted all countries and it is used in all areas of human knowledge and development. Practically, it can be said that it is the language of today's world, so, more than ever, it is essential to learn English as a foreign language.

With this in mind, it is relevant to indicate that in this section the supporting concepts and definitions used through the present research are presented below.

#### *Managing Learning*

The difference between success and failure for a classroom can be made by establishing productive norms for student behavior. According to Emmer (1987, pp.236-237), early in the year, a variety of ways such as “teacher praise for appropriate behavior, corrective feedback, formally presented rules, establishing procedures that regulate behavior during classroom activities and academic work requirements” are best norms to be set in the classroom. Students must learn how to behave in a variety of work and social situations. Effective instructional strategies and good classroom curriculum design are built on the foundation of effective classroom management. Long and Frye (1985) stay that effective teachers can prevent all discipline problems, to name just few, when students experience difficulties at home which spill over into the classroom, or when students experience problems with peers during class breaks and in the classroom, which often involve the teacher, and also when they experience mood changes which can generate problems, by keeping students interested in learning through the use of exciting classroom materials and activities (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

Additionally, an effective teacher performs many functions that can be organized into major roles: making wise choices about the most effective instructional strategies to employ, and by designing classroom curriculum to facilitate student learning.

There is a wide array of instructional strategies at teachers' disposal such as cooperative learning and graphic organizers; they know the best way to use homework and how to use questions and advance organizers, and when to use these strategies with specific students and specific content (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

To lay out in advance the desired expectations for some situations as student seating, well-used areas of the room, and quite access to materials and equipment, will more likely make that students behave in the desired manner as well as some planned activities such as whole-class instruction, teacher-led small groups, independent, small, cooperative workgroups. It is necessary to be sure that students know exactly what it looks like to cooperate and give them the opportunity to practice individual seatwork, transitions between activities, tutoring students, giving and receiving assignments (Bray, & Kehle, 2011).

Praise like corrections, for example, need to be thoughtfully given if they are about to support our learners. A positive climate, where learning is encouraged and can strengthen the relationship between the teacher and the students, can be helped to establish by specific, informative, and genuine praise statements. This praise, which flows with the lessons, can enhance academic learning, increase on-task behavior, shape future actions, improve teacher-student relationships, and help create a more positive learning climate (Archer, & Hughes, 2011). When students consistently respond correctly, meet behavioral expectation, or demonstrate exemplary academic or behavioral performance, more elaborated praise can be offered.

To determine the content that requires emphasis and the appropriate sequencing and presentation of it, it's necessary to consider the needs of the students individually and

collectively rather than relying totally on the scope and sequence provided by the district or the textbook. It will be useful, too, to present new knowledge in different formats and media as for example stories, explanations, oral presentations, video and web-based presentations, simulations, etc. (Marzano, Robert, & Pickering, Debra, 2003).

Experienced teachers become more adept at planning the time and more able during the lesson to make judicious choices that affect the timing. Pace, a lesson's timing combined with spontaneous decision making, is crucial in keeping students alert, motivated, engaged and on course (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

#### *Teacher-Student, and Student-Student Interaction*

Johnston (1990) says that students in reduced classes are more likely to initiate contacts and interact more frequently with their teachers. Instruction teachers in smaller classes were more likely to respond more positively overall to students compared with large classes (Bourke, 1986). Overall teachers reported having more enthusiasm, higher morale, and more positive interactions with learners when they taught small classes (Zahorik, 1999).

An optimal teacher-student relationship consists on equal parts of dominance and cooperation; an effective teacher-student relationship addresses the needs of different types of students. Some ones need encouragement, others need a gentle reprimand and still others might require a not-so-gentle one. A strong recommendation by Brophy (1996) is that teachers develop a set of "helping skills" to employ with different types of students. The possibility to increase participation and to place students in situations where knowledge must be negotiated, is provided by having students collaborate together in the process of constructing understandings of the subject matter. In this regard, Slavin and colleagues (Slavin, Leavy & Madden, 1984; Stevens & Slavin, 1995) affirm that the use of cooperative learning strategies where students read and ask questions and work together to ask questions and explain concepts to each other contribute to students' learning. So, students'



interactions have been found to be effectively shaped with the use of participatory roles at the classroom level.

The introduction of sufficient modeling and feedback by the teacher of a particular role and its relation to the subject, reduces ambiguity (Cornelius, 2008). The responsibility for ensuring each student's learning is communicated to the group. The balance between the group and the individual is an essential component of ensuring that all students participate and learn; each student's success is determined by each member of the group's success. Teachers should be able to listen to students ideas and implement them, students want to voice their opinions on aspects of school life, and this will help them to become more capable and able to take on responsibility. Although teachers accept suggestions from the children, they retain control over what goes on, how it goes on, and when it goes on. Students' participation will create a class that manages lessons and time well and a best learning environment with teacher modeling (Marzano, Jana, Marzano, Robert, and Pickering, Debra 2003).

According to Kerman, Kimball and Marin (1980), to keep students working together, cooperatively, talking through the material with each other and making sure that all group members understand is the best way students may have to learn more material than when they compete with one another or work alone, individualistically.

Also, teachers have the privilege and unique opportunity to be a significant adult in a student's life, as they can say every day, to a number of students, that they believe in them and that they can do things well (Boynton & Boynton 2005). This is a positive relation strategy as well as an instructional one. With this powerful message they help to build confidence in students and increase their chance for success and a culture of positive expectations. They will work hard and behave appropriately to prove their confidence is justified as well as their respect for them.

### *Class Size*

As cited in Bray and Kehle (2011), according to Deutsch, working with a reduced group can offer many advantages:

Class size is defined as the number of students that are regularly present in a teacher's classroom for instruction. A class size of less than 20 students is considered to be small, and is associated with positive student outcomes, classrooms with more than 20 students are viewed as large. The benefits of reduced class size are explained in three types of outcomes: a) student's learning behaviors; b) student's social behaviors; and c) students – teacher interactions. Compared to students in large classes (more than 20 students), students in small classes were found to display higher levels of academic engagement, which is positively correlated with academic achievement.

As mentioned before, a positive and appropriate students' behavior, a higher level of interaction, individualized attention together with students' engagement can be on the list when talking about the benefits of teaching English in small classes.

The opportunity for each student to reveal his or her understanding or skill level increases dramatically as the class becomes smaller and gives the opportunity to the teacher to prove, give help, demonstrate, encourage, assess and, if needed reteach (Finn, Wang, 2002).

Articulation and critique are the specific elements of individualization that seem to account for the success of reduced class size teaching in promoting student learning. Constant request to students to share their knowledge and constant feedback to students regarding the knowledge that is shared, fill the newly acquired time of reduced size classes. Even though, some fluidity in lessons is desirable, time is lost if the teacher's lessons are not clearly organized at the start. Several teachers believe that they can quickly redirect to an

emerging lesson in small class because it is more manageable than a regular class. On the other hand, the reduced class size can result in some cases in less planning and preparation, less firm goals, activities are only partially organized because there are only few students. In all teaching, regardless of class size, an emphasis on knowledge and skill acquisition as well as on an orderly class and structured learning activities is important, according to Finn, Jeremy, Wang, Margaret (2002).

Glass and Smith (1978) found that being taught in a one-on-one tutorial, as opposed to a 40-student class, improved student performance by 30 percentage ranks, and concluded that small classes produce higher levels of student achievement than large classes. They argued that, to be most effective, classes should have about 15 students.

#### *Teaching techniques, strategies or activities for teaching*

Teachers' concern must be that each student learns, and for this, they need to create an accountability system that can provide feedback not only to the individual learner but also to the group. The key to this accountability system is that the members of the group are aware that each individual will receive a grade and that each is a participant in the evaluation process. Each group member may provide feedback on his or her own performance and the work of others (Frey, Fisher & Everlove, 2009).

Also, an opportunity for communication, planning, research, oral, and visual presentations in the classroom can be provided by Cooperative Learning. (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002) claims that a form of cooperative learning is particularly effective with English language learners because of the opportunities for verbal interaction and the support it provides.

In this matter, group work should promote frequent use of interpersonal and small-group skills. Students in classrooms that feature productive group work are learning each day how to organize and coordinate efforts and are acquiring results-oriented outlook

that will serve them well through years to come. These valuable skills can be taught and practiced using a helping curriculum (Sapon-Shevin, 1998).

With fewer students, the effect is that teachers individualize their instruction; the needs of each student are adjusted to their teaching. Individual students' understanding are elicited, critiqued and corrected or extended through one-to-one tutoring, small groups teaching, and total class teaching. The teaching procedures vary with the student but the content of instruction is uniform.

Consequently, the increased use of individualization in reduced-size classes is a result of increased knowledge of students: less discipline problems, which makes more time available for instruction; and greater teacher enthusiasm. The individualization that is produced along with an increased use of hands-on activities that these three elements also enable, results in increased content, in more student self-direction and, ultimately, it is speculated, in greater student achievement as evidenced by higher achievement scores (Molnar, Smith, & Zahorik, 1998, 1999; Zahorik, 1999).

#### *Learning Environment in Small Classes*

Real student achievement depends on many course components: appropriate pedagogy aligned with the preparation level and learning preferences of students, the expectations and outcomes of the course, class size, and many other important elements of a well-designed course. Teachers' role to develop and design a powerful, productive learning environment in any size class cannot be emphasized enough. In small or large classes, when versatile, responsive, engaged instructors synchronize goals, methods, materials, assessment, and outcomes with size, level and student learning styles, wonders can be done. But matching a well-trained teacher with a small class of eager students yields a winning combination (Nilson & Miller, 2010).

Researchers suggest that properly engaged students would be more effectively stimulated and fulfilled in small class. The argument, however, has several provisions. When the variables of discipline, course level, teacher characteristics, goals, methods, assessment, and outcomes work together to inspire and produce significant learning, good students can also thrive in large classes. Not every student wants or needs a small class environment. Not every course needs to be situated in a small class. Not every discipline requires small classes for all its offerings. Not every instructor is suited for or has the pedagogical skill to succeed in the small class (Nilson & Miller, 2010).

Despite a lack of unanimity and the research on class size, size makes a difference, lends sufficient credence to faculty intuition that smaller classes, or alternatively small-class methodologies adapted to large-class environments, substantially enhance learning. Students will respond when the classroom environment encourages growth and development. The teacher is called to construct and allow cooperative, collaborative strategies to create such environments. For Cole (2008), arranging the room to make the best use of space and to create a comfortable learning climate—both physically and psychologically is just the meaning of classroom design. But the ways in which the teacher orchestrates high-quality instructional activities helping children to take charge of their learning and eliminating unwanted behavioral and discipline problems reflects a well classroom management.

The important role of environmental preferences in students' motivation and their ability to learn is strongly supported in researches. The quality of the environment in which we live and work is vitally. Harmony makes it easier to concentrate and remember information, as individuals tend to respond to their physical environment first in terms of personal comfort (Cole & Robert, 2008).

Appropriate classroom design empowers teachers to create instructional areas, such as learning and interest centers and media centers that will offer students varied learning opportunities and accommodate individual learning needs and interests displaying high levels of student cooperation, academic success, and task involvement. Intrinsic motivation in students is essential to create lifelong learners (Cole & Robert, 2008).

There is much more information not only in published books but also in many previous studies about the importance, repercussion, and handling of the learning of English as foreign language that helps students not only to better understand their first language but also to increase their vocabulary, to improve opportunities in school, University, and even in labor stages, and allows the interaction with other cultures.

One study is the one carried out by Batchford, Russell, Basset, Brown, and Martin (2006), whose purpose was to report about the relationship between class size and teaching with pupils in KS2 (7 – 11 years). The authors concentrate on interactive aspects of teaching drawing on multiple methods of data collection asking two questions: 1) Do teachers in large and small classes differ in time spent on teaching or instructional activities overall, time in individual, group, and class contexts, and amount of teacher – child contact and individual attention from teachers?; 2) Apart from these more obviously quantitative dimensions, do teachers in large and small classes differ in more qualitative dimensions of teaching, concentrating particularly on interactions between teachers and children?.

They used a multi-method approach, integrating qualitative information from teachers' end-of-year accounts and data from case studies with quantitative information from systematic observations; questionnaires and teachers' own experiences and detailed case studies. In other words, for teachers, it can be easier in small classes to spot problems and give feedback, identify specific needs and gear teaching to meet them, set individual targets

for pupils, and be more flexible and adventurous in the use of different styles of teaching, more time to mark work, assess pupils in terms of process as well as product, and plan work.

Questionnaires and case studies were consistent in showing the importance teachers attach to individual attention as the basis for effective teaching and how this could suffer in larger classes. These also indicated that space and equipment become less available as students increase and both can adversely affect planning and choice of tasks.

Similarly, Blatchford, Bassett, and Brown (2005) studied the effect of class size differences on teacher-pupil interactions, pupil engagement, and pupil-pupil interaction which is examined in this paper. The literature on class size effects on classroom processes and the earlier observation is extended in two ways: 1) the extent to which class size effects are affected by school subject; and 2) the effect of extra adults in the classroom on teacher and pupil behavior, considering three aspects of teacher and pupil behavior: Teacher-Pupil Interactions, Pupil Engagement and Off-Task Behavior, and Peer Relations In Class.

Classes were selected on a random basis from class size information supplied by the school. Multilevel statistical models. Systematic classroom observation through data collection. The participating schools were selected randomly with a longitudinal research design and regression models were used.

The need to add two other factors to general models of effects on classroom processes was shown by this study. The first is the presence of extra adults, and the need to consider ways in which relationships between class size and teacher and pupil behavior can be moderated by the school subject, it was suggested to do more in teacher training and professional development to consider more strategic linkages between the curriculum, pedagogy and classroom contexts.

Feng (1999), with the purpose of obtaining data on how Chinese school teachers perceive issues like class size, its benefits and effectiveness, designed a study to investigate:

(a) What kind of factor is class size? (b) What are the benefits for having small classes in schools? (c) What should teachers and students in large classes do to teach and learn effectively?

On a sample of Chinese rural teachers (N = 55) a random survey with open-ended questions was conducted. Functions and benefits of small classes to both teachers and students related issues were investigated. The participating teachers were full-time teachers in the school district with five or more years of teaching experience. According to an official of the school district, the teachers of the district were not different from teachers in other rural areas of the country.

The findings of this study indicated that the Chinese rural teachers perceived class size as a beneficial factor, that small classes in schools facilitate classroom management, more individualized help from teachers, teaching effectiveness, a better learning atmosphere, more student-teacher interactions, and reduced teachers' workloads, but all of these was not directly related to student achievement. They also believed in teachers creating and encouraging competition and peer help among students, which they regarded as important for students in large classes to learn better. Some cultural differences were also found.

On the other hand, Blatchford, Moriarty and Martin (2005) extended previous research on younger pupils by using a more sophisticated form of data analysis that recognizes the hierarchical nature of observation data, and the confounding influence of other variables, this study examined the effect of class size differences on teacher-pupil interactions, pupil engagement and pupil-pupil interaction.

Random selection of schools within the participating LEAs involved the designed research. These schools drew from a wide range of social backgrounds and were situated in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Schools were either all-through primary schools (i.e., children aged 4–11 years), constituting 74%, or infant schools (i.e., children aged 4–7 years),



constituting 26%. At the start of the study, 49% of the sample were female and 51% male, 17% were eligible for free school meals (a measure of low family income), the vast majority (97%) spoke English as a first language, and most (91%) were classified as from White U.K. ethnic backgrounds. All children entering reception in a selected school during the year were included in the study.

The two main conclusions were: 1) small classes students in the elementary grades are more engaged in learning behaviors, and they display less disruptive behavior than the students in larger classes do; and 2) that effects on processes appear to fade out by later grades and that class size seems to affect student engagement more than teaching, though there is some evidence that teachers' interpersonal styles benefit from small class reductions.

Another study, made by Harfitt (2012), seeks how class size reduction might alleviate one key psychological aspect of learning in Hong Kong and Asia, namely language learning anxiety from the students' perspective. As for long this has been seen as an obstacle to second language acquisition the aim of this study was to examine whether, and how, class size reduction might help to alleviate it.

Multiple case studies in four Hong Kong secondary schools were employed. One teacher teaching English language to first language Chinese students in a reduced-size class (where class size was between 21 and 25 students) and a large class (where class size was between 38 and 41 students) of the same year grade, and of similar academic ability constituted each case. Conducting multiple interviews with the four teachers, and data stemmed from group and individual interviews with 231 students. Their perspectives and experiences of studying in large and reduced-size classes was the focus of the student interview questions.

The case studies data reveal that students' sense of anxiety can be reduced in smaller classes, class size reduction may assist in breaking down cultural barriers, also this study suggested that the student voice can provide insights into language learning classrooms.

## Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The interpretation of different perceptions that teachers and students can have about the benefits and limitations of teaching and learning English in small classes was the base of this analysis.

The elements considered were the answers obtained in the questionnaires given to the teachers and students which were tabulated generating the following results.

### *Qualitative and quantitative analysis*

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

To measure the benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes, seven aspects were stated for teachers and eight for students.

Table 1

#### Teachers' perceptions

No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	It is easier to design activities that help the students to apply what they have learned.			4	80	1	20					5	100
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.			5	100							5	100
3	Classroom space allows students to properly do the activities designed.	2	40	3	60							5	100
4	Appropriate feedback can be given.	2	40	2	40					1	20	5	100

5	Activities that allow more interaction among students are performed.	1	20	3	60	1	20					5	100
6	There is more interaction between the teacher and the students.	2	40	2	40	1	20					5	100
7	It is easier to remember students' names.	2	40	1	20	2	40					5	100

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Mediterráneo

Table 2

Students' perception

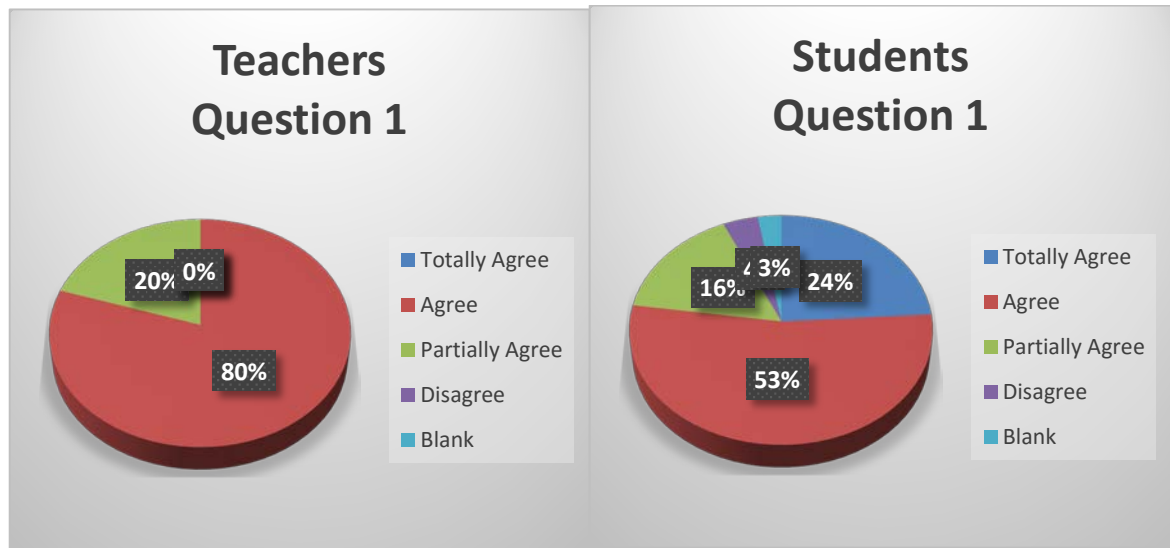
No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	The activities done in class help to apply what students learn.	18	24	40	53,3	12	16	3	4	2	2,7	75	100
2	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.	15	20	44	58,7	10	13,3	5	6,7	1	1,3	75	100
3	The students can better concentrate because there is a	14	18,7	38	50,6	14	18,7	6	8	3	4	75	100

	less noise in the classroom.													
4	The classroom space allows students to carry out the activities assigned by the teacher.	20	26,7	35	46,7	15	20	3	4	2	2,6	75	100	
5	Students receive proper feedback from the teacher.	17	22,7	33	44	15	20	7	9,3	3	4	75	100	
6	There is interaction between the students.	22	29,3	40	53,3	10	13,3	2	2,7	1	1,3	75	100	
7	There is interaction between the teacher and students.	17	22,7	38	50,6	13	17,3	4	5,3	3	4	75	100	
8	The teacher remembers the students` names.	31	41,3	23	30,6	15	20	4	5,3	2	2,7	75	100	

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Mediterráneo

*The activities done help to apply what students learn.*

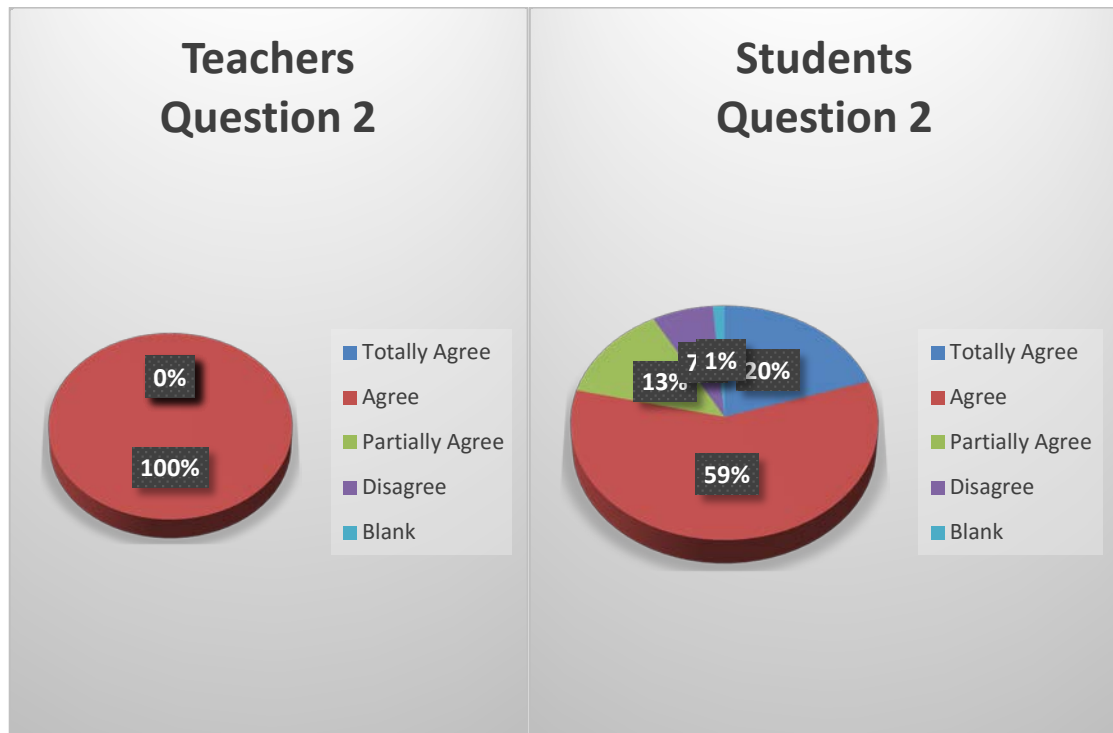


The results above show that 80% of teachers agree with the fact that working in a small class gives them the opportunity to design and carry on activities that allow students to practice what they have learned and 20% partially agree. On the other hand, 24 % of students totally agreed that in small classes the activities done during the class help them to apply what they have learned, 53.3% also agree with it, 16% partially agree, and only 4% disagree. 3% did not answer.

In the five classes that were observed, the teachers worked on the activities pre-established in the textbook, but they always made the students practice what they had been already taught. Also, a discussion was carried on, where students were encouraged to ask challenging questions as a way to co-evaluate peers. Through these activities, students were assessed in content and the skills they developed.

This confirms that with few students in a class, teachers can apply multiple strategies to teach and evaluate pupils. According to Caplan and Owings (2002), teachers in small classes are able to align the curriculum so all their students have the chance to learn the content that will be later evaluated and measured.

*The students are attentive and participate in class activities.*

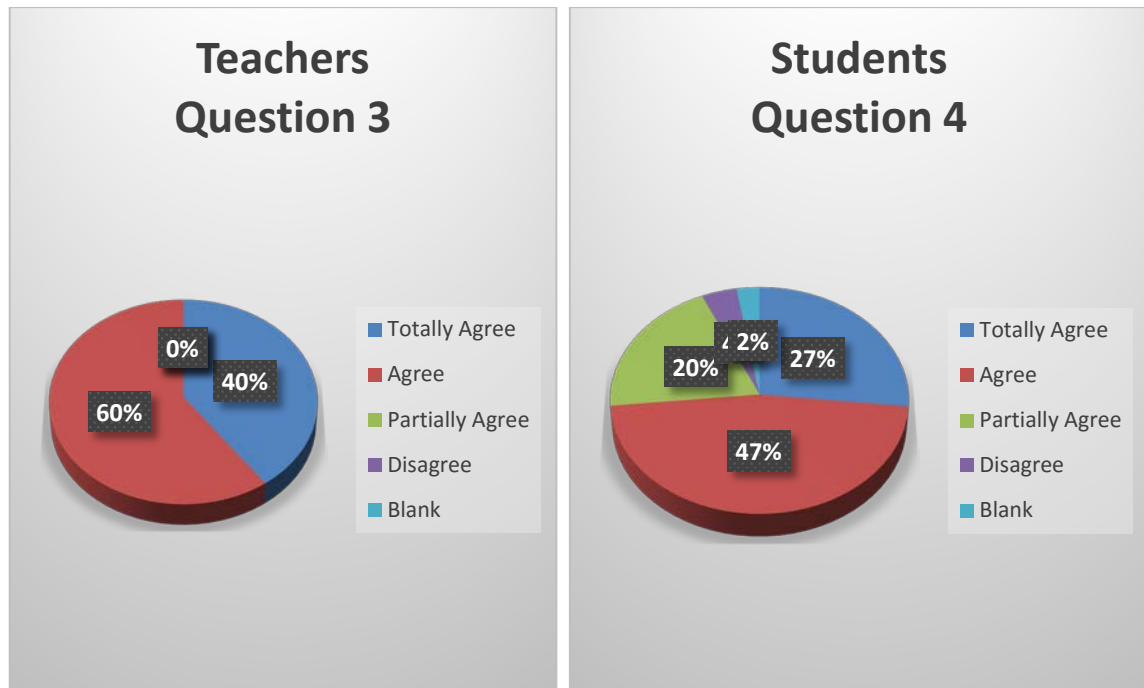


In this statement, 100% of teachers agree that the level of concentration and participation of their students is better in small classes. Twenty percent of the students totally agree that in small classes they are often attentive and participative during class activities, 59% agree, and 13% partially agree. Additionally, 7% disagree and just 1% did not answer.

Based on the observation performed, it can be said that most of the students were attentive and took an active part in the class activities; while others were not fully alert maybe because of students' personality; no matter how active some classmates and teachers can be, they just prefer to listen to others and let them do most of the work.

In this regard, Blatchford (2003) indicates that students in small classes are more persistent and concentrated due to the teachers' constant help and observation; this fact was confirmed with the results obtained in this statement.

*Classroom space allows students to properly do the designed activities.*



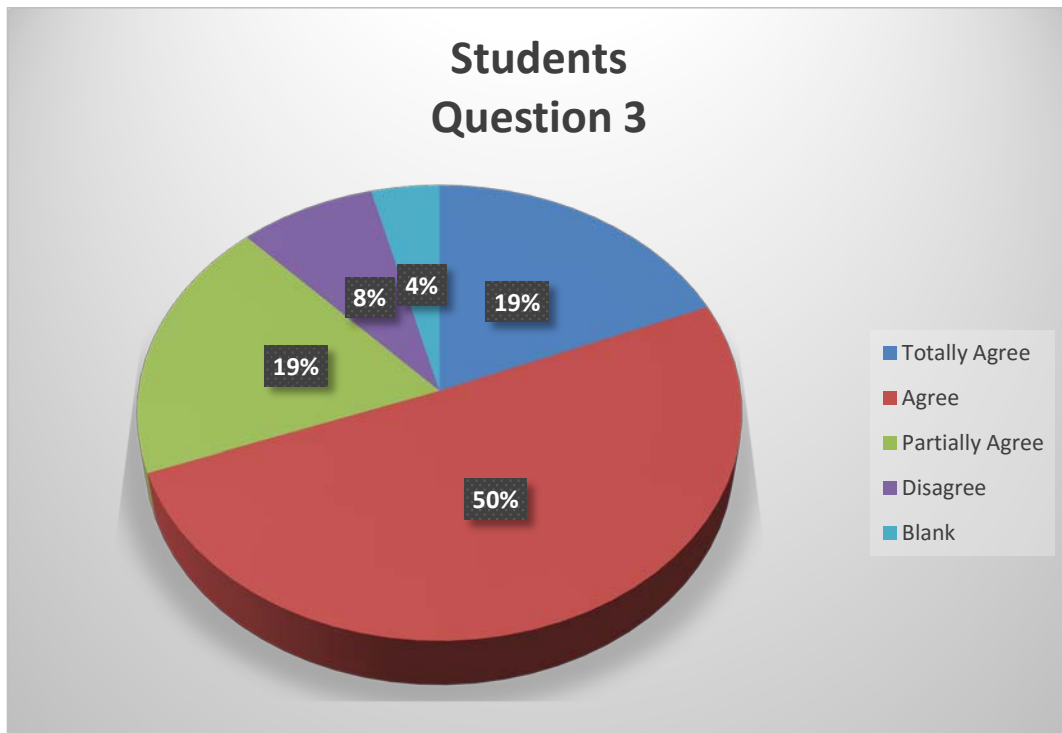
Question 3 shows that 40% of the teachers surveyed totally agree that the physical space in small classes allows the adequate development of the designed activities and 60% of them agree. Question 4 reports that 27% of students totally agree that in small classes the classroom physical space allows carrying out appropriately the activities assigned by the teacher, 19% partially agree, 4% disagree, and 2% left it in blank.

In the observations done, it was noticed that classrooms have enough space and teachers were able to move students' chairs easily in order to make groups or to work individually allowing them to walk around. Having the appropriate physical space in the classroom, gave teachers the opportunity to develop activities using different interaction patterns with a great functional development.

In this aspect, Bray and Kehle (2011) agree with the fact that the physical space is related to the possibility of making students work in groups according to the nature of the activity in order to achieve better results.



*Less noise in the classroom allows the students a better concentration.*

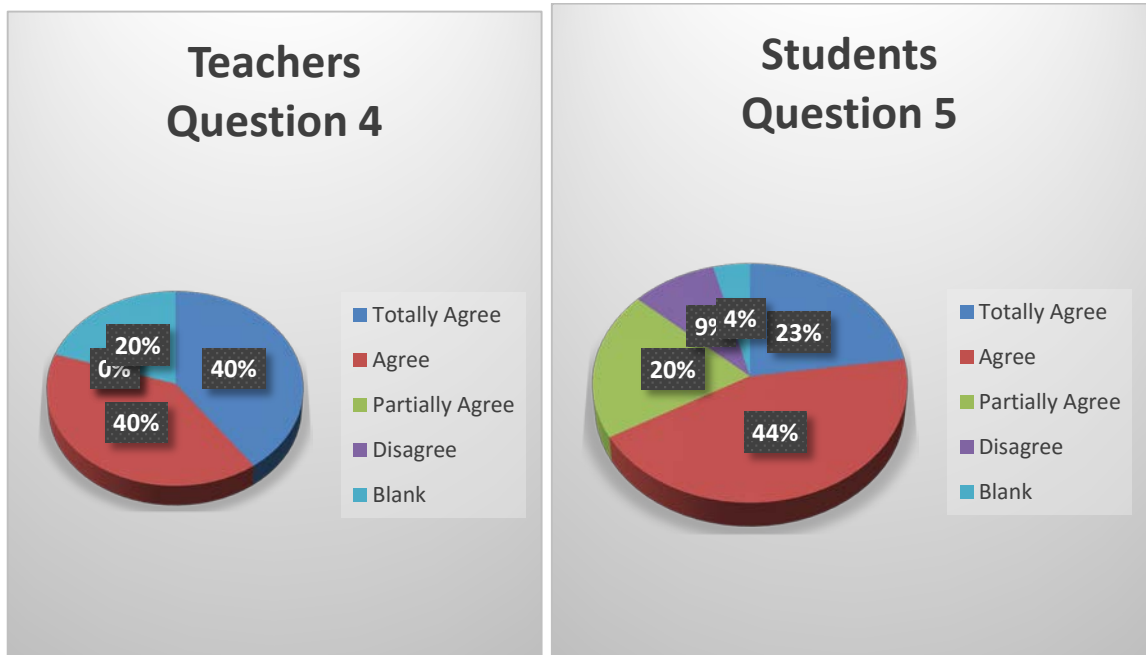


According to the results obtained in statement three, most of the students feel that the level of noise in small classes is low enough to let them work, as 19% totally agree, 50% agree, and 19% partially agree, only 19% of the students disagree, and 4% did not answer.

During the observations, it could be perceived that the level of noise was acceptable due to the group activities performed. Parallel conversations were a significant factor to the lack of concentration that the students showed.

In the same way, Bray and Kehle (2011) consider the noise level as an important physical characteristic in a classroom that can affect students' performance.

*Appropriate feedback can be given.*

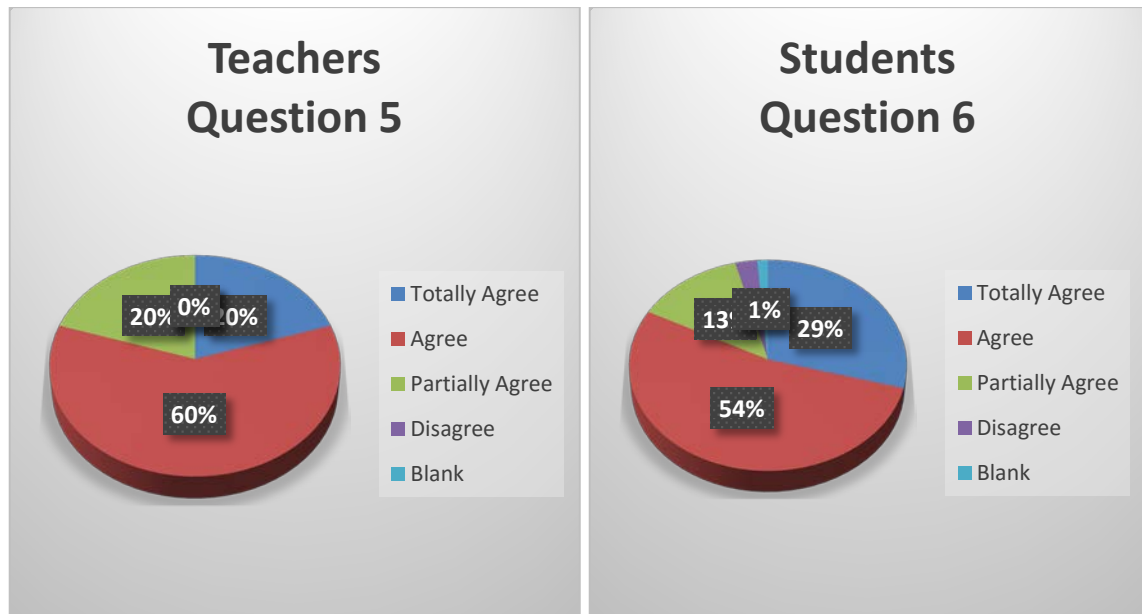


Forty percent of teachers totally agree that in small classes they can provide an appropriate and immediate feedback, 40% of them agree; so 80% of the interviewed teachers agreed with this fact, only 20% of teachers did not answer. In the same sense were the answers obtained from the students, since 23% of them totally agree that in small classes the teacher provides an appropriate feedback, 44% agree, 20% partially agree, just 9% disagree, and 2% did not answer.

During the class, teachers guided students through their process of learning, checking, monitoring, and observing. Besides, it was noticed that teachers asked students to clarify and paraphrase the word order to correct mistakes; this made the students correct themselves, and assess their work. The immediate feedback they received in the class was an advantage of having a small class.

As a matter of fact, according to Bray and Kehle (2011), in small classes the students hardly ever have to wait for support or feedback because the teacher is always concerned about the students' quality of work.

*The students are allowed to perform more interaction activities.*

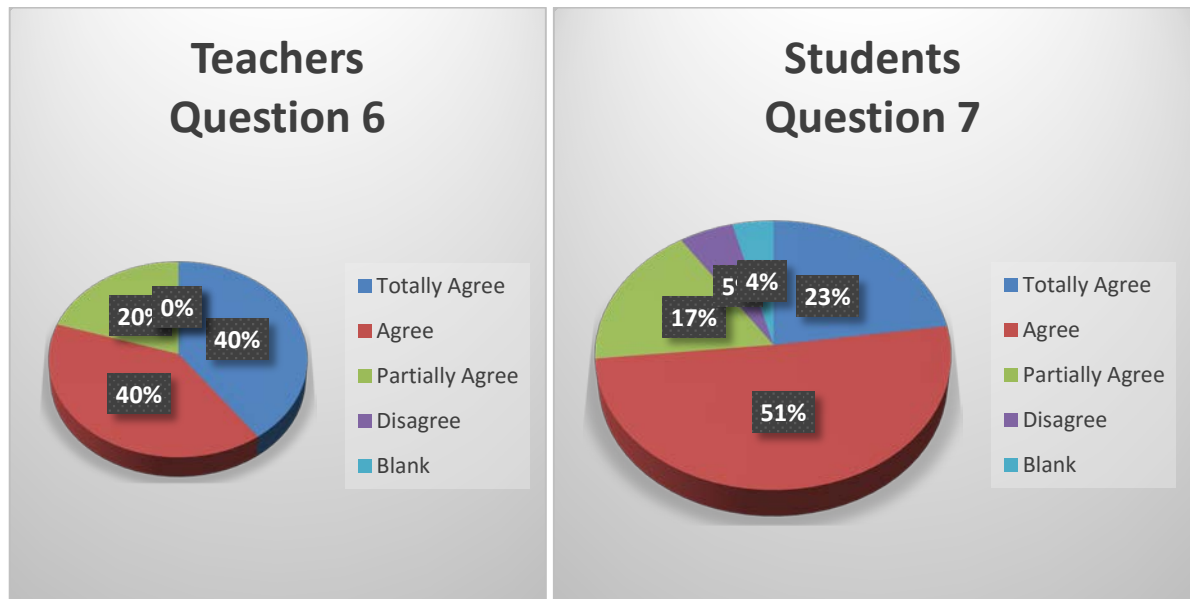


As observed in graph 5, it is confirmed that all teachers agree with the fact that working in small classes is advantageously because they can plan their activities in order to promote interaction among students. Twenty percent of teachers totally agree, 60% agree, and 20% partially agree, and nobody disagrees. Similarly, graph 6 shows that 29% of students totally agree that there exist student-student interaction, 54% agree, and 13% partially agree, and only 2% of the students disagree and 1% did not answer.

In the observations performed, it was noticed that students interacted in academic topics centered in the class activity. Also, students liked to work together in pairs and in assigned groups that showed that they are accustomed to this type of working. So, it is confirmed that in small classes, it is easier to have more occasions to interact with others, which contributes in the growth of students' confidence and fluency.

This advantage is stated by Bray and Kehle (2011), who found that interactions in small classes had such a high level, that students became supportive, caring, and cooperative with their classmates.

*There is more interaction between the teacher and the students.*

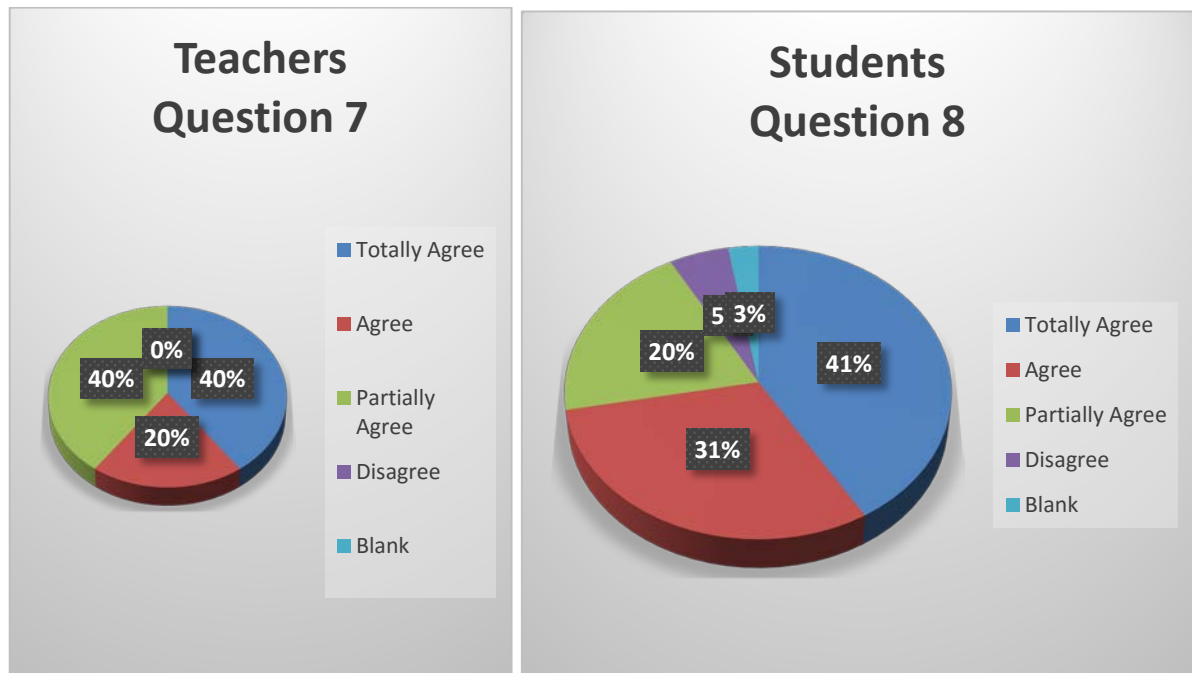


Based on the results from question 6, it can be said that 40% of teachers totally agree, and 40% of them agree that in small classes there is more teacher-student interaction, 20% partially agree and nobody disagrees. Students, by the way, totally agree in a 23% that there is teacher-student interaction, 51% agree, 17% partially agree, almost 4% disagree, and 4% did not answer.

In the observations done, it was noticed that teachers and students have a good relationship, so the interactions were of a high quality. Students did not seem afraid to ask for help and teachers were most of the time enthusiastic when offering guidance; this fact, made students feel close enough to ask for help and explanation when needed. At the same time, all the teachers managed to be friendly without losing their authority.

This is corroborated by Berns (2010), who states that a small class enables students to interact more often, giving them multiple occasions to understand one another, increasing, and improving the learning opportunities.

*The students' names can be easily remembered.*



Based on question 7, 40% of teachers totally agree that in small classes it is easier for them to remember the learner's names, 20% agree, and 40% partially agree. In contrast, 41% of students totally agree that in small classes the teacher remembers their names, 31% agree, 20% partially agree, only 5% disagree, and 3% gave no response.

During the observations, it could be perceived that students and teachers treated each other in an informal, but respectful way. Both teachers and students called each other by their names.

According to Finn and Wang (2002), one advantage of working in small classes is that teachers get to know students better; teachers can even dedicate time to have one-to-one tutoring and individualized attention. So teachers know not only students' names, but also some of their personal background.

So, with these results, it is stated that small classes are beneficial for the teaching and learning process. Teachers and students perceive that due to class size, it is highly possible to plan and carry out activities that allow students to show what they have learned

through a variety of techniques and strategies. As their names can be easily remembered, students feel they are part of the group. Teachers and students friendly interaction gives the students the security needed to experiment with the language in a safe environment.

Teachers, on the other hand, have the opportunity to assess students and detect who needs a special attention and guidance. So, students' motivation can be increased because they can feel that the teacher has more time for them and that makes them feel important and special.

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

Teachers' and students' perception about strategies and resources used in small classes are analyzed in detail through eight aspects, the results are shown below and analyzed one by one.

Table 3

Teachers' perceptions

No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
8	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the listening skills.	1	20	2	40	2	40					5	100
9	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the speaking skills.	2	40	2	40	1	20					5	100
10	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the reading skills.	3	60	2	40							5	100
11	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the writing skills.	4	80	1	20							5	100

12	Design and apply group work activities.	4	80	1	20							5	100
13	Design and apply individual activities.	3	60	2	40							5	100
14	Use technological tools.	1	20	3	60	1	20					5	100
15	Use didactic materials.			3	60	2	40					5	100

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Bilingüe Mediterráneo

Table 4

Students' perception

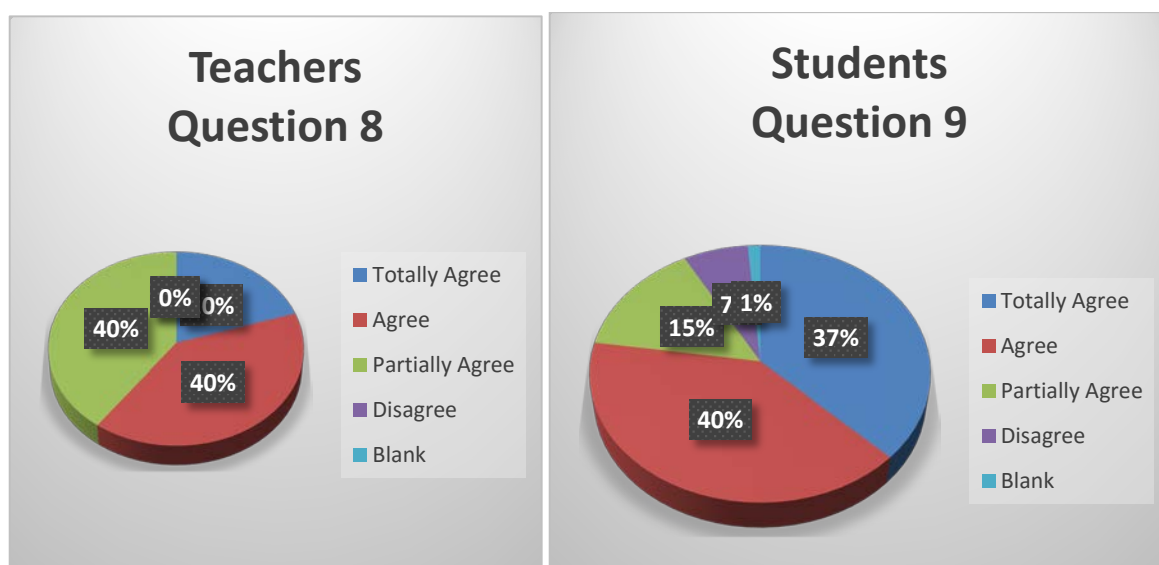
No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
9	The activities done allow to practice listening skills.	28	37,3	30	40	11	14,6	5	6,7	1	1,3	75	100
10	The activities done allow to practice speaking skills.	20	26,7	40	53,3	12	16	2	2,7	1	1,3	75	100
11	The activities done allow to practice reading skills.	26	34,6	38	50,6	7	9,3	3	4	1	1,3	75	100
12	The activities done allow to practice writing skills.	29	38,6	42	56	2	2,7	1	1,3	1	1,3	75	100

13	Group work activities are used.	18	24	39	52	12	16	4	5,3	2	2,7	75	100
14	Individual activities are used.	20	26,7	37	49,3	15	20	1	1,3	2	2,7	75	100
15	Technological tools are used.	20	26,7	31	41,3	12	16	10	13,3	2	2,7	75	100
16	Didactic materials are used.	21	28	26	34,6	20	26,7	7	9,3	1	1,3	75	100

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Bilingüe Mediterráneo

*Activities that allow students to practice listening skills are designed and applied.*

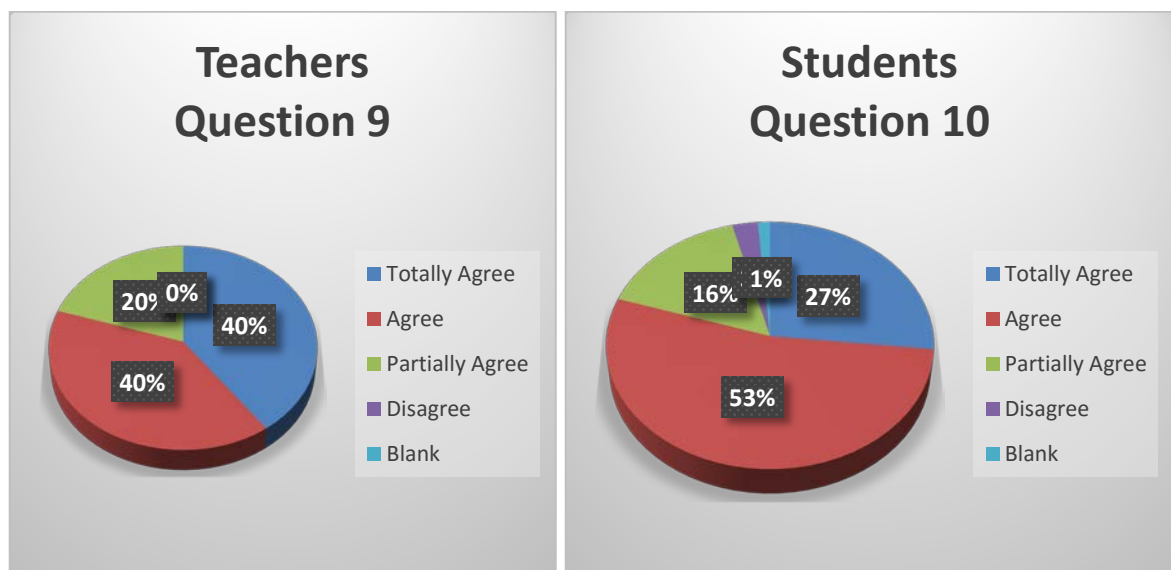


According to question 8, it can be seen that 20% of teachers totally agree that in small classes it is easy to design and apply activities that allow practicing listening skills. 40% agree, and 40% partially agree. So, it can be said that the majority of teachers accept this fact as nobody disagreed. On the other hand, students also in their majority (37%) agree that in small classes the activities done allow to practice listening skills, 40% agree, 15% partially agree, 1% did not answer, and only 7% disagree.



During the observations done, it was confirmed that both listening and speaking skills were developed by students, who were demanded to talk, discuss, and share ideas. Besides, the activities were student-centered; teachers also took part in the discussions and gave instructions. Students' responses also demonstrate that listening and speaking activities are daily developed.

*Activities that allow students to practice speaking skills are designed and applied.*



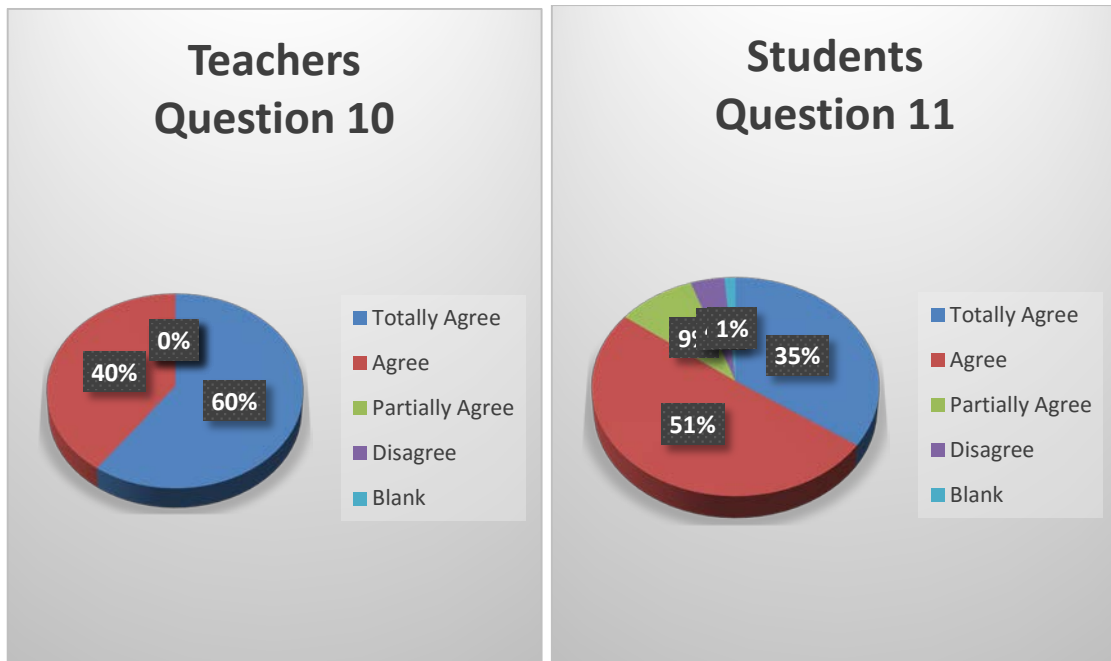
All of the teachers in this research seem to agree that in small classes it is possible to apply and design activities directed to develop speaking skills, as the 40% totally agree, 40% agree and 20% partially agree in this assertion, nobody disagrees. On the other hand, only 3% of students disagree, which is a minor percentage, 27% totally agree that in small classes the activities done allow to practice speaking skills, 53% agree, and 16% partially agree, 1% did not answer.

In the observed classes, students were asked to participate in oral discussions, presentations, and debates, which are always good activities to work with learners in their development and improvement of oral fluency. Additionally, these activities enhance students' ability to communicate effectively. Finally, it is relevant to recognize that small

classes allow the development of activities that are oriented to practice and improve speaking abilities.

According with this, Berns (2010) says that as the number of students' decreases, the participation in discussions increases, and this way students develop their speaking skills.

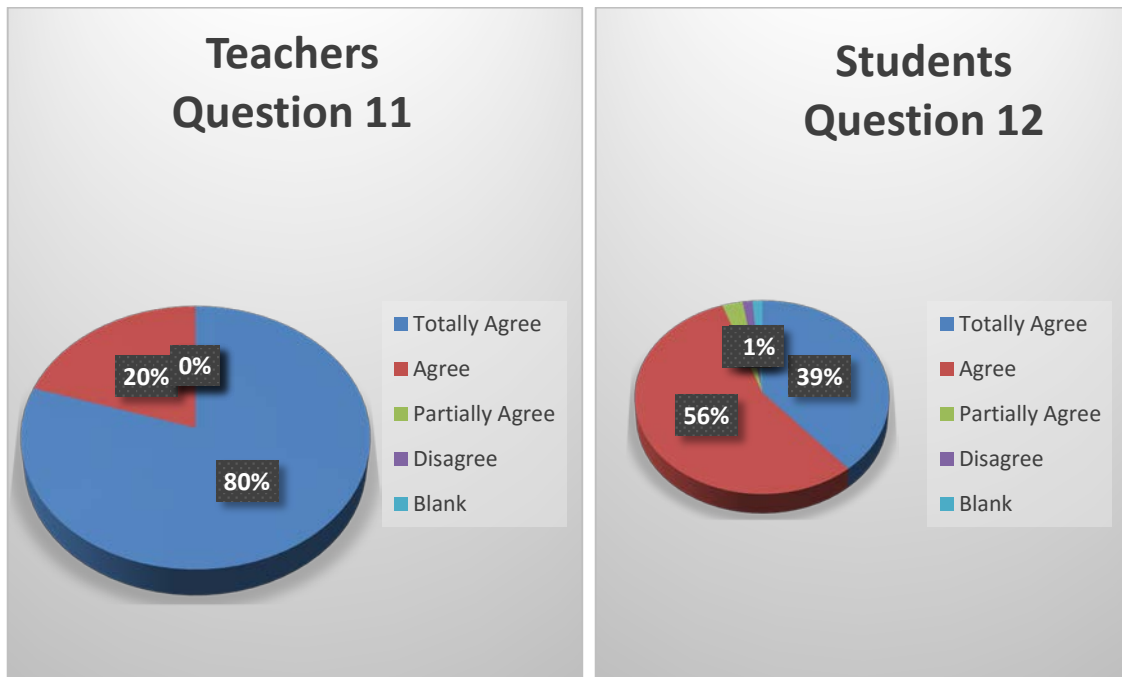
*Activities that allow students to practice reading skills are designed and applied.*



It was found that teachers think that working in small classes offers them the advantage to design and apply activities to develop reading skills easily, 60% totally agree, and 40% agree with it. Meanwhile, in the students perception only 4% disagree, 1% did not answer, 35% totally agree, 51% agree and 9% partially agree that in small classes the activities done allow to practice reading skills.

The observed classes were based on activities from text book that contained reading activities, which included critical thinking, comparison and contrast, description of characters, recalling main idea and details. Students demonstrated to have developed reading skills since they were able to support ideas, discuss and think critically.

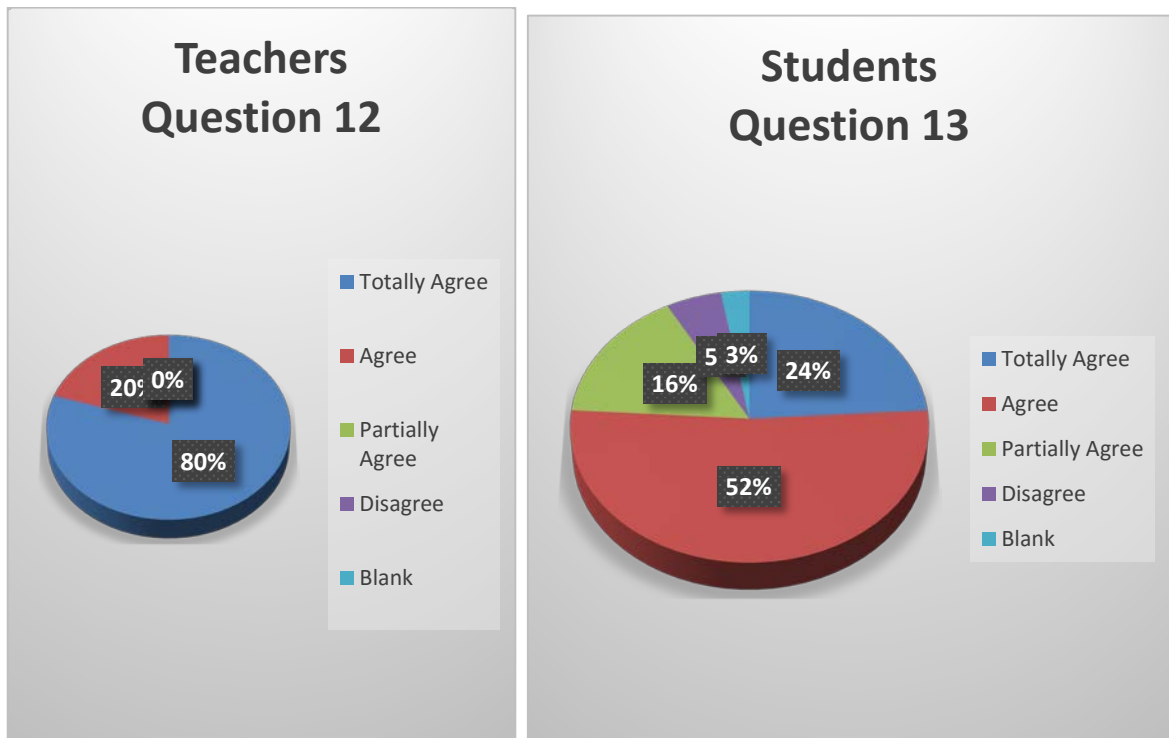
*Activities that allow students to practice writing skills are designed and applied.*



In question 11, it can be seen that 80% of the surveyed teachers totally agree with the fact that it is viable to design and apply activities oriented to help students practice and develop writing skills in small classes, while the other 20% agree with this fact. Students' answers, by the way confirm that 39% totally agree that in small classes the activities done allow to practice writing skills, 56% agree, 2% partially agree, only 1% disagree, and 1% did not answer.

In the observations done, it was noticed that teachers assigned a part of the class period to make students write about a given topic. Most of the writing activities were designed to be accomplished individually and teachers evaluated grammar structures, connection between ideas, paragraphs' organization, and creativity among some other criteria. The writing skills were developed accurately, students were able to work independently showing security and domain of the tools needed to write in a clear and effective way.

*Group work activities are designed and applied.*

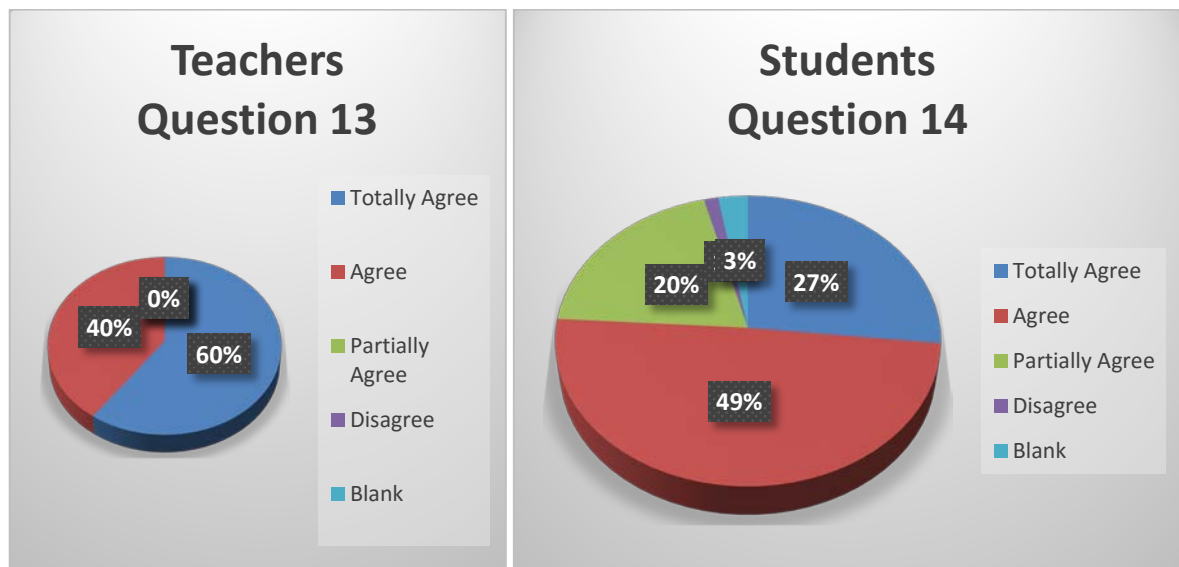


Question 12 shows that the majority of teachers find it very likely to design and apply group activities in small classes. 80% totally agree and 20% agree, nobody disagree with this assertion. However, 24% of students totally agree that in small classes it is used group work activities, 52% agree, 16% partially agree, 5% disagree, and 3% did not answer.

The observed classes included group activities; it seemed that students were accustomed to work in that way because they were fast in organizing the groups and effective in the accomplishment of the tasks. Students joined together to analyze texts, to share ideas and opinions, and to write summaries about a given topic.

This confirms what Herrell and Jordan (2012) state about how group work is not only a strategy, but also a way of enhancing cooperative learning. According to the authors, group work offers students the huge advantage of improving and increasing interactions among them.

*Individual activities are designed and applied.*

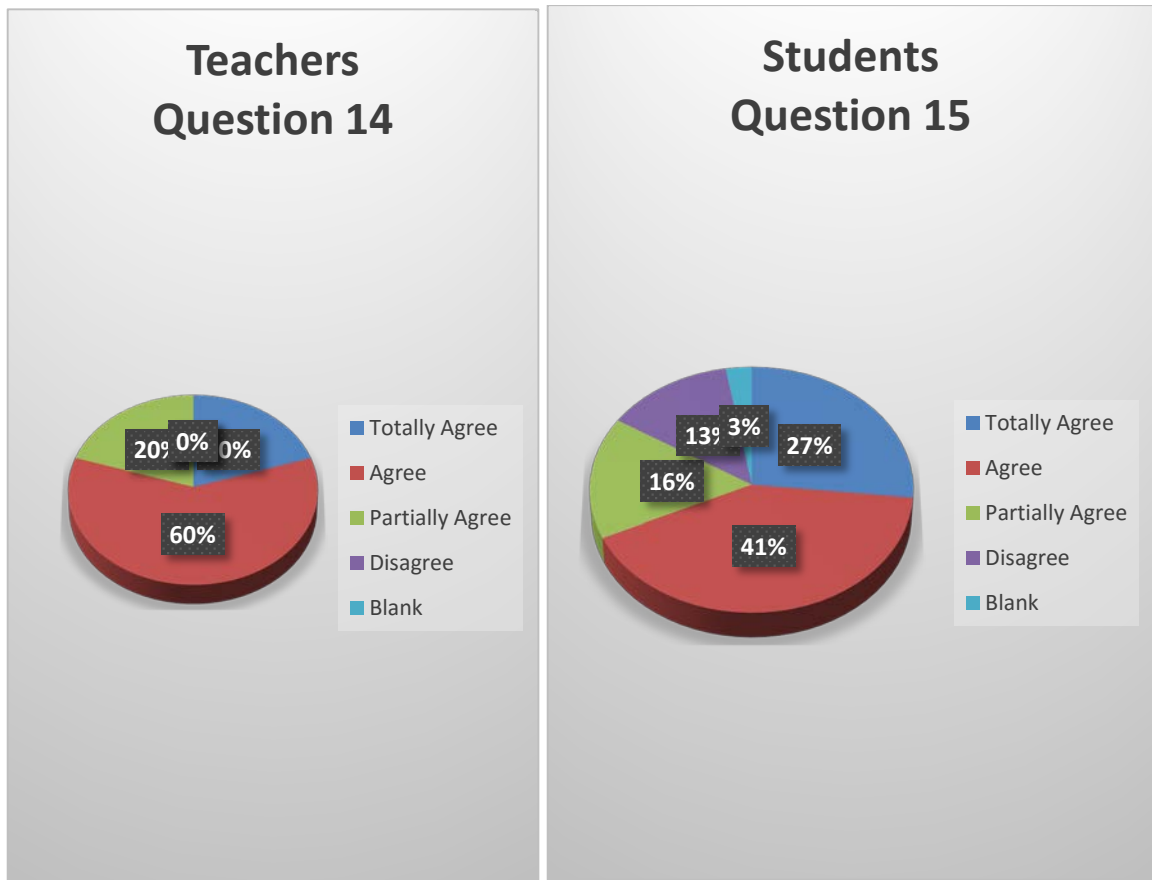


Question 13 shows that 60% of teachers totally agree that in small classes it is easier to design and apply individual activities. The other 40% of teachers agree and nobody disagrees with this assertion. Students, by the way, also think that in small classes it is used individual activities since 27% totally agree, 49% agree, 20% partially agree, 1% disagree, and 3% did not answer.

In the observations done, there was a balance between the group and individual activities; so these two activities were a major part of the class period. Due to small number of students, teachers were able to check and respond to students' work immediately; so students were clear about what had to be improved. Individual work gives teachers a real picture of what students have understood and learned about a topic because this type of activities are done without any peers' help, so teachers also receive a real feedback on their teaching.

In this regard, Molnar, Smith, and Zahorik (2003) state that the individualization that is produced along with an increased use of hands-on activities results in increased content, in more student self-direction and, ultimately, it is speculated, in greater student achievement as evidenced by higher achievement scores.

*Technological tools are used.*



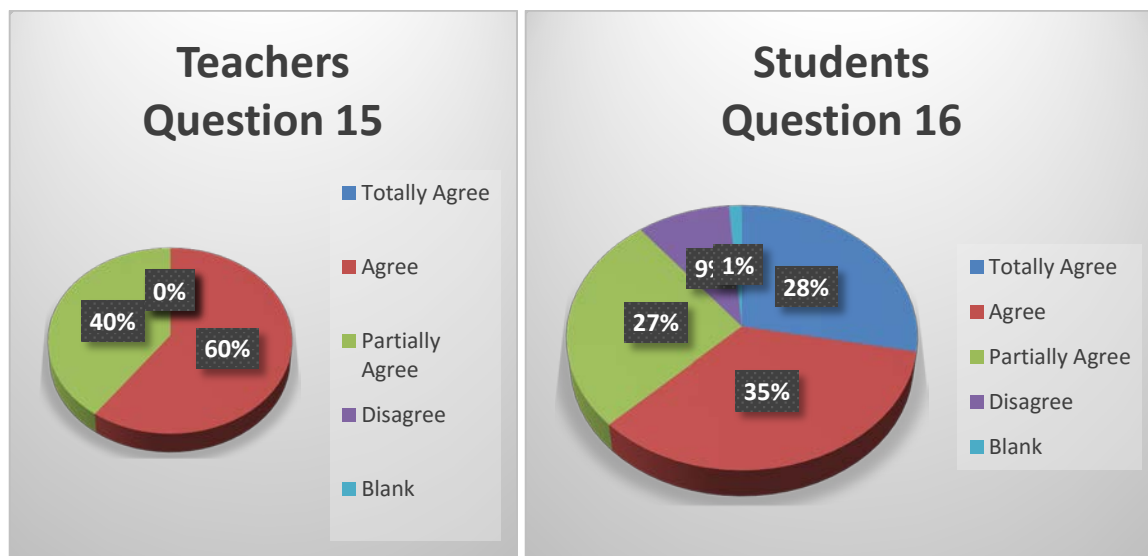
The results obtained in this statement reveal that in small classes it is easier to use technological resources for teaching purposes. The results show that 20% of teachers totally agree, 60% agree, and 20% partially agree. On the other side, students' perception shows that 27% totally agree that in small classes it is used technological resources, 41% agree, 16% partially agree, and 13% disagree. Only 3% did not answer.

Even though the majority of the teachers surveyed think that the use of technological resources is easier in small classes, during the observation stage, it was found that only two of the teachers used them. On the other side, the students' opinion was that not all the technological resources are used despite the school is equipped with them.

The use of technological resources is a great advantage because it makes classes more dynamic and allows catching students' attention. Herrel and Jordan (2012) stayed that

technological resources can be indispensable for providing learners with valuable language experiences when learning a new language.

*Didactic materials are used.*



Teachers confirm that working with didactic material in small classes is possible. It was found that 60% of teachers agree with this and the other 40% partially agree; nobody disagrees. In the students point of view, 28% totally agree that in small classes it is used didactic material, 35% agree, 27% partially agree, 9% disagree and, 1% gave no answer.

Even though teachers and students used their text book, posters and teaching cards in classes, only some teachers used electronic devices like audios and videos. In addition, it is stated that teachers in small classes can easily make materials to be used in planned activities, on quizzes and other type of assessments that can help them evaluate the students' learning.

As Brown (2007) stated, the use of didactic materials allows the teacher to explain the class with visual input, as the teaching cards, pictures, graphs, posters, etc., can be used as graphical feedback.

All these findings take us to the conclusion that the perception of teachers and students in classes with a reduced number of students allow teachers to help learners

develop and improve their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as to apply strategies and resources that can favor to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language.

Besides, in small classes teachers can demand students to change interaction patterns and seating arrangement depending on the learning goal and to work independently or in group according to the nature and complexity of a task. Finally, small classes allow teachers and students develop social skills, increase the quality of interaction, and boost cooperative work.

*What is your opinion about the way students feel when learning English in small classes?*

Through the interpretation of the four questions below, teachers' and students' perceptions about the way students feel through their learning process in small classes are going to be analyzed.

Table 5

Teachers' perceptions

No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
		16	They are relaxed when speaking in front of their classmates.			3	60	1	20			1	20
17	They are taken into account by the teacher because they have more opportunities to participate in class.	1	20	4	80							5	100
18	They are motivated to participate because of the small number students.	3	60			2	40					5	100



19	They are at ease because they can healthy compete with their classmates.	4	80	1	20								5	100
----	--	---	----	---	----	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---	-----

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Bilingüe Mediterráneo

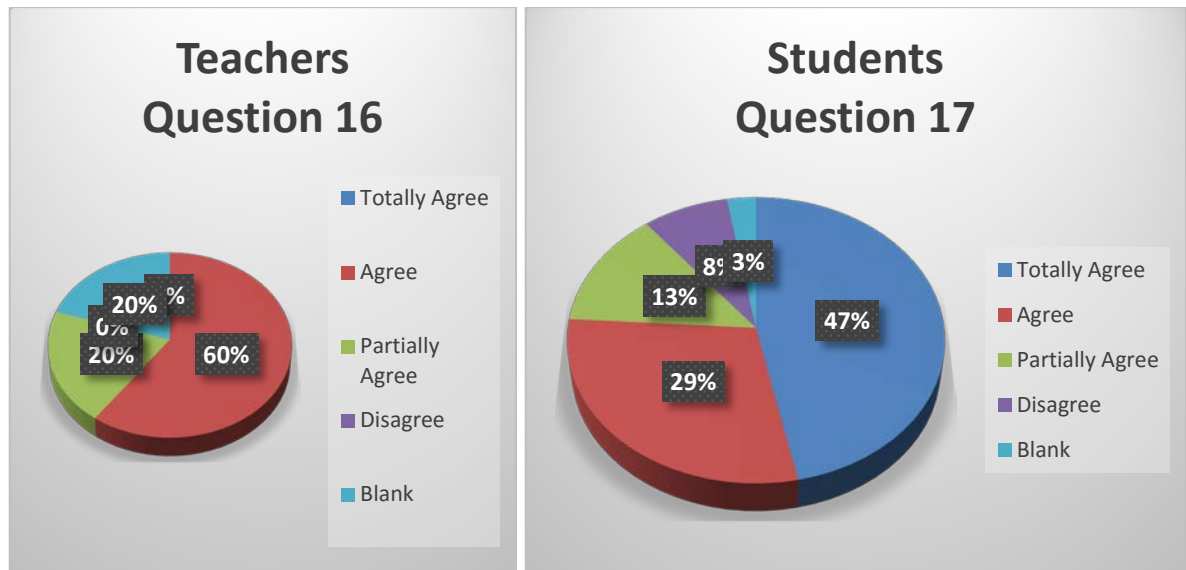
Table 6  
Students' perception

No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
17	I am relaxed when speaking in front of my classmates.	35	46,7	22	29,3	10	13,3	6	8	2	2,7	75	100
18	I am taken into account by the teacher because I have more opportunities to participate in class.	30	40	25	33,3	11	14,6	8	10,6	1	1,3	75	100
19	I am motivated to participate because of the small number of classmates.	33	44	31	41,3	9	12	1	1,3	1	1,3	75	100
20	I am at ease because I can healthy compete with my classmates.	30	40	37	49,3	5	6,7	2	2,7	1	1,3	75	100

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Bilingüe Mediterráneo.

*Students are relaxed when they speak in front of their classmates.*

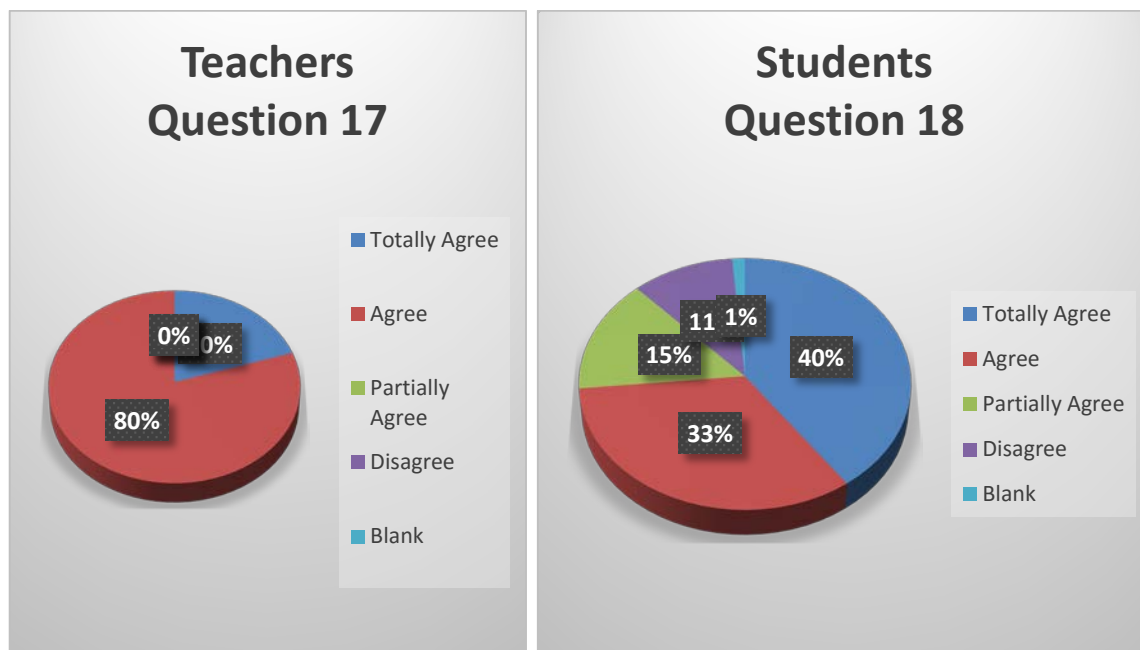


Question 6 affirms that in small classes students feel relaxed when they talk in front of the class, 60% of teachers agree with this declaration, 20% partially agree, and 20% did not answer. Meanwhile, students perception confirmed that 47% totally agree that in small classes they feel relaxed when they talk in front of the class, 29% agree, 13% partially agree, 8% disagree and 2% did not answer.

What it could be perceived in the observation performed was that the learning environment in the classroom was safe, full of respectful, non-judgmental classmates. The students were not nervous to talk in front of their classmates; they interacted with others using English most of the time and they did not even hesitate or showed fear to be the center of attention.

Concerning this, Bray and Kehle (2011) say that as interactions in these types of classes are warm, supporting and caring, the social/emotional aspect is going to be benefited as well, allowing students to feel relaxed when they have to talk in front of their peers.

*They have more opportunities to participate in class and to be taken into account by the teacher.*

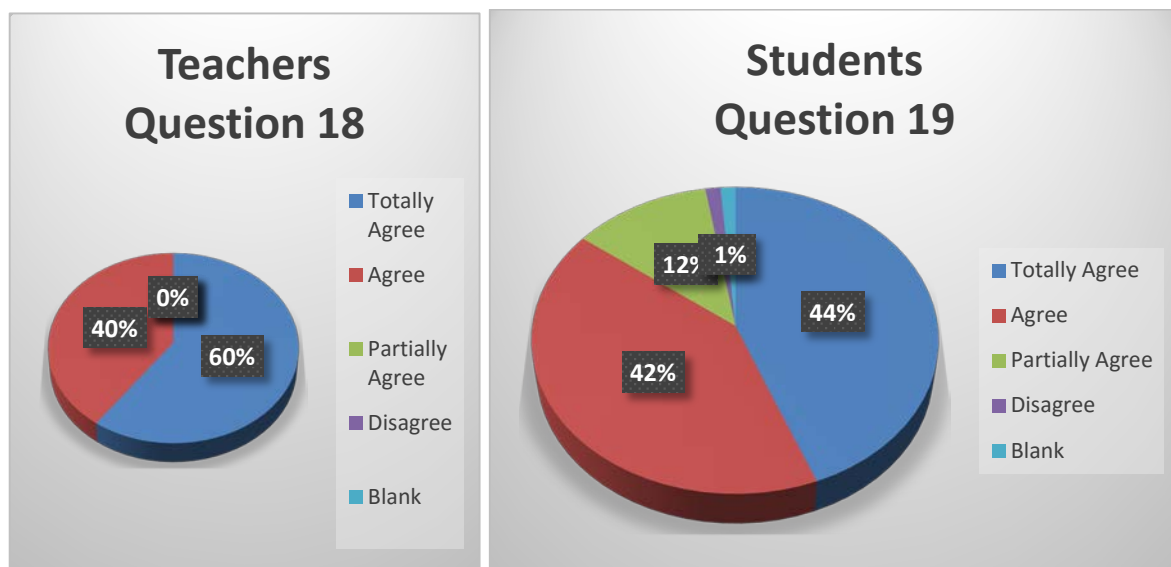


Question 17 indicates that 20% totally agree that in small classes students feel taken into account because they have more opportunities to speak in class, and 80% agree. On the other side, students' perception is that 40% totally agree that in small classes they feel taken into account because they have more opportunities to participate during the class, 33% agree, 15% partially agree, 11% disagree and 1% did not answer.

Some students in the observed classes seemed reluctant to take an active part in the class, but as soon as the teacher intervened, students did not oppose to participate. Besides, due to the small number of students in the classes, they have constantly the chance to actively participate in all the class' activities, and when someone did not seize that opportunity, teachers found the way to make them get involved in the activities.

In fact, according to Bray and Kehle (2011) having the teacher constantly concerned about students' development gives them confidence to ask more questions, to take more risks, and therefore, to participate in class.

*The small number of students motivates them to participate.*



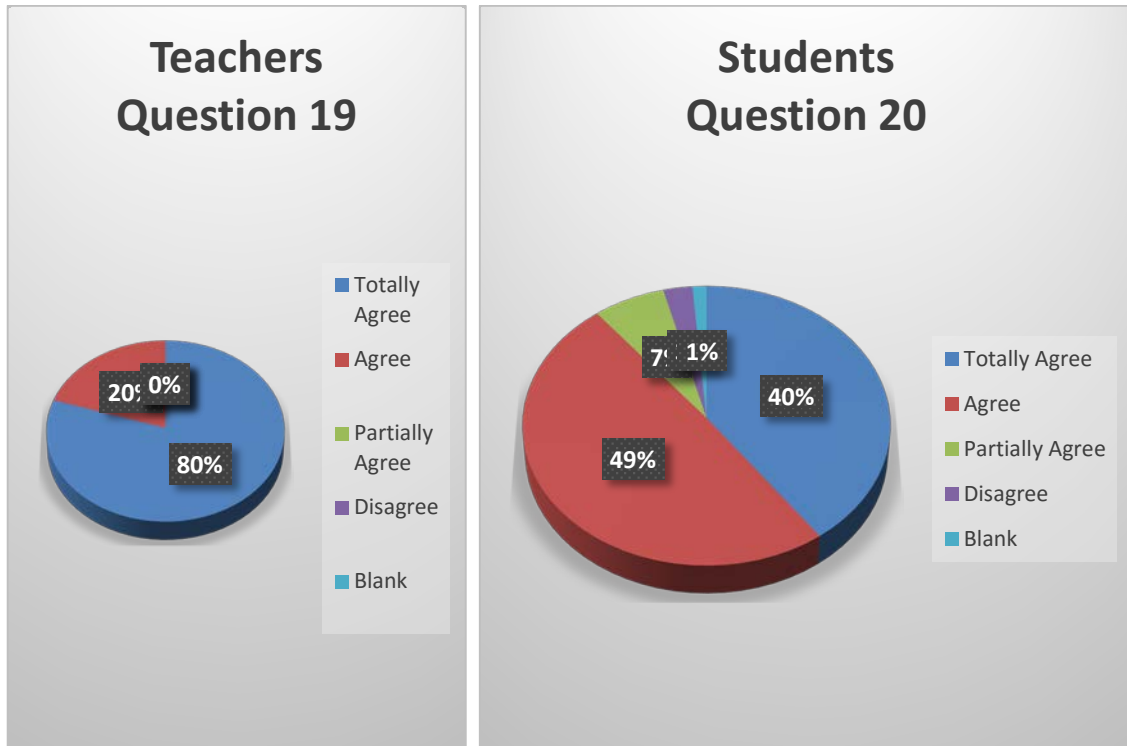
According to question 19, 60% of teachers totally agree with the fact that in small classes students feel motivated to participate because there are few classmates in the class, the other 40% of teachers also agree with this statement. In the case of the students' perception, 44% totally agree and 42% agree that in small classes they feel motivated to participate because they are few students in the class, 19% partially agree, and 1% disagree with this enunciation. 1% gave no response.

Having a small group of students allows teachers to have more control over their behavior and involvement. The majority of students were focused on task and were attentive to what the teacher required. However, the fact that students were focused on a task and alert during the class period does not imply that all of them were interested in taking part of the discussions.

Besides, teachers demanded attention and students were expected to participate and contribute during the planned activities. It seemed that motivation is also related to personal characteristics, interests and the chemistry students feel toward a teacher and among them. Motivation in the class was related to the subject content, the topic, and even to the relationship students had with the teacher.

Accordingly, Berns (2010) agrees with the fact that good interactions between students are going to boost motivation as a consequence.

*They can healthy compete with their classmates.*



Question 20 shows that 80% of the teachers totally agree and 20% agree that in small classes students feel comfortable because they can healthily compete with others.

Alternatively, 40% of students totally agree that in small classes they feel comfortable because they can compete in some way with their classmates, 49% agree, 7% partially agree, 3% disagree, and 1% gave no answer.

In the observations done, it was noticed that students were asked to work in groups, but they did not compete, they cooperated, which is more beneficial; they understood the benefits of being team players; this fact demonstrates that students have a good relationship with others and that they learn in a cooperative environment.

These results corroborate what Bray & Kehle (2011) say about how teachers in small classes perceive their students become cooperative, caring, and willing to support their peers instead of competing with them.

With the findings stated above, it is clear that teachers and students perceive that in a small class students feel more relaxed, participative, and confident. As interactions are constant and students take an active part in most of the tasks, they feel relaxed and confident in front of their classmates. Motivation is the aspect that appears to be less related to class size. The classroom environment that takes place in small classes offers students the advantage to feel safe, to show what they know, and to be willing to cooperate with others to accomplish a task and reach learning goals.

*What are the possible limitations of teaching English in small classes?*

Through the two questions detailed below, the teachers' and students' perceptions about the possible limitations of teaching English in small classes are analyzed.

Table 7

Teachers' perceptions

No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20	There is anxiety among students because there is more control from the part of the teacher.	3	60	2	40							5	100
21	Listening and speaking are more difficult to develop.					2	40	3	60			5	100

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Bilingüe Mediterráneo

Table 8

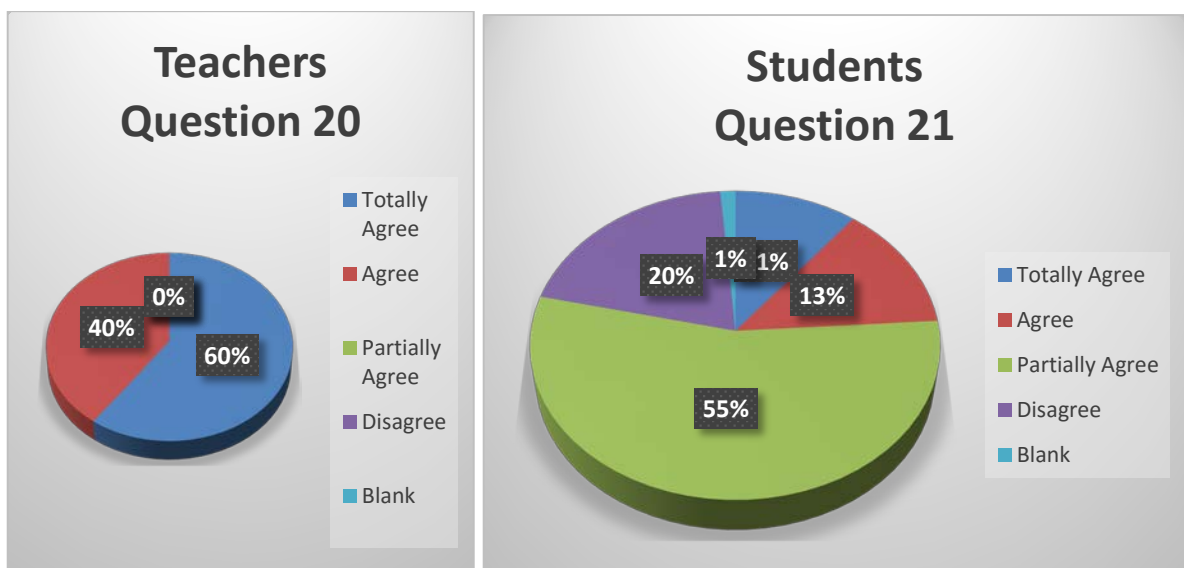
Students' perception

No.	In classes with small number of students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially Agree		Disagree		Blank		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
21	There is anxiety among students because there is more control on the part of the teacher.	8	10,6	10	13,3	41	54,6	15	20	1	1,3	75	100
22	Listening and speaking skills are more difficult to develop.	7	9,3	12	16	34	45,3	20	26,7	2	2,7	75	100

Author: Diana García Almeida

Source: Liceo Mixto Bilingüe Mediterráneo

*As there is more control from the teacher, the students feel anxiety among them.*

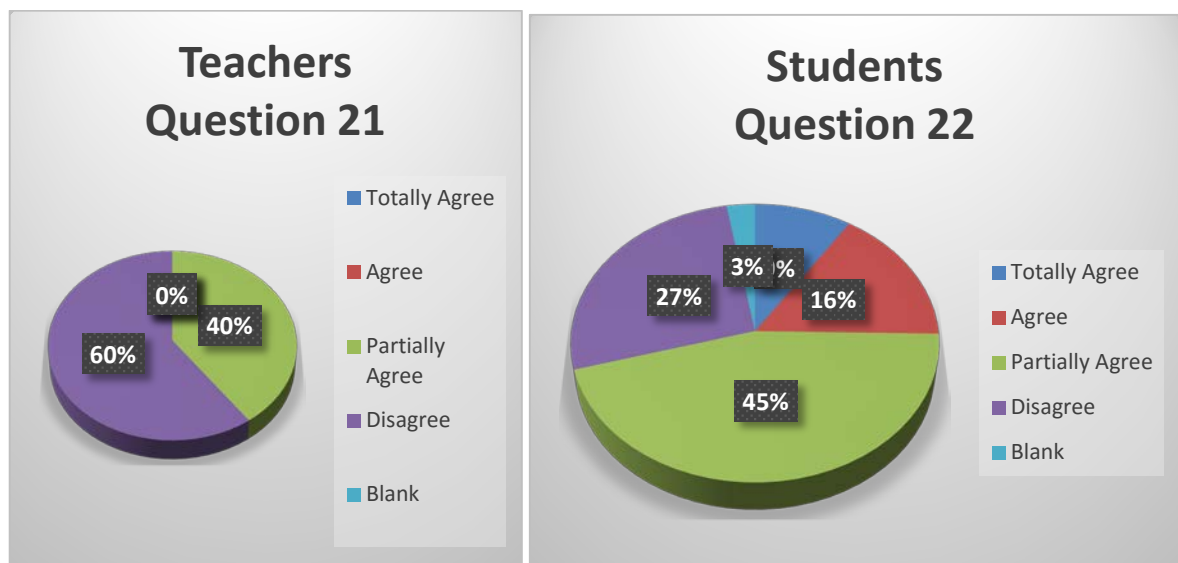


With regard to question 20, it was found that 60% of teachers totally agree that in small classes there exist anxiety among students because there is more control by the teacher, and 40% of them agree. Instead, students perception shows that 10% totally agree that in small classes there exist anxiety among them because there is more control by their teacher, 13% agree, and more than the half of the surveyed students, which represents the 55% partially agree, 20% disagree with this assertion and 1% gave no answer.

In the observations, it was perceived that students were conscious of being constantly observed and that fact pushed them to remain focused which was clearly an advantage for teachers and ensured the accomplishment of tasks. Students did not seem to feel nervous or uncomfortable with the teacher’s constant presence; they appeared, though, anxious while waiting for the teacher’s validation and approval.

According to Finn & Wang (2002), small classes are characterized by an increased individualization, which implies greater teacher’s control; it is obvious, therefore, that what can be an advantage for teaching purposes, may become a disadvantage for the learners in terms of the anxiety it might produce.

*It is more difficult to develop listening and speaking skills.*





The graphs of the last statement of this survey show that 60% of teachers disagree with the fact that it is difficult to practice listening and speaking skills, while the other 40% partially agree. In the case of the students' perception, the graph shows that 27% of the students disagree that in small classes it is more difficult to practice the listening and speaking skills, 45% partially agree, 16% agree, 9% totally agree, and 3% gave no answer.

In the observation done, it was found that listening and speaking activities were carried out on daily basis in small classes. Teachers planned activities such as discussions and debates, which allow to develop both skills; this fact is important since students need to understand what others say in order to give opinions or argument their ideas. They have to listen for main ideas and listen for details; they also have to communicate orally to show what they have understood or learned. In small classes, students are exposed to great amounts of listening materials that they have to decode and understand and speak about.

Finally, it was found that there exist limitations when teaching English in small classes, according to teachers' and students' perceptions, since a reduced number of students will not guarantee the absence of anxiety. In fact, it seems that as teachers are able to monitor students constantly, their angst tends to increase. Similarly, teachers and students agree with the fact that a small class will offer facilities: in the practice of listening and speaking skills, teachers' and students' relationship. Lastly, through this research it was confirmed that confidence teachers give to students to feel good and confident is important to maintain a good mood in the class and the achievement expected in the class.

## Conclusions

Teaching and learning English in small classes allows the possibility of a better understanding of contents and tasks that enable students to carry out activities that facilitate the practice of what they have learned.

In small classes, there are healthy supporting and caring interactions, which help students increase their confidence to take an active part in the class, and help teachers manage the classroom successfully.

Small classes provide the opportunity of more dynamic classes that encourage the students' involvement and the occasion to work cooperatively to accomplish a task.

In small classes the use of technological resources improves the teaching process and has a positive effect on the students who demonstrate enthusiasm and participate actively in the class.

Immediate and appropriate feedback focused on the students' individual needs, which helps to improve students' achievement, is provided in small classes.

Small classes have been proven to offer a friendly learning environment that makes students feel safe and allows them to experience acceptance and a sense of belonging to a group.

In small classes, teachers remember students' names, which has a positive effect on students' involvement and accomplishment since it produces a sensation of being taken into account and makes them feel important.

## Recommendations

Teachers should plan their activities using new technological resources to make their classes more dynamic and interactive, in order to get greater students' engagement in the tasks and better achievement.

In order to consider students' learning styles and to increase students' confidence and performance teachers should use appropriate teaching methods and strategies to teach their classes.

School Directors should give more support and training to teachers on how to teach English in small classes, in order to offer a healthy and friendly learning environment and to improve the quality of the English teaching-learning process.

## REFERENCES

- Archer, A. & Hughes, C. (2011). *Explicit instruction: effective and efficient teaching*. United States: The Guilford Press.
- Berns, R. (2010). *Child, family, school, community. Socialization and support*. (9<sup>th</sup> ed.) Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.
- Blatchford, P. (2003). *The class size debate: is small better?* England: Open University Press.
- Blatchford, P., & Bassett P., & Brown, P. (2005). Teachers' and pupils' behavior in large and small classes: a systematic observation study of pupils aged 10/11 years. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97, 454-467
- Blatchford, P., & Moriarty, V., & Martin, C. (2005) Relationships between class size and teaching: A multimethod analysis of English infant schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 39, 1, 101-132
- Blatchford, P., Russell, A., Basset, P., Brown, P., & Martin, C. (2006). The Effect of Class Size on the Teaching of Pupils Aged 7–11 Years. *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 18, 147-172.
- Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., & Brown, P. (2011). Examining the effect of class size on classroom engagement and teacher-pupil interaction: Differences in relation to pupil prior attainment and primary vs. secondary schools. *Learning and Instruction* 21, 715-730.
- Bonwell, Ch., Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. United States of America: Wiley.
- Boynton, M., & Boynton, C. (2005) *Educator's guide to preventing and solving discipline problems*. United States of America: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Bray, M & Kehle, T. (2011). *The oxford handbook of school psychology*. Ney York: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* Fourth Edition. San Francisco: State University.
- Caplan, L., & Owings, W. (2002) *Teacher quality, teaching quality, and school improvement*. Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Cole, Robert W. (2008) *Educating Everybody's Children: Diverse Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learner*. United States of America: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

- Cornelius, L. L. (2008). *Student Participation in Classroom Discourse*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest LLC.
- Feng S. Din. (1999). The functions of class size perceived by Chinese Rural School teachers. *National forum of applied educational research journal*, 12, 3.
- Finn, J.D., Wang, M. C. (2002). *Taking Small Classes One Step Further*. United States of America: Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Frey, N., Fisher, D., Everlove, S. (2009). *Productive Group Work: How to Engage Students, Build Teamwork, and Promote Understanding*. United States of America: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- Harfitt, G. (2012). Class size and language learning in Hong Kong: The students' perspective. *Educational Research*, 54, 3.
- Herrell, A., & Jordan, M. (2012). *50 strategies for teaching English language learners*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Johnson, R. T., & Johnson, D. W. (1982) *What research says about student-student interaction in science classrooms*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.
- Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D.J., & Pollock J.E. (2001) *Classroom Instructions That Works*. United States of America: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Marzano, J.S., Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. J. (2003) *Classroom Management That Works*. United States of America: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Molnar, Alex (2000). *Vouchers, Class Size Reduction, and Student Achievement: Considering the Evidence*. Indiana, United States of America: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Molnar, A., Smith, P. & Zahorik J. (2003) *Research on Teaching in Reduced-Size Classes*. Tempe, Arizona State University.
- Nilson L.B., & Miller J. E. (2010). *To Improve the academy: Resources for faculty, instructional, and organizational Development*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Vincent, S., & Ley, J. (1999). *The multigrade classroom: A resource for small rural schools. Book 3: Classroom management and discipline*. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

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:**

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

**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.

	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
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.

Nº	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
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.

Nº	<b>In classes with a small number of students,</b>	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
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>	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
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.

	<b>In classes with a small number of students:</b>	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
--	--	---------------	-------	-----------------	----------

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.	Classroom space allows students to properly do the activities designed.				
4.	Appropriate feedback can be given.				
5.	Activities that allow more interaction among students are performed.				
6.	There is more interaction between the teacher and the students.				
7.	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>	Totally agree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
23.	Design and apply activities that allow student to practice listening skills.				
24.	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice speaking skills.				
25.	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice reading skills.				
26.	Design and apply activities that allow students to practice writing skills.				
27.	Design and apply group work activities.				
28.	Design and apply individual activities.				
29.	Use technological tools				
30.	Use didactic materials.				

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

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

C. Limitations of learning English in small classes.

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

Thank you



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja  
**MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA**  
**TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS**  
**HOJA DE OBSERVACIÓN**

<b>INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA:</b>	
<b>FECHA:</b>	
<b>CURSO/NIVEL:</b>	

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

5. Existe interacción entre los estudiantes.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

6. Existe interacción entre el profesor y los estudiantes.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

7. El profesor recuerda el nombre de los estudiantes.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

12. Se utilizan actividades **grupales**.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

13. Se utilizan actividades **individuales**.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

14. Se utilizan recursos tecnológicos.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

15. Se utilizan materiales didácticos.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

17. Los estudiantes tienen mayor oportunidad de expresarse.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

19. Los estudiantes pueden competir sanamente con sus compañeros.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

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

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*

22. Se dificulta realizar habilidades de habla y escucha.

*SI* ( )      *NO* ( )

*Notas:*