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**Teachers and students' perceptions of Teaching English in small classes.**

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación, “Teachers and Students’ perceptions of Teaching English in small classes in Ecuador” realizado por Espinoza López Paulina de los Ángeles, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, noviembre de 2014

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my daughters Karen and Natalie who motivated me to keep going, I also dedicate it to my parents who have always supported me unconditionally and have been with me during the good and bad times of my life, all my sisters but particularly to Magaly who has been with me every day of my life. Finally, I dedicate it to God because he has guided my way and allowed me to fulfill my dreams.

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## CONTENTS

COVER	i
APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN	ii
DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
CONTENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	1
RESUMEN	2
INTRODUCTION	3
METHOD	6
DISCUSSION	8
Literature Review	8
Description, Analysis and interpretation of the Results	23
Conclusions	52
Recommendations	53
REFERENCES	54
ANNEXES	57

## ABSTRACT

This research focus was on analyzing teachers and students' perceptions of teaching English in small classes. Its purpose was to find out if the results of working with small classes generate positive or negative results in students English learning.

The general approach used in this research was quantitative and qualitative. Besides, survey, note taking, and observation techniques were considered and the main instruments used were questionnaires and observation sheets.

The field research was conducted in two private schools in Soria and the sample analyzed consisted on twenty-five students and five teachers, who were surveyed in order to know their perceptions of teaching and learning English in small classes.

The most important finding gotten from this research was that students and teachers feel more comfortable when they work in small classes, they can take advantage of all resources, more time for interaction among them and more opportunities to practice.

**Key words:** Research, Quantitative Research, Qualitative Research, Method, Findings.



## RESUMEN

Esta investigación fue dirigida para analizar las percepciones de profesores y estudiantes de la Enseñanza de Inglés en clases pequeñas. Con el fin de averiguar si los resultados de trabajar con grupos reducidos, genera resultados positivos o negativos en el aprendizaje de Inglés de los estudiantes.

El enfoque general fue cuantitativo y cualitativo. En base al análisis cuantitativo se hizo la tabulación de los estudios completados por cada maestro en cada aula observada y por cinco estudiantes seleccionados al azar en cada clase. Se consideraron las técnicas encuesta, toma de notas y de observación y los principales instrumentos utilizados fueron cuestionarios y hojas de observación. La investigación de campo se llevó a cabo en dos escuelas privadas en Soria, la muestra analizada consistió en veinticinco estudiantes y cinco profesores, que fueron encuestados y entrevistados para conocer sus percepciones sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de Inglés en clases pequeñas. La investigación se realizó durante el día en dos escuelas subvencionadas en el capital de Soria; en donde las clases se componen de 20 estudiantes o menos. La edad de los estudiantes en este estudio va entre 9 a 13 años de edad, que pertenecen a la sección primaria.

El hallazgo más importante obtenido de esta investigación fue que los estudiantes y los profesores se sienten más cómodos cuando trabajan en grupos pequeños, ya que pueden tomar ventaja de todos los recursos, disponen de más tiempo para la interacción entre ellos y más oportunidades para practicar, pero es importante tener en cuenta que el tamaño de la clase no es el único factor que determina el progreso del alumno.

## INTRODUCTION

English is studied in many countries in South America and Europe as a foreign language, precisely because to know English opens the door for better jobs with a better salary paid and also because there are more possibilities to travel and study abroad.

Besides, Globalization and new technologies require us to know English; for this reason, it is very important to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning process in schools, colleges and universities. This issue motivated the current research since by investigating the teachers and students' perceptions of teaching English in small classes in order to know the positive or negative results of class size related to the students' progress.

This research is specifically intended to answer the following questions: What are the benefits of teaching and learning English to 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 show the teachers and students' opinions about teaching English in small classes. The first one was conducted by Harfitt (2012) with the purpose of examining whether and how class size reduction might help to alleviate language learning anxiety which is considered as an obstacle to second language acquisition. In this study this author employed multiple case studies in four Hong Kong secondary schools. With four teachers, multiple interviews were used and individual interviews at the total of 231 students. The interview questions for the students were focused on their perspectives and experiences of studying in large and reduced- size classes. Data was taken from multiple students' interviews and classroom observations. The results showed that students in small classroom exhibit a strong sense of security within their classroom community and decreases their fears to the negative

evaluation from their peers and teachers. Besides, students felt more confident about participating in English lessons. The author concluded that in small classes learner's anxiety can be reduced and class size reduction may help in breaking down cultural barriers.

Another study is the one conducted by Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein & Martin (2003) whose purpose is to know whether class size differences affect pupils' academic achievement and connections between class size and classroom processes, which might explain any differences found. They used in this study an observational approach with the objective to capture the nature of the relation class size and achievement across a full range of observed classes. The schools taken into account for this study were randomly selected and belong to a wide range of social backgrounds and situated in urban, suburban, and rural areas, and were schools with different class size categories i.e. large (30 and over), large medium (26-29), small medium (20-25), and small (under 20). The results showed that the class size is connected with the numbers and size of the groups in the class. Besides the educational environment of large groups was less effective than small groups, due to, an adverse effect on the amount and quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' work and concentration in large groups. Teachers felt that group size and class size affect their teaching and classroom management. These authors concluded that class size is related to several classroom processes and the effects of class size are possible to be multiple. The limitations encountered in this study may be other outcomes and classroom processes related to class size differences, that neither were nor covered in this study.

Finally, Harfitt (2013) conducted a study whose purpose was to examine why 'small classes' can be better than large classes. In this study he examined the relationships between class size and pedagogical practice by focusing on teachers working in large and small classes of the same grade level. The participants were students of the urban areas of Hong Kong. The

results showed that teachers did not change their pedagogy between large to small classes. About “knowing” students better in small classes, the interviews of the teachers said that smaller classes had allowed teachers to know their students better and this was reflected in the more frequent use of names of the small class students in the classroom episodes. This author concludes that teachers have good teaching practice in smaller classes; in fact, teachers adopted different approaches in their small classes such as: 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. A limitation of this study was the lack of time, and the sample size that unable examined the student achievement.

Teachers, students and policy makers of the educational process are the main beneficiaries of this study. Teachers can be highly benefited from this research work because they can understand how to improve the way in which they teach by incorporating new techniques, strategies, and motivating students with things that they love.

The main limitation encountered in this research was the lack of time for doing the observations and the possibly differences between public and private schools. Also, this study was conducted only with the primary section with learners between 9 to 12 years old; therefore, this study was limited to the beginner and intermediate level of proficiency.

## METHOD

### *Setting and Participants*

This research was carried out in Spain in the city of Soria. It was carried out in two private schools, through five class observations. These two schools are located in the urban area of the city of Soria. The sample selected for this research consisted on 25 students, whose ages ranged from 9 to 13 years old, and belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> years of school. Besides, teachers were all female aged between 26 to 51 years old, each of them with at least 5 years in teaching English.

### *Procedures*

The first step of this research was the gathering of the information to build up the literature review. The bibliographical support was search based in the followings topics: managing learning, Teacher-student, and student-student interaction, class size, teaching techniques, strategies or activities for teaching English in small classes, and learning environment in small classes. The most relevant information of concepts and definitions were taken mainly from books, manuals, and e-books.

This information supports and clarifies the concepts used through this research. Besides, five previous studies were utilized in the same way which permitted to establish the bibliographical background for the present study.

The second step was the field research. It began with the observations of English classes. One class per day was observed, in each class the teacher filled in a teacher questionnaire, during their free time; also, five students randomly selected filled in the student's questionnaire. Both questionnaires were based on four related groups with the following themes: the benefits of teaching and learning English in classes with few students,

the strategies, and resources favoring the teaching of English in classes with few students, opinion about how students feel learning English in a class with few students, and limitations of learning English in classes with few students. Furthermore, both questionnaires were written in Spanish to avoid misunderstandings.

The instruments used for collecting data were observation sheets, teacher questionnaires, and student questionnaire; and the techniques used were note taking, which was used to collect details and more important extra information about the English classes and class observations, where the researcher post in the information sheet.

This study is based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis because the researcher counted the number of occurrences of each answer and found the corresponding percentage of each section. Finally, the information was analyzed and described in order to contrast and compare the results of the two schools researched, in order to be able to make conclusions and recommendations

## DISCUSSION

### Literature Review

Nowadays learning English is very important in both the academic and workplace. So, it is necessary that the process of learning English as a foreign language in Ecuador may be analyzed in order to keep improving the quality of teaching in schools and high schools, providing teachers with the right preparation and resources.

With objective of improving the quality of the English teaching and learning Ecuadorian government through the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has created The Project for Strengthening the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, which main objective is that the Ecuadorian students attain a functional level of use of the English language. Their specific initiatives are aimed at updating national curricula that subject to the delivery of textbooks aligned to these curricula, professional development for teachers of English in exercise, and improving training in this career. (Ministerio de Educación 2012).

Also, the Ministry of Education with the aim of improving the teaching of English is using certain strategies to measure the degree of knowledge of the English teachers, this is the TOEFL test, and according the managers of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador this program will help to train to English teachers. Besides, this program will help to enhance their English skills and learn new strategies to use in the classroom, in order to build an attractive environment for learning the language. The objective of the program is to ensure that all teachers of EFL reach a B2 level in English (as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference) and to improve their ability to teach EFL.

According to Jean-Michel Mosquera, Project Manager for the English Language Ministry of Education, the TOEFL test is the most widely recognized assessment in English

language around the world; it is used in more than 130 countries, including Australia, UK, Canada, and USA. This assessment measures the ability of a person to understand English and proficiency in the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In addition to the preparation of teachers for teaching English there are other factors that affect the process of teaching and learning such as the size of the class, the better small or large classes, it could benefit the teaching of English in small classes.

In this section, it is included the supporting concepts and definitions used through the present research.

The following topics are going to be considering: Managing learning (instructions, feedback and timing); Teacher-student, and student-student interaction (importance of the interaction); Class size (number of students in small and large classes); Teaching techniques, strategies or activities for teaching English in small classes; Learning environment in small classes (use and organization of the physical space; and social and emotional atmosphere).

### *Managing learning*

Gebhard (2006) suggests that when teaching English, the manner in which the teacher gives the instructions is one of the main aspects of managing the classroom. For this reason, the instructions should be clear and allow students to interact. This author also provides some recommendations when giving instructions for example: write down instructions and give them verbally, give the instructions verbally and show the students what are they to do, ask a student to read the instructions and another to repeat it, write the instructions on the board, tell students what is expected of them in each task to be performed, dictate the instructions and check exchange dictation with a partner, whisper the instruction one partner to another, explain with gestures the instructions for the students to guess what they have to do.



In the same way, Harmer (2007) states that there are two general rules for giving instructions: they must be simple and logical. Teachers must know what they want to teach and what students need to accomplish the task successfully. When instructions are given it is very important to verify that the student has understood what to do, this can be done by asking directly to the student.

Another aspect to consider in managing learning is feedback. Askew (2000) says that effective language learning is a cycle that involves processes and outcomes. Within the processes for effective learning he mentions for example: make connections of learning in different contexts; reflect on one's own learning and strategies, explore the contexts that have contributed to learning, set future learning goals and engage with other in learning. Regarding to the outcomes he includes: deep knowledge, higher order skills, strategies and approaches, actions towards greater complexity and more learning, positive emotions, excitement, enthusiasm; enhanced sense of self, more sense of connections with others, further learning strategies; greater affiliation to learning, and change personal significance.

He concludes, that if all of these processes are fulfilled the learning outcomes cited above can be reached.

Finally, giving feedback is very important in order to bring self-awareness and progress in the development of any activity during the class because students continually need to know how they are doing, so providing feedback is one of the responsibilities of the teacher. One way of providing feedback can be by praising and encouraging the students, by correcting them or by testing them; discussing and exchanging opinions, taking into account that feedback always can be done in a positive way. (Gower, et al 2005)

*Teacher-student and student-student interaction*

Lighbown & Spada (2006) highlight the importance of the interaction between the learner and the teacher in the acquisition of the second language. They also state that interaction plays an important role in the learning of any language. Therefore, in teaching English teachers should interact with their students, if they want to obtain good results.

In addition, teacher and student relationship is one of the aspects of classroom management as Marzano (2003) says that if the teacher maintains a good relationship of respect and trust with his pupils, they work and learn more easily and without disciplinary problems. So good teachers provide support and strong academic guidance but, at the same time taking into account the opinion of the learners based on their needs and desires for attempting to work as in a team. This author believes that in the classroom there should be a right combination of moderate dominance and moderate cooperation for proper learning.

Besides the interaction with the teacher and interaction with other students plays an important role in learning English as Lighbown & Spada (2006) say that the interactions with other learners allow them express their thoughts, opinions and learn from each other, when they are working together in a particular task. This type of interaction provides them an opportunity that any other form of interaction does, because students can ask for confirmation or clarification, repetition with a questioning intonation, in this way they can learn languages forms, grammatical structures and specially vocabulary while they work with a partner.

On the other hand, McNough & Mackey (2013) mention that the learner-learner interaction during task - based instruction facilitate the process of acquisition of second language, due to the learners exposure to the meaningful input allow them to get feedback on their linguistic performance and enable them to produce and change their output. Taking into consideration these aspects for these authors the learner-learner interaction can have a positive effect in the learning of a second language.

### *Class size*

Bray & Kehle (2011) argue that class size is an important element in the success of students' English learning. These authors consider a classroom with 20 or fewer students as a small, and those with more than 20 students as large. For them, small classes allow students to get favorable results; the main benefits small classes provide are: (a) students' learning behavior; (b) students' social behaviors; and (c) students-teachers interactions. These authors also indicate that students in small classes, unlike large classes, are more likely to participate in the activities proposed by the teacher during class; also, the teacher can give individual attention to students by identifying who needs more support in a particular task.

Similarly, Nilson & Miller (2010) point out that small classes have many benefits for both teachers and students. Small classes allow learners to have a positive self-image, more opportunities to participate in activities during the class, and feel motivated toward learning English; besides, for teachers small classes means more job satisfaction, increases their desire to teach; in fact, there are more opportunities to do activities with their students and allows to improve classroom management, control the students' discipline. Therefore, these authors conclude that small classes allow teachers to know better about each of their students, know their strengths and weaknesses and be able to provide individualized support, allowing a better relationship between teacher and student and also succeed in English learning.

On the other hand, referring to class size Kaplan & Owings (2002, p.49) state that "Class-size effects vary grade by grade level, pupil characteristics, subject areas, teaching methods, and other variables. Thus, reducing class size without simultaneously improving teacher and teaching quality appears to be both an expensive and often unproductive option"

In the same way, these authors state that when the students' number overwhelms 30, it can be considered a problem that really affects because unable teacher to give personalized

attention to students, because they spend more time to keep students under control, than teaching them. So, small class allows more attention, time, opportunities to give feedback and energy from teacher to students in their tasks. Therefore, teaching learning process becomes easier to be achieved and students can development a higher grade of confidence and stronger effect between class members.

In conclusion, according to Kaplan & Owings (2002) class size is one of the factors that affects to the teaching and learning quality. In addition, for them, the teacher is a very important component that must be highly qualified to address the needs and expectations of students. If the teacher complies this, interacts and provides individualized help to students in both small and large classes. So, the academic success not only depends on the size of the class.

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

Before appointing techniques favoring teaching in small classes, it is important to know the definition of a technique. Related to Brown, (2007, p.16) a “Technique is any wide variety or exercises, activities or tasks used in the language classroom for creating lesson objectives”. Therefore, this author indicates that to keep students engaged in the English learning teachers need to consider sounds, patterns, gestures, maps, jigsaws, summaries, symbols, multimedia, computers programs and visual aids, ask and answer questions, share experience, state concepts, role playing among others.

Furthermore, Herrell & Jordan (2012) mention three strategies for teaching English to small classes such as: skills grouping, partner work and cooperative learning. In skills grouping, students are placed into groups according to their level of instruction in a determinate skill. The professor creates groups based on the observations of the needs and the level of knowledge of their students, in this way students can improve their comprehensible

input. Similarly, partner work strategy results very effective when you work with second language learners because this strategy allows students interact each other. For instance, they work in pairs and they have more time for practicing the verbal interactions, first with their partner and after with the whole class. In relation with cooperative learning, students are placed in groups to accomplish a particular task, where each student has to complete part of the task, so students need to work collaboratively to develop a good job. For cooperative learning activities, it is necessary that the teacher let the students to know each other and have a clear idea of what it is that the teacher expected to achieve in each task.

Besides, Kendall & Khuon (2005) state that although students receive instructions as a whole class to perform certain tasks, sometimes learners need to work in small groups for receiving feedback and feel more comfortable when they ask questions. Because students feel embarrassed in front of the whole class. Sometimes, working with small groups can be complicated depending on the affinity between students and the type of the task; on the contrary, this strategy allows students to learn in a low anxiety environment with more opportunities for teacher-student interaction and also student-student interaction guided more often by the teacher and thereby, easier for the teacher check for understanding and monitor the classroom.

In addition to techniques that can be used specifically in small classes, it is necessary to get knowledge on the techniques that can be applied for teaching English in both large and small classes. Nunan (2000) classifies in a general way the teaching techniques into five main types as cognitive, interpersonal, linguistic, affective, and creative. In this way, the cognitive teaching technique is based on activities in where students infer, classify, discriminate or diagram with the objective that students participate actively. Related to interpersonal teaching techniques aims to cooperate, to share ideas, and to learn with other students. Regarding to the

linguistic technique is used for practicing controlled exercises, using context, skimming and summarizing while reading. Besides, the affective technique allows students share opinions, feelings and ideas about the subject with other classmates. Finally, within the creative technique students can evidence their creativity for example when they work in the brainstorming for completing a task.

#### *Learning environment in small classes*

Erwin (2004) mentions some strategies that create a safe and orderly classroom environment such as: maintain a daily or weekly agenda, building activities in team, journal communication and use of music in the classroom. This author also explains that the use of daily weekly agenda is important to help students know what they have to do in a specific moment in the class and reduce their fear at the unknown. Moreover, team- building activities help them to feel safe and secure while they are working and learning with peers. Besides, the use of journal communication allows students to feel more comfortable communicating their feelings and thoughts in written way instead of telling the teacher directly. In this way, students can express their fears, concerns and needs in discreet manner. Related to the music, he thinks, that it is a good source to create an atmosphere of calm and order, specially the classical and baroque music, due to the softness of rhythm that transmits.

Another aspect that plays an important role in the learning environment is seating arrangement. According to Bray & Kehle (2011) the physical characteristic and arrangement of the classroom is one of the important aspects of learning environment because seating arrangement influences on students' behavior, allows eye contact between teacher and learners, teacher can monitor students, and students can interact with the teacher and with their peers.

According to these authors, the seating arrangements should be based on students' needs and activities to control students' behavior. These authors also argued that some types of seating arrangement are: in rows, semicircles, and circles. Teachers should arrange the seats into rows when the goal is based on independent tasks and in semicircles when the learners need more interaction between them in order to complete the tasks.

Another important aspect inside the physical characteristics of the classroom mentioned by these authors is the noise. Excess noise affects on students' concentration and performance of students in the class, so Bray & Kehle (2011) recommend that teachers should control the noise within the classroom placing students away from air conditioners, fans and other devices that impede student's concentration. Unfortunately, outside noise is not under the control of any English teacher, but teachers should try to minimize external noise by closing the doors and windows of the class, to avoid noise of cars, planes, whistles, horns and more. Finally, these authors conclude that it is important that the teacher note these important factors in the environment of the class complies with the ideal learning conditions, and the results will be good for both teacher and student.

The following pages contain relevant studies performed on the teachers and students' perceptions of teaching English in small classes, which have been considered in order to support the current research.

The first study was conducted by Harfitt (2012) with the purpose of examining whether and how class size reduction might help to alleviate language learning anxiety which has long been seen as an obstacle to second language acquisition. In this study this author employed multiple case studies in four Hong Kong secondary schools.

With four teachers, multiple interviews were used and individual interviews at the total of 231 students. The interview questions for the students were focused in their

perspectives and experiences of studying in large and reduced- size classes. Data was taken for multiple students' interviews and classroom observations. A 'case' in this study constitutes one teacher teaching in a small and large class. Each teacher taught one large and one small class.

The results showed that students in small classroom exhibit a strong sense of security within their classroom community and decrease their fears to the negative evaluation from their peers and teachers. Besides, students felt more confident about participating in English lessons as demonstrated during classroom observations.

The author concluded that in small classes learner's anxiety can be reduced and that class size reduction may assist in breaking down cultural barriers. The importance of this study was that pupils' voice represents a different perspective to the important issue of how class size can mediate teaching and learning. Conclusions described earlier indicated the need for a deeper examination of students and teachers working in large and small classes through the organization of longitudinal studies that capture the reality and fine details of the classroom context.

Finally, Harfitt identifies as a limitation of this study the focus on only four cases (eight classes and four teachers) so that any conclusions are best only provisionally.

Din (1999) in his study investigated: (a) what kind of factor is class size? (b) What are the benefits for having small classes in schools? And (c) What should teachers and students in large classes do to teach and learn effectively? The purpose of the study was to obtain data on how Chinese school teachers perceive these issues.

A survey with open-ended question was conducted on a sample of Chinese rural teachers (N=55). This survey was conducted in Chinese rural school district located in small



town or villages in where the 90% of the population were farmers. In this district, a class with 50 students or more was considered large, a class with 30 students or less was considered a small class. In each class the average of students was 48. Nevertheless, classes in elementary schools were relatively larger than those in secondary schools. A survey package was sent at the principals of five schools, in a separate letter, the principals were requested to distribute the surveys packages to his/her teachers with five or more years of teaching experience. About 50% of the teachers in each school were surveyed.

The findings showed that the majority of teachers considered a class with 45 to 50 students as a small class and a class with 50 or more students as a large class. In conclusion, most part of the teachers 54 of 55, prefer to teach small classes and only one thinks that “It does not matter to me”.

The author concluded that the Chinese rural teachers did not see a necessary link between class size and student achievement. However, they believed that small classes facilitate classroom management, more student-teacher interactions, more individualized help from the teachers, and reduce teachers’ workloads. On the other hand, Chinese rural teachers believed that in large classes’ student competition encourage learning.

As limitation this author mentions the number of students per class varies from one to another continent; therefore, this study limited to Asia because, American educators have a different standard. Nevertheless, Chinese rural teachers prefer to teach to small classes for several reasons: small classes are easier to manage, easier for teachers to provide individualized help to students; they facilitate teaching effectiveness, and mean less work for teachers, and so forth.

Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein & Martin (2003) investigated whether class size differences affect pupils' academic achievement and connections between class size and classroom processes, which might explain any differences found.

They used in this study an observational approach with the objective to capture the nature of the relation class size and achievement across a full range of observed classes. The schools taken into account for this study were from a wide range of social backgrounds and situated in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Besides, it was randomly selected and schools were from different class size categories i.e. large (30 and over), large medium (26-29), small medium (20-25), and small (under 20)

The results showed that the class size is connected with the numbers and size of the groups in the class. Besides, the educational environment of large groups were less effective than small groups, due to, an adverse effect on the amount and quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' work and concentration in large groups. Teachers felt that group size and class size affect their teaching and classroom management.

They concluded that class size is related to several classroom processes and the effects of class size are possible to be multiple. They said that the limitations may be other outcomes and classroom processes related to class size differences, that neither were nor covered in this study.

Another study conducted by Harfitt (2012) aimed to answer the following questions: What are the secondary school English language teachers' perceptions of teaching large and reduced-size classes of the same grade level? and what are the differences, if any, between those perceptions and the subsequent practices of the same teachers when teaching in large and reduced-size classes of comparable ability?

In this study it was employed a qualitative research methodology in the collection and analysis of data, which includes 22 semi-structured interviews with three experienced teachers across three case study schools as well as 48 lesson observations. A 'case' in this study constitutes a teacher teaching a large class as well as a reduced-size class of comparable level and ability. Each case provides us an opportunity to understand and explain any differences identified.

The results showed that all three teachers answered related with the planned of the lesson that they prepared both classes in the same way, and use the same materials. Regarding to adopting different teaching approaches the study suggest that the teachers actually do not change their pedagogy with the large or small classes, but they are aware that they are more likely to engage in other activities such interviews when teaching small classes.

As conclusions in this study there are some benefits when teachers work with small classes for example fewer classroom management problems, better knowledge of students and more opportunities for teaching. Besides, two teachers reported that they did not actually change or vary their pedagogy when faced with a smaller class, but instead, chose to do much the same in both classes.

Harfitt (2013) investigated the relationships between class size and pedagogical practice by focusing on teachers working in large and small classes of the same grade level. His goal was identified pedagogical practices which may contribute to a better understanding of what effective teaching in small or reduced-size classes might look like.

This author used interviews and lesson observation as part of multiple case studies on teachers in different secondary schools in Hong Kong. A 'case' in this study constitutes the same teacher teaching a large class as well as a smaller class of comparable level and academic ability. In this study the naturalistic approach was adopted with the purpose of

determining the impact of classroom interaction and learning, the content of the lesson (the topic and the language skills) and the academy ability of the students.

The results showed that teachers did not change their pedagogy between large and small classes, but observational data suggest otherwise. Teachers varied the organization of learning in their large and small classes during the lessons and were found that group work and pair work is most frequently used with small classes, this showed the pedagogical differences in the observed classes. Besides, in the interview the teachers said that the small classes allowed them to know their students better and this was reflected in the more frequent use of names of students in small classes and enable to build a class spirit in where they are all working together and that this was made possible because of a strong mutual understanding between them. In the interview teachers were better able to describe individual students in the small classes and were able to describe the learning strategies and personalities of those.

This author concludes that teachers have good teaching practice in smaller classes; teachers observed in this study did adopt different approaches in their small classes such as: 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. But, whether teachers are able to articulate explicitly the differences between large and small class teaching is possibly not as important as enabling teachers to see what opportunities there are when the class size is reduced. Although this study focuses on Hong Kong, the issue of long working hours for teachers is surely a global issue and raises important questions for educators at all levels because in order to promote successful small class teaching, management must surely take a leading role in providing teachers with the physical and mental room for changing their practice.

The main limitation in this study was the lack of time, which impeded to check whether good academic practice allow students learning achievement.

## Description, Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

The next section describes, analyzes, and interprets the author's findings reached after the field observation. The analysis and interpretation of the results is based on questionnaires filled by teachers and students in order to know their perceptions of teaching English in small classes. Then, the results are showed in the following tables, with the frequencies and percentages obtained from each statement one table for teachers' perceptions and another for students' perceptions.

### *Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis*

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

Table 1

#### Teachers' Perceptions

No.	In small classes:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	It is easier to design activities that help students to apply what they learned in class.	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100
2.	The students are attentive and participative in class activities.	2	40	2	40	0	0	1	20	5	100
3.	The classroom's physical space allows that the designed activities by you could be carrying out appropriately	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100
4.	It can provide an appropriate feedback	2	40	2	40	0	0	1	20	5	100
5.	The activities performed foster student-student interaction.	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100
6.	There exists teacher student interaction.	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100

7.	It is easier to remember the students' names	2	40	2	40	0	0	1	20	5	100
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Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Teachers' questionnaire

Table 2

Students' Perceptions

No.	In small classes:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	The activities done help to apply what students learn.	16	64	8	32	1	4	0	0	25	100
2.	The students are attentive and participate in class activities.	15	60	10	40	0	0	0	0	25	100
3.	Students are more concentrated because there is not much noise in the classroom	15	60	7	28	2	8	1	4	25	100
4.	The classroom's physical space allows carrying out appropriately the assigned activities by the teacher.	17	68	3	12	5	20	0	0	25	100
5.	The teacher provides an appropriate feedback	17	68	3	12	5	20	0	0	25	100
6.	There exists student-student interaction.	15	60	9	36	1	4	0	0	25	100
7.	There exists teacher-student interaction.	12	48	8	32	5	20	0	0	25	100
8.	The teacher remembers the students' names	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0	25	100

Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Students' questionnaire

Regarding the first statement it is observed in table 1, based on teachers' questionnaire that most of teachers 80% (four) totally agree with the fact that classes with few students

facilitate the design activities that allow students to put into practice what they learned. While, only one teacher which represents 20% disagree with this statement.

Besides, based on students' questionnaire most of the students, sixteen of them which represent 64% totally agree that the activities in their small classes allow them to apply what they learned in the previous class. Besides, eight students (32%) agree and only one student which represents 4% of them, partially agree. However, none of the students surveyed disagreed with this statement.

Based on classroom observations, it is confirmed that in classes with few students it is easier for teachers to design activities that allow students to practice what they have learned; as for example, in the sixth class, the teacher was doing sentences with the perfect present tense for which students needed to remember the past participle of the verbs. The teacher wrote some verbs on the board, in three columns: present, past, and past participle, the last column had to be completed by each student. This activity allowed them to remember what they have learned in previous classes to correctly perform the exercises in class of that day. It is evident that with large classes, not all students can participate individually to see their mistakes and correct them, but with smaller classes it is possible to have the participation of all students and the support and feedback from their teacher.

Bray & Kehle (2011) state that class size is an important element in the success of students' English learning. These authors consider a classroom with 20 or fewer students as a small class, and those with more than 20 students as large. For them, small classes allow students to get favorable results; the main benefits small classes provide are: (a) students' learning behavior; (b) students' social behaviors; and (c) students-teachers interactions. These authors also indicate that students in small classes, unlike large classes, are more likely to



participate in the activities proposed by the teacher during class; also, the teacher can give individual attention to students by identifying who needs more support in a particular task.

In relation to second statement, from teacher's questionnaire, it was found that one teacher which represents 20% disagree that the number of students affects the participation of students in the activities performed in class. On the other hand, two teachers (40%) totally agree that the number of students influence positively in the participation of the students in the classroom activities; in the same way, two teachers (40%) agree that classes with few students are better than large classes for the performance of activities.

Furthermore, based on table 1 on the students' questionnaire, it is observed that fifteen students which represent 60% totally agree that in small classes they are attentive and participate during class activities; as well as, ten students which represent the 40% agree with this statement, and none of them partially agree or disagree.

Moreover, based on the classroom observations performed, it was noticed that in class with few students most of them were attentive because they knew that all had to participate in the activities planned by the teacher. Besides, depending on the topic and the sources used by the teacher, children were more or less interested.

In this way, Brown (2007) mentions that to keep students engaged in the English learning, teachers need to consider patterns, sounds, gestures, maps, jigsaws, summaries, symbols, multimedia, computer programs and visual aids, ask and answer questions, share experience, state concepts, role play, among others.

Also, during classroom observation it was noticed that the majority of the students were attentive and participative in all activities planned by the teacher. Therefore, the activities planned by teachers met the requirements to keep students' attention.

In relation with statement number three of table 2 of students' questionnaire, it was found that fifteen students who represent 60% totally agree that in small classes they are more concentrated because there is no much noise in the classroom, seven students which represent 28% agree, two students which represent 8% partially agree and only one student who represent 4% disagree.

Regarding noise in the classroom Bray & Kehle (2011) mentioned that the noise affects on students' concentration and performance, so Bray & Kehle recommend that teachers should control the noise within the classroom by placing students away from air conditioners, fans, and other devices that impede student's concentration. Unfortunately, outside noise is not under the control of any English teacher, minimize external noise by closing the doors and windows of the class, to avoid noise of cars, planes, whistles, horns, and more.

Besides, classroom observation support the student's answers because it was noticed that in classes with few students they can concentrate better than in large ones, each student pay attention to the instructions and participate actively in all classroom activities. Also, it was noticed that in all classroom all doors and windows were closed to avoid the external noise of any type. Besides, students could listen to the teacher and answer without shouting and therefore avoiding discipline and concentration problems.

Regarding statement number four, on table 1 of teachers' questionnaire, it shows that two teachers which represent 40% totally agree that in small classes the classroom's physical space allows that the activities designed by them could be carried out appropriately, other 40% of teachers (2) agree, while only 20% (1) disagree. The only teacher that disagrees with this statement wrote at the bottom of the sheet "the number of students does not influence the design and development of activities."

Besides, based on students' questionnaires, it was found that seventeen students, which represent 68% totally agree that the physical space of the classroom allows carrying out appropriately the assigned activities; also, three students (12%) agree, five students (20%) partially agree, and any student disagree with this statement.

The results show that most of teachers agree that a class with few students in the classroom allows to develop all activities designed by teachers. This fact was confirmed during classroom observations since it was found that most classrooms have between 17 and 20 students per class. Besides, teachers said that they can develop all the activities planned; also, in classes with few students it is easier to perform activities because small classes allow all students to participate in all activities planned for each class. The activities observed included the use of songs, readings, and personal information as example the names and ages of each student, practice pronunciation, writing sentences and pair activities with question and answer to practice what they learned in class. Also, during the field observations it was found that the space of the classes was very adequate, which allows teachers to place the classroom seats in different ways according to the needs of students and the subject of each class.

During one of the observed schools, the position of school desks were always in groups of four, only the seats were placed individually when they had some test.

Besides, Tanner (2009) states that depending on the size and age of the students, 4.55 to 6 square meters is the minimum necessary space within a classroom, per student. If the information claimed by Tanner is considered, then the physical space of the classes observed is highly adequate for the students since the number of students was between 17 and 20 pupils aged between 9 and 12 years.

Regarding to statement number five, it is observed in table 1 of the teachers' questionnaire that forty percent of them (2) totally agree with the fact that it is easier to provide feedback to students in classes with few students. Besides, forty percent (2) agree with this statement. In contrast, twenty percent of teachers (only one) disagree.

While, on the students' questionnaires it is observed that seventeen students which represent 68% totally agree with the fact that in small classes an adequate feedback is provided during the class, three students which represent 12% agree, five students which represent 20% partially agree, and none of them disagree.

The majority of teachers during the field observation provided adequate feedback to students after each topic; in fact, the teacher asked to each student different questions concerning the same subject and repeating the correct pronunciation and meaning of new words learned.

Besides, giving feedback is very important in order to bring self-awareness and progress in any activity develop during the class because students continually need to know how they are doing, so providing feedback is one of the responsibilities of the teacher. One way of providing feedback can be by praising and encouraging students, by correcting them or by testing them; discussing and exchanging opinions, taking into account that feedback always can be done in a positive way. (Gower, et al 2005)

So, according to the field observations and the teacher's and students' questionnaires, the majority of teachers and students agree that it is easier to provide feedback when the number of students is small.

Related to statement number five, table 1 on teachers' questionnaire shows the results of teachers opinions about the activities performed foster students-student interaction, it was

obtained that eighty percent of them (four teachers) totally agree and twenty percent (one teacher) disagree with this statement.

On the other hand, in statement number six of the students' questionnaire on table 2, it was found that fifteen students which represent 60% totally agree that in classes with few students there is interaction between them. Also, nine students which represent 36% agree, only one student which represents 4% partially agrees, and any student disagrees with this statement.

Besides, interaction with other students plays an important role in learning English as Lighbown & Spada (2006) say that the interaction with other learners allows them express their thoughts, opinions, and learn from each other when they are working together in a particular task. This type of interaction provides them an opportunity that any other way of interaction does because students can ask for confirmation or clarification, repetition with a questioning intonation; so in this way, they can learn languages forms, grammatical structures and specially vocabulary while they work with a partner.

In the same way, based on the observation performed the great majority of the teachers think that small classes allow students to more easily interact with each other, either in groups or pairs. Small classes have the advantage that in each planned activity every student can participate without having to wait for the next activity.

In relation with statement number six, based on teachers' questionnaire, regarding to the fact that there is more interaction between teachers and students in classes with few students, the results show that four teachers 80% totally agree, any teacher agree or partially agree with this statement, while, 20% (only one teacher) disagree.

In the same way, in statement number seven on the students' questionnaire it was found that twelve students which represent 48% totally agree that there is teacher-student interaction, eight students which represent 32% agree, five students which represent 20% partially agree, and any student disagree with this statement.

Besides, based on classroom observations performed, it was found that in classes with few students interaction between teacher and students are more readily. In fact, it was noticed that with few students the teacher could allow the participation of all of them in each theme of class, so each student could give an example; also, the environment of the class allows the teacher to constantly interact with their students in each planned activity and students were motivated because they knew that everyone could participate every time.

Furthermore, teacher and student relationship is one of the aspects of classroom management as Marzano (2003) says that if the teacher maintains a good relationship of respect and trust with his pupils, they might work and learn more easily and without disciplinary problems. So good teachers provide support and strong academic guidance but, at the same time taking into account the opinion of the learners based on their needs and desires for attempting to work as in a team.

Related to statement number seven on the teachers' questionnaire on table 1, it was found that two teachers which represent 40% totally agree that in small classes it is easier to remember the students' names, two teachers which represent 40% agree, and any teacher agrees or partially agrees with this statement and 20% disagree.

Besides, based on table 1 on the students' questionnaire related to statement number eight, it was found that twenty students which represent 80% totally agree that in small classes the teacher remember their names, five students which represent 20% agree. While, any student partially agree or disagree.

Based on classroom observations in small classes (17- 20 students per class) it was found that all teachers knew the names of all students and in many cases their last names to distinguish when two or more students had the same name; besides, it was also observed that teachers knew who child needed more support in reading, listening, speaking and writing and help in each case to improve these skills.

Therefore, based on teachers' questionnaires, students' questionnaires, and classrooms observations there are many benefits of teaching and learning English in small classes for both teachers and students. The most relevant ones found in this research were the activities done in small classes such as: read aloud with the whole class, sing a song, pair and group activities for complete a task and practice pronunciation of the new words learned, ask and answer questions according the level of the students, presentations, and games; which allow students to practice what they learn in previous classes; also, students in small classes are attentive and participate actively in all the activities done in class; students can concentrate better in classroom activities because there is not much noise in the classroom; the classroom space allows students to develop the activities assigned by the teacher adequately; the teachers can give feedback in all activities planned; there is more interaction between students and between teachers and students and it is easier for the teacher to remember the students' names.

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

Table 3

## Teachers' Perceptions

No.	In small classes it is easier:	Totally agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
8.	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the listening skill.	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100
9.	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the speaking skill.	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100
10.	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the reading skill.	3	60	1	20	0	0	1	20	5	100
11.	Design and apply activities that allow practicing the writing skills.	3	60	1	20	0	0	1	20	5	100
12.	Design and apply group activities.	3	60	1	20	0	0	1	20	5	100
13.	Design and apply individual activities.	2	40	2	40	0	0	1	20	5	100
14.	Use technological resources.	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100
15.	Use didactical materials	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20	5	100

Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Teachers' questionnaire

Table 4

## Students' Perceptions

No.	In small classes :	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
9.	The activities done allow to practice the listening skill.	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0	25	100
10.	The activities done allow to practice the speaking skill.	15	60	9	36	1	4	0	0	25	100
11.	The activities done allow to practice the reading skill.	16	64	8	32	1	4	0	0	25	100
12.	The activities done allow to practice the writing skill.	10	40	13	52	1	4	1	4	25	100
13.	It is used group activities.	11	44	5	20	8	32	1	4	25	100



14.	It is used individually activities.	15	60	9	36	1	4	0	0	25	100
15.	It is used technological resources.	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0	25	100
16.	It is used didactical materials.	15	60	9	36	1	4	0	0	25	100

Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Students' questionnaire

Related to statement number 8, on table 3 on the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that eighty percent of teachers (four) totally agree that in small classes it is easier to design and implement activities that allow practicing listening skills, none of the teachers agrees or partially agrees, and twenty percent (one teacher) disagrees with this statement.

Besides, statement number 9, from the students' questionnaire on table 4, it was found that twenty students, which represent 80%, totally agree that in small classes the activities carried out allow to practice the listening skill, five students, which represent 20%, agree and none of the students partially agrees or disagrees with this statement.

Similarly, in the questionnaire applied to students, they said that in their classes they did every day at least one listening activity, with songs, or listening a story to complete a determinate tasks, or listening for understanding.

Furthermore, during classroom observations it was found that listening activities were planned by teachers because most of the classes had CD with songs and vocabulary that students had to repeat; also, it can be added that small classes facilitate the participation of every student because they can repeat the correct pronunciation of the words they heard; in addition, this kind of activities help students to learn the proper pronunciation of new vocabulary. The songs used contribute students to learn the correct pronunciation of the words and motivates them to learn in a fun way, especially in the early hours of class because some of them were sleepy; so, it can be said that it is very beneficial to use songs to encourage them

to learn in a dynamic way. Besides, with listening activities all students can practice two skills at the same time as listening and speaking.

In this way, Nation and Newton (2009, p.37) suggest that “listening is a natural precursor to speaking; the early stages of language development in a person’s first language (and in naturalistic acquisition of other languages) are depending on listening”, for this reason, several writers and researches have suggested that listening has an important role in the learning of a second or foreign language.

Regarding to statement number 9 showed on table 3 of the teachers’ questionnaire, the results reveal that eighty percent of teachers (four) totally agree that in classes with few students it is easier to design and apply activities that allow practicing speaking skills. Any teacher agrees or partially agrees with this statement. In contrast, to one teacher which represent 20% who disagrees.

In the same way, related to statement number 10 on table 4 of the students’ questionnaire it was found that fifteen students which represent 60% totally agree that in class with few students activities that allow them to practice speaking skills are performed, nine students which represent 36% agree with this statement, one student which represent 4% partially agree, and any student disagrees.

Based on classroom observations, it was found that in small classes it is easier to implement activities for any of the four skills, especially for speaking activities because each student has more opportunities to participate pronouncing the new words and the teacher can listen to each student, and if it is necessary correct and teach the right pronunciation. In most of the observed classes the activities for practicing speaking were: listening and repeating new words, make sentences using the words learned, ask and answer questions with a partner, and practice speaking in chorus with the whole class.

Regarding to statement number 10 on table 3 of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that 60% of teachers (three) totally agree that in small classes it is easier to design and apply activities that allow practicing reading skills, one teacher who represent (20%) agree, while 20% of them (one teacher) disagree with this statement, and any teacher partially agree.

In the same way, regarding to statement number 11, on table 4 on the students questionnaire it was found that sixteen students which represent 64% totally agree that in small classes the activities done allow to practice reading skills. Eight students which represent 32% agree and one student which represents 4% partially agree, and any student disagrees with this statement.

In this sense, classroom observations support the results obtained from the teacher's questionnaire because the classes were small; in fact it was observed that reading activities was implemented with the participation of all students, each student read a paragraph from the textbook they used every day in class, according to a topic chosen by the teacher and if the reading process finished learners began to read again in order to get everyone involved.

Small classes facilitate that the teacher can provide individual assistance to the needs of each student. Besides, it was noted that students of the higher grades (fifth and sixth) were able to identify and discuss the difficult words, phrases and concepts of the text because the readings used were according to the level of knowledge of students.

In this regard, Nunan (2000) classifies in a general way the teaching techniques into five main types as cognitive, interpersonal, linguistic, affective and creative. The cognitive teaching technique is based on activities in where students should infer, classify, discriminate or diagram with the objective that the students think. Interpersonal teaching techniques aim to cooperate, to share ideas and to learn with other students. The linguistic technique could be used for practice controlled exercises, using context, skimming and

summarized while reading. The affective technique allows students share opinions, feelings and ideas about the subject with other classmates. Within the creative technique the main objective is when the students are working using brainstorming.

Regarding to statement number 11 on table 3 of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that three teachers which represents 60% totally agree that in small classes it is easier to design and apply activities that allow practicing the writing skill, one teacher which represent 20% agrees with the statement, any teacher partially agree and one teacher which represent 20% disagree.

In relation with statement number 12, on table 4 of the students' questionnaire it was found that ten students which represent 40% totally agree that in classes with few students activities that allow the practicing of writing skills are performed, thirteen students which represent 52% agree, one student which represent 4% partially agree and one student which represent 4% disagree.

Related to writing skills, Herrell & Jordan (2012, p.165) state that "one of the most challenging tasks for English language learners is acquiring writing skills. In order to support this daunting task, teachers must provide scaffolding, modeling, monitoring, and encouragement".

In addition, based on the observations performed, it can be said that teachers in classes with few students can easily monitor the writing activities of their learners. The activities used by the teacher to improve writing skills were: writing sentences related to a specific topic, shared writing to complete stories with theirs peers, and interactive writing supported by the teacher. The activities were according to the level of proficiency and the age of the students. With the students between 9 to 10 years old, simple and short sentences were made, using the verb "to be", the simple present tense, the present continuous; with students between 11 to 12

years old longer sentences were made using more tenses as the present and past perfect, and bearing in mind, the right writing present and past of regular and irregular verbs and the past participle.

Besides, the student's questionnaire confirms that most students think that in small classes it is easy to receive feedback from teachers to give them help, especially when someone writes a word poorly or when someone needs help to successfully complete a sentence, or part of a story; on the other hand, only a few students say that the number of students no matter to develop writing activities.

Regarding to statement number 12, on table 3 of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that 60% of teachers (three teachers) totally agree that in small classes it is easy to design and apply group activities, 20% of them (one teacher) agree, 20% of them (one teacher) disagree with this statement, and any teacher partially agrees.

In relation to statement number 13, on table 4 on students' questionnaire, it was found that eleven students which represent 44% totally agree that group activities are used in small classes, five students which represent 20% agree, eight students which represent 32% partially agree, and only one student which represent 4% disagree.

Based on the classroom observations, it was confirmed that small classes facilitate the use of group activities; it was noticed that learners feel relaxed working in groups, they pay close attention to avoid mistakes, and especially they feel encouraged to learn regardless of the subject class. Group activities most frequently observed were those of role playing, questions and answer, pairing activities, discussion, and brainstorming in each group to complete a particular activity.

Also, students said that they feel comfortable when they work in groups with their peers because they are not afraid to make mistakes, learn from the mistakes of their peers, learn to value companionship, and especially because they feel motivated to learn. On the other hand, one teacher said that “it is the responsibility of the teacher to use the appropriate strategies to teach in both small and big classes”; so, this teacher thinks that the size of the class does not affect in the performance of group activities

Furthermore, related to group activities Kendall and Khuon (2005) state that although students receive instructions as a whole class to perform certain tasks, sometimes learners need to work in small groups to receive feedback from the teacher and to feel more comfortable when they ask questions, which sometimes cannot be made in front of the whole class for reasons of shame or fear.

Regarding to statement number 13, on table 3 of the teachers’ questionnaire it was found that 40% of teachers (two) totally agree that in small classes individual activities are used. 40% of teachers (two) agree, while 20% of them, one teacher, disagree, and any teacher partially agrees with this statement.

Besides, regarding to statement number 14 on table 4 of the students’ questionnaire, it was found that fifteen students which represent 60% totally agree that individual activities are used in small classes. Nine students which represent 36% agree, one student which represents 4% partially agree and any of them disagree with this statement.

Besides, classroom observation supports that in small classes many individual activities can be developed for example: oral presentations, describing pictures using students’ own words, summarizing readings, asking and answering to questions, finding the meaning of new words from pictures and gestures used by the teacher.

Also students' questionnaire shows that most of the learners think that in small classes individual activities can be developed easily because there is more time spent in each student and teachers can monitor their individual work, and correct them when it is necessary.

In the same way, teachers that were surveyed argue that the small number of students facilitates the monitoring process of students' work; also, students can answer oral or written questions, with or without the teacher's help, and many individual speaking activities can be develop in each English class. To sum up individual activities facilitate the learning of certain activities that cannot be develop in groups.

In relation to statement number 14, on table 3 of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that 80% of them (four) totally agree that in small classes it is easy to use technological resources. Any teacher agrees or partially agrees; while only 20% (one teacher) disagree with this statement.

Besides, regarding to statement number 15 of the students' questionnaire, it was found that twenty students which represent 80% totally agree that in classes with few students technological resources are used. Five students which represent 20% agree and any student partially agrees or disagrees with this statement.

During class observations, it was noted that technological resources allow teachers to provide, colorful, dynamic, and varied classes. The most observed technological resources in the different classes were: tape recorder, CD player, CDs with native-speakers' audios, power point presentations, electronic board, tablets, which motivate students' interaction and understanding of English more easily. Besides, most of students have internet access, one or three times per week at the school; for this reason, it was noticed that most of the students love to learn English because for them internet is a very good tool for learning English either

for practicing grammar exercise, watch a film and learn the correct pronunciation, learn English or just for listening to fashion music that each student prefers.

Besides, students' questionnaires confirm that all learners feel comfortable with the use of technology because they like computers and tablets to learn English or any other subject in the classroom.

Nowadays, technological resources need to be used in all English classes, in order to enhance the English teaching- learning process.

Regarding to statement number 15, on table 3 of the teachers' questionnaire it was found that eighty percent of the teachers (four) totally agree that in small classes it is easy to use didactic materials. Any teacher agrees or partially agrees with this statement. On the other hand, twenty percent (one teacher) disagree.

Regarding to statement number 16, on table 2 of the students' questionnaire it was found that fifteen students which represent 60% totally agree that in classes with few students didactical materials are used. Nine students which represent 36% agree, one student which represents 4% partially agree, and any student disagree with this statement.

Besides, through the classrooms observation performed, it was noted that in most of the classrooms, teachers in third and fourth grades used the traditional didactical materials such as: pictures from magazine, newspapers, notebooks, and books; as well as realia (real things objects in the class), flashcards, wall charts, posters, handmade materials, pointers, markers, and the blackboard as the main resources used in all the classrooms. While, in the fifth and sixth grades teachers used all the resources named above and audio visuals aids such as: overhead projectors, electronic board, computers, and tablets. In addition, bibliographical resources course book, workbook, and dictionary were also used.



In the same way, according to the results obtained and the students' opinions, it is confirmed that small classes facilitate the use of didactical materials and it is both comfortable for teachers and students.

In this way, Harmer (2007) states that didactical resources are instruments that help us to achieve any goal; that is, supplementary materials help students develop the learning process. Therefore, this author suggests that teachers need to know what materials are available in the classroom and the types of materials that can be used in each class. He mentions that the types of didactical resources can be: permanent and technician. Permanent resources are the materials that the teacher has in hand and uses almost every day for example: whiteboard, eraser, books, notebooks, pens, pencil, charts, flashcards, puppets, pointers, markers. Among the technician resources are audiovisual aids (computer, television, CD player, tapes, DVDs, overhead projectors and posters, cartoons strips, costumes, realia and field strips.), Computing media (multimedia programs, educative games, word processor.). Therefore he concludes that learning how to use various types of resources is a major part of the modern teacher training.

Finally, based on teachers' questionnaire, students' questionnaires, and classroom observations there are many strategies and resources that can benefit to the teaching of English in small classes these are: activities that allow practicing listening skills such as dictogloss, leveled questions adjusting questioning strategies to the language level of students; activities that allow practice speaking activities such as: language focus lessons, collecting and processing words, verbal practice, and communication games creating opportunities for verbal interaction; activities that allow to practice readings skills such as: read, pair, and share working with a partner to negotiate the meaning, exploring a book to deepen comprehension, read aloud plus, guided reading providing individual support within a group

setting, moving into reading to foster comprehension, free voluntary reading, repeated reading; activities that allow practicing writing skills such as: preview/review building vocabulary and concepts to support understanding; group activities such as: small groups and partners, cooperative learning; individually activities such as: predictable routines and signals, manipulative strategies, visual scaffolding providing language support through visual images; technological resources such as: multimedia presentations, handheld computers, tablets and smartphones and, of course, didactical material of all types can be used in small and large classes.

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

Table 5

Teachers' Perceptions

No.	In small classes students feel:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
16.	Relaxed when speaking in front of the class.	2	40	1	20	1	20	1	20	5	100
17.	Taken into account because they have more opportunity to participate during the class.	2	40	2	40	0	0	1	20	5	100
18.	Motivated to participate because there are few classmates in the class.	1	20	2	40	1	20	1	20	5	100
19.	Comfortable because they can compete in a sane way with other students.	0	0	3	60	0	0	2	40	5	100

Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Teachers' questionnaire

Table 6

## Students' Perceptions

No.	In small classes I feel:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
17.	Relaxed when talking in front of my classmates.	3	12	20	80	2	12	0	0	25	100
18.	Taken into account because they have greater opportunity to participate during the class.	8	32	2	8	15	60	0	0	25	100
19	Motivated to participate because we are few students in the class.	13	52	7	28	3	12	2	8	25	100
20	Comfortable because I can compete in a sane way with other students.	14	56	5	20	1	4	5	20	25	100

Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Students' questionnaire

In section C students and teachers were asked to indicate how students feel about learning English in small classes.

Related statement number 16, on table 5 of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that two teachers which represent 40% totally agree that in small classes students feel relaxed when they talk in front of the class, one teacher which represent 20% agrees. One teacher which represents 20% partially agrees, and one teacher which represents 20% disagrees with this statement.

Regarding statement number 17, on table 5 of the students' questionnaire it was found that three students which represent 12% totally agree that in small classes they feel relaxed

when they talk in front of the class. Twenty students which represent 80% agree, two students which represent 8% partially agree, and any student disagrees with this statement.

Related to this question, opinions were divided, but the majority of teachers believed that in small classes, students feel relaxed when they have to talk with their peers. Based on classroom observations, it was confirmed that in small classes learners feel relaxed when they talk with their classmates or when they work in pairs, groups or in the whole class because everyone is learning and is not afraid to make mistakes; they also learn from the mistakes of their teammates. In fact, it was noticed that most of students feel comfortable when talking with their classmates; in this way, they have opportunities to know best among each other. Also, it was noticed that the teacher always formed groups or pairs to work better; so, students learnt to lose their fear when talking in front of their classmates.

Related to statement number 17, of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that two teachers which represent 40% totally agree that in small classes students feel taken into account because they have more opportunities to participate in class; two teachers which represent 40% agree, any teacher partially agree. On the other hand, one teacher which represents 20% disagrees with the statement.

In the same way, according to statement number 18, on table 6 of the students' questionnaire it was found that eight students which represent 32% totally agree that in class with few students they feel taken into account because they have more opportunities to participate in classroom activities. Two students which represent 8% agree. Fifteen students which represent 60% partially agree and any student disagrees.

Similarly, classroom observations revealed that in small classes each learner has more opportunities to participate in each activity planned by the teacher. In fact, it was noticed that in all activities performed in classroom every student participated, due to the small number of students allows the participation of everyone. On the other hand, one of the teachers wrote at the bottom of the questionnaire sheet that the learning environment doesn't depend on the number of students per class, and therefore, each teacher has to be qualified for teaching to large and small classes.

Statement number 18, of teacher's questionnaire state that 60% of them agree that in small classes, students feel motivated to participate because there are few classmates in the class, 40% (two teachers) disagree with this statement.

On the other hand, on the students' questionnaires show that thirteen students which represent 52% totally agree that in classes with few students they feel motivated to participate in the classroom activities. Seven students which represent 28% agree, three students which represent 12% partially agree, and two students who represent 8% disagree with this statement.

Besides, classroom observations supported the teachers' answers because it was noticed that in small classes, students have more opportunities to practice individual activities, feedback is provided immediately, and students feel highly motivated to participate and to perform the activities well because they are taken into account in each activity. On the other hand, only one teacher thinks that the number of students doesn't affect to the learning process.

In this sense, motivation plays an important role in language learning as Littlejohn and Hicks (1998) suggest that of all the different aspects involved in the language learning, motivation is probably one of the most important ones. Researches have suggested that there

are two main types of motivation in language learning: instrumental which means that people study in order to use the language for example in their work and integrative which means that they study because they want to know more about a foreign language culture. With young learners, neither of these types of motivation is relevant. For this reason, teachers use other ways for motivating their students for example they use songs, games, fun activities, and text that appeal to students' interest. The teacher looks for ways to bring about a deeper, more enduring sense of student involvement using activities such as: open-ended tasks, problem solving, music, pair work, and group work.

Related to statement number 19, on table 5 of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that three teachers which represent 60% agree that in small classes students feel comfortable because they can compete in a sane way with the rest of students. On other hand, two teachers which represent 40% disagree with this statement.

Also, statement number 20, on table 6 of the students' questionnaire, it was found that fourteen students which represent 56% totally agree that students feel comfortable competing in a sane way with the rest of the class. Five students which represent 20% agree, one student which represent 4% partially agree; while, five students which represent 20% disagree with this statement because they think that the class size does not affect in the students' relationship.

In the same way, classroom observations supported the fact that in small classes students feel comfortable because they have more opportunities to participate in all activities planned by the teacher and they have more opportunities to interact with their classmates. Besides, the observations confirmed that most of the students feel comfortable because working in groups or individually help to create a favorable environment without much noise.

Furthermore, related to noise Bray and Kehle (2011) claim that excess noise affects concentration and performance of students in the class; so they recommend that teachers should control noise within the classroom by placing students away from air conditioners, fans, and other devices that impede student's concentration. Unfortunately, noise is not under the control of teachers, but teachers should try to minimize external noise by closing the doors and windows of the classroom, to avoid noise cars, planes, whistles, horns and more. If, teacher takes into account these important factors in the environment of the class the results will be good for both teacher and students.

According to the teachers' questionnaires, students' questionnaires, and classroom observation it is concluded that in small classes students feel relaxed when they have to talk with their partners in class, they have more opportunities to participate in the classroom activities, they feel encouraged to learn because of the few neighbors in the class, and they feel comfortable with the classroom environment because they can compete in a sane way with their peers. Therefore, most of students in small classes feel comfortable learning English and it is beneficial for both teachers and students as showed the classroom observations and questionnaires.

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

Table 7

Teachers' Perceptions

No.	In classes with few students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20.	There is anxiety among students because there is greater control by the teacher	0	0	0	0	1	20	4	80	5	100

21.	It is more difficult to practice speaking and listening skills.	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100	5	100
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Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Teachers' questionnaire.

Table 8

Students' Perceptions

No.	In classes with few students:	Totally Agree		Agree		Partially agree		Disagree		TOTAL	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
21.	There is anxiety among students because there is greater control by the teacher.	17	68	3	12	4	16	1	4	25	100
22.	It is more difficult to practice the speaking and listening skills.	0	0	11	44	13	52	1	4	25	100

Author: Paulina Espinoza

Source: Students' questionnaire

It is time to analyze the results obtained from teachers and students questionnaires about the limitations when teaching English in small classes.

Related to statement number 20, on table 7 of the teachers' questionnaire the results show that none of the teachers totally agrees or agrees that in small classes there exists anxiety among students because there is greater control by the teacher, one teacher which represent 20% partially agree, and four teachers which represent 80% disagree with this statement.

In the same way, statement number 21 on table 8 of the students' questionnaire it was found that four students which represent 16% totally agree that they feel anxiety because there is more control by the teacher, three students which represent 12% agree, seventeen students



which represent 68% partially agree, and one student which represent 4% disagree.

Similarly, classroom observations support teacher's answers because the researcher noticed that in small classes there is not greater anxiety between students; in fact, in all the observed classes there were always children who liked English and enjoyed all the activities; only a very few children did not like English and of course it was more difficult for them to learn, but in general children felt comfortable and active to participate in all class activities; Besides, Students' interviews show that most of the learners (20 of 25) felt comfortable working in small classes, while only four of them think that in small classes they feel a little anxious because the teacher can control the class and in each activity they knew that they had to participate, so they felt nervous about this.

Related to statement number 21, on table 7 of the teachers' questionnaire, it was found that any teacher totally agrees, agrees, or partially agrees that in small classes it is more difficult to practice speaking and listening skills; on the other hand, five teachers which represent 100% disagree with this statement.

Besides, according to statement number 22 on table 8 of the students' questionnaire, it was found that none of the students totally agrees that in small classes it is more difficult to practice speaking and listening skills, 11 students which represent 44% agree, thirteen students which represent 52% partially agree, and one student which represent 4% disagree with this statement.

In the same way, classroom observations support teachers' answers because the researcher noticed that in small classes learners have more time to practice listening and speaking activities. Unlike large classes, small classes allow all students to practice during class individual activities of listening and speaking; also, the teacher can correct students' pronunciation mistakes student per student, which benefits that the whole because students

learn the correct pronunciation and don't repeat the same pronunciation mistake. The most observed speaking activities were: introductions, interviews, role playing, ask and answer questions in pairs or groups. The Listening activities were: listening to songs, listening to stories for completing information, and listening and repeat.

According to teachers' questionnaires, and classroom observations it was found that in small classes there is not great limitations when teaching English. Most of the teachers think that in small classes there is not anxiety between students and it is easier to practice listening and speaking activities. In fact, for teachers, small classes mean less discipline problems, more time for interaction, and more opportunities for feedback.

The only limitation encountered, regarding students, was that few of them feel anxious because there is more control by the teacher.

## Conclusions

- The most significant benefits when teaching and learning English in small classes are that it is easier to design activities that allow students to practice what they learned and teachers can provide adequate feedback in each activity planned.
- In small classes the majority of teachers perform creative and dynamic classes that allow students to actively participate in all class activities.
- The classroom space and physical conditions in the observed classes were appropriate; it was because the number of students allowed to move seats from one place to another according to the student's needs; so, students felt comfortable working in groups or individually according to the planned activities.
- The interaction between teacher and students was very satisfying; this fact, allowed the practicing of the four English skills listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- The resources that the interviewed teachers used were adequate; among the most used resources were overhead projector, audio books, radio, electronic whiteboard which were used according to the students' English level.
- The adequate number of students per class allows teachers to implement activities in groups, pairs or individually, oral or written, which allows students to have enough practice in order to ensure their proficiency and fluency.

## Recommendations

- Nowadays, teachers have many technological resources that assist in English teaching, and every teacher must make the necessary efforts to update with the use of the new technologies and improve the strategies for teaching English to small and large classes.
- Teachers should receive more teaching training in teaching strategies according to students' needs in order to enhance students' English learning.
- Class size is important, but should not become an excuse to guide and maintain a positive classroom environment. Teachers should find the right strategy to interact with their students and provide feedback, through group activities or whole class activities.

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## ANNEXES



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

Estimado docente:

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

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

### Datos Informativos:

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

**Instrucción:** Marque con una X según su criterio.

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

Muy satisfactorio
Satisfactorio
Poco satisfactorio
Nada satisfactorio



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

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

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

No.	En clases con pocos estudiantes se facilita:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
23.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de <b>escucha</b> .				
24.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades <b>habla</b> .				
25.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de <b>lectura</b> .				
26.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades que permiten practicar las habilidades de <b>escritura</b> .				
27.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades <b>grupales</b> .				
28.	Diseñar y aplicar actividades <b>individuales</b> .				
29.	Utilizar recursos tecnológicos.				
30.	Utilizar materiales didácticos.				

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

No.	En clases con pocos estudiantes los estudiantes se sienten:	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
31.	Relajados al momento de hablar frente a sus compañeros.				
32.	Tomados en cuenta porque tienen mayor oportunidad de participar en la clase.				
33.	Motivados a participar porque son pocos compañeros en la clase.				
34.	A gusto porque pueden competir sanamente con otros estudiantes				

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

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

¡Gracias por su colaboración!



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Estimado estudiante:

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

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**Datos Informativos:**

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

**Instrucción:** Marque con una X según su criterio.

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

Muy satisfactorio
Satisfactorio
Poco satisfactorio
Nada satisfactorio

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

		Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
1.	Las actividades que se realizan permiten practicar lo aprendido.				
2.	Los estudiantes están atentos y participan en las actividades desarrolladas en clase.				
3.	Los estudiantes se concentran mejor porque no hay mucho ruido en el salón de clase.				

4.	El espacio de la clase permite desarrollar adecuadamente las actividades asignadas por el profesor.				
5.	El profesor brinda una retroalimentación adecuada				
6.	Existe interacción entre los estudiantes.				
7.	Existe interacción entre el profesor y los estudiantes.				
8.	El profesor recuerda el nombre de los estudiantes				

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

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

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

No.	En clases con pocos estudiantes me siento	Muy satisfactorio	Satisfactorio	Poco satisfactorio	Nada satisfactorio
17.	Relajado al momento de hablar frente a mis compañeros.				
18.	Tomado en cuenta porque tengo mayor oportunidad de participar en la clase.				

19.	Motivado a participar porque somos pocos compañeros en la clase.				
20.	A gusto porque puedo competir sanamente con otros estudiantes.				

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

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

¡Gracias por su colaboración!



**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:







